

HERMENEUTICS CLASS NOTES

by Al Franklin

Franklin's class notes on biblical hermeneutics, providing a practical guide to the principles and methods of interpreting Scripture for students of the Bible.

13 Chapters

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00. Hermeneutics Class Notes

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www.shasta.edu These are Class Notes for Hermeneutics from Shasta Bible College. In the RTF
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10.1.4 No figurative language was used.

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01. Introduction

1. Introduction 1.1 Hermeneutics given less and less attention 1.2 Human Reason-Col 2:8 1.3 Subjective Feeling-Col 2:18 1.4 Objective Revelation-2Ti 4:1-4 1.5 Biblical Authority-2Ti 3:16-17 1.5.1 The origin & flow of Bibhcai authority 1.5.11 God inhered authority

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1.5.16 Things man is forbidden to do to God's complete revelation 1.5.16.1 Cannot add to the Bible 1.5.16.2 Cannot subtract from the Bible 1.5.16.3 Cannot change the Bible Introduction to Hermeneutics The interpretation of Scripture is a stewardship which we have from God. It is a part of the "ministry of the Word" (Act 6:4). After His resurrection, Christ "interpreted" the Scriptures for the apostles in reference to Himself as Messiah (Luk 24:27). We are to "cut a straight line" down the word of truth (2Ti 2:15). Hermeneutics is the science of correctly interpreting God's Word, of observing principles whereby the Scriptures are devoutly and profoundly read. It is a process of meaning-extraction, of bringing out the sense of the Bible by means of principles supplied by Scripture itself. The task is never done, for God has yet more light and truth to give from His Holy Word. Our hermeneutics is never exhaustive and never infallible. It can always be enlarged with new insight and improved by sharper insight. Just because we listen to Scripture from a different setting in time and space than our fathers, our perspective is unique and we notice things not seen before. As Berkouwer has taught, "Listening, unlike remembering, is always a thing of the present moment" (G. C. Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, 1954, p. 9). Thus we would be "hearers" of God's Word, charged with the interpretation and proclamation of this message among the nations. This involves determining exactly what the biblical text means to say (exegetis), assessing the results of exegetical study in light of the whole Bible (theology), and directing the message to men's lives for correction and instruction (application).

"Man can weary himself in any secular affair, but diligently to search the Scriptures is to him tedious and burdensome."

Few covet to be mighty in the Scriptures; though convinced their great concern is enveloped in "them". Locke

Hermeneutics given less and less attention

Human Reason -Col 2:8

Subjective Feeling -Col 2:18

Objective Revelation -2Ti 4:1-4

Biblical Authority - 2Ti 3:16-17

If one believes the inspiration and authority of the Bible, then there are certain “self-evidencing” rules that should govern his interpretation and when applied lead to a consistent interpretation. Rules which make the truths of God’s Word plain; which enable all believers to interpret individually; which result in spiritual edification.

The origin & flow of Biblical authority

God inherent authority

Because He is the originator of the universe - Gen 1:1

Christ

Delegated authority from God - Mat 28:18, 1Co 15:27

Holy Spirit

Guided & guarded apostles - Joh 14:26; John 16:13, 1Co 2:10-13

Apostle

Delegated authority from Christ - Joh 13:20; John 17:8; John 20:21, Gal 1:11-12

Bible

Written by the apostles and the prophets - Eph 3:3-5 They wrote all of God’s message to man - Joh 16:13, 2Ti 3:16-17, 2Pe 1:3, Jud 1:3

Things man is forbidden to do to God’s complete revelation

Cannot add to the Bible

1Co 4:6, 2Jn 1:9, Rev 22:18

Cannot subtract from the Bible

Rev 22:19

Cannot change the Bible

Gal 1:6-9 The above forbids man from doing anything with the Bible except to use it as the sole absolute authority and to obey the Bible.

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Introduction

Importance of Hermeneutics

The Definition of Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the science & art of interpretation (Text 19).

Science = principles of interpretation Art = practice (application) Greek word - hermeneuo - to interpret or explain; hermeneia - interpretation; ultimately derived from Hermes Greek - message god.

Biblical usage Old Testament - primarily in interpretation of dreams;

New Testament - Joh 1:42; John 9:7; John 1:38; Heb 7:2; Act 9:36; 1Co 12:10; 1Co 14:26; Luk 24:27, Act 14:12; 1Co 12:30; 1Co 14:5, 1Co 14:13, 1Co 14:27; Heb 5:11; 1Co 14:1-40 & 28

The Purpose of Hermeneutics

Positively to find the meaning of the text (Text 64).

“The true object of interpretation is to apprehend the exact thought of the author...The interpreter is not responsible for the thought...His only province is to apprehend the precise thought imparted by the author’s words, and leave the author responsible for the character of his thought.” R. Chafer Which author? Small “a” or capital “A”.

It is important to realize the difference between interpretation and application.

“Perhaps a still more important distinction exists between interpretation and application. It was that great Biblical scholar Delitzsch who said: “Interpretation is one; application is manifold.” In studying the Bible, as with any other book, the objective is to find out the exact meaning of the text at hand. After this has been ascertained, it can be applied to the life of an individual or a group.

Much confusion has been the result of using the Scriptures practically wholly by way of application. For instance, it is true, and eminently so, that for every trusting and believing heart the eternal God is a refuge, and His arms can be depended upon to uphold and sustain. But Deu 33:27 has a specific meaning in the context, which refers it directly to Israel. Such is the case with the Psalms and the prophecies. Isa 53:1-12 may be applied to all sinners, but its interpretation shows us that it is speaking of the confession of the nation of Israel in a coming day. The Gospels have suffered in this respect probably as much as any portion of the Word with the result that the primary meaning is foreign to most people. True interpretation demands of us to ascertain to the best of our ability with the help of the Spirit exactly what a text means and to whom it is addressed." Charles L. Feinberg, Premillennialism or Amillennialism?, p.14.

"A passage of Scripture has one meaning and if it had several hermeneutics would be indeterminate." Ramm

"The best teacher is the one who does not bring his meaning into the Scripture, but brings it out of the Scripture." Luther

The Methods of Hermeneutics

There are two possible methods used in finding the meaning of an author, the literal and the allegorical. The literal takes the customary meaning of the words used while the allegorical method seeks for hidden meanings beyond the literal.

Negative

"It is not the privilege of any interpreter to impose his own thought upon the words of an author, nor in any way to modify the author's meaning. The moment that one allows oneself this privilege one ceases to be an interpreter and becomes a collaborator with the author. To essay this role with the Spirit Author of the Scriptures should give pause to a larger number of careless interpreters than is daily evident." R. Chafer

The Relationship of Hermeneutics to the Other Sciences (Text 20).

Criticism

Historical or higher criticism - origination style, age, authorship, vocabulary, genuineness, authority

Textual or lower criticism - determination text

Hermeneutics - interpretation

Exegesis - explanation and application of hermeneutics

Systematic Theology - systemization

Systematic and Biblical - philosophical

Homiletics - organization- science of preaching

Exposition - proclamation - teaching the truth

The Value of Hermeneutics

To build the Christian life

Interpretation, doctrine, application = manner of life 2Ti 2:15, 2Ti 3:15, Tit 2:11-12, Joh 17:17, Act 17:11, Jas 3:1

To bridge the gap in culture

“The necessity of a science of interpretation is apparent from the diversities of mind and culture among men...This science assumes that there are divers modes of thought and ambiguities of expression among men, and, accordingly, it aims to remove the supposable differences between a writer and his readers, so that the meaning of the one may be truly and accurately apprehended by the others.” Terry

To bypass the errors of the past and present

“In religion, what damned error but some sober brow will bless it, and approve it with a text, hiding the grossness with fair ornament.” Ramm, *The Merchant of Venice*, p.3 The following quotes are from Fredric W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, pp.38-43.

“...let us not fall into the common error of fancying that such mistaken inferences are of little practical importance. If they be harmless in some instances, they may be very fatal in others. ‘The true sense of Scripture is Scripture;’ but ‘giving it a wrong sense,’ says Bishop Wordsworth, ‘men make God’s Word become their non-word, or even the Tempter’s word and then Scripture is used for our destruction, instead of making us wise unto Salvation.’ The misinterpretation of Scripture must be reckoned among the gravest calamities of Christendom. It has been the source of crimes and errors which have tended to loosen the hold of the sacred writings upon the affection and veneration of mankind. Recall but for a moment the extent and the deadliness of the evils for which texts of the Bible have been made the command and the excuse. Wild fanaticism, dark superstition, abject bondage, antinomian license, the burning hatred and unbending obstinacy of party spirit - have they not each in turn perverted the Scriptures to which they appealed?”

“How often have the supporters of mistaken purposes defended their outrages by the injunctions of the Pentateuch?”

“The Crusaders, thinking that they did God service by wading bridle deep in the blood of infidels who were often morally superior to themselves, justified their massacres by the exterminating wars in the Book of Judges...”

“A crime so atrocious as the massacre of St. Bartholomew was hailed by Pope Gregory XIII. with acclamation, and paralleled by the zeal for God of ancient heroes. Texts were used to crush the efforts of national liberty, and to buttress the tyrannies of immoral despotism. The murder of kings and passive obedience to them were alike defended by texts. The colossal usurpations of the Papacy in the days of its haughtiest audacity were maintained not only by spurious donations and forged decretals, but by Boniface VIII. on the ground that the two swords of Peter meant the possession by Popes of temporal and spiritual dominion; and a century earlier, by Innocent III., on the ground that the Pope was intended by the sun to rule the day, and the Emperor only by the moon to rule the night.”

“Even the Spanish Inquisition - that infamy of Christendom - appealed to Scriptural warrant for the right to immolate its holocausts of victims.” “...the axes, the stakes, the gibbets (form of hanging), the thumbscrews, the racks, and all the instruments of torture kept in the dungeons of priests to deprave the heart of nations, and to horrify the world, were defended by scraps of texts and shreds of metaphor from the mercy-breathing parables of Christ. Texts have been used a thousand times to bar the progress of science, to beat down the sword of freedom, to destroy the benefactors of humanity, to silence the voice of truth. The gospel of peace, the gospel of knowledge, the gospel of progress, has been desecrated into the armory of fanaticism, and the stumblingblock of philosophy. The gospel of light and love has been used to glorify the madness of the self-torturer, to kindle the faggot of the inquisitor, and to rivet the fetters of the slave. Who can deny these things unless he thinks to please God by going before Him with a lie in his right hand?”

“How then is it possible better to maintain the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures than by pointing out, and by forsaking, the errors whereby men have so often wrested them alike to their own destruction and to the ruin and misery of their fellow men? How can we better prove their sacredness and majesty than by showing that in spite of such long centuries of grievous misinterpretation they still remain when rightly used, a light unto our feet and a lamp unto paths?”, to deliver the Holy Places from

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Introduction

Importance of Hermeneutics

The History of Hermeneutics

A study of the history of hermeneutics is necessary to see the results of both correct and incorrect methods of interpretation. Development of the rules of hermeneutics has been a slow process and the science itself did not really come into its own until the reformation. For over 1,000 years the church was hindered and corrupted by false methods of interpretation.

Old Testament and Jewish Views

Biblical (Gen 1:1; Gen 2:15-17; Gen 6:12-14; Gen 12:1-3)

The method of interpretation seen in the Old Testament is the literal method.

Deu 4:2 - Scripture was not to be added to or taken from. This can only be true if words are given their literal or normal meaning.

Deu 28:1-6 The commandments were obviously understood and applied as literal. Exo 20:1-7 Prophecy was likewise interpreted literally Jer 25:11-13, Dan 9:2, Eze 12:21-28 A literal method was also used in the first recorded translation.

Neh 8:4-8 - translated from Hebrew to Chaldean The development of hermeneutics is usually thought to have started here with Ezra.

Isa 49:2-7; Isa 53:1-12

Extra-Biblical

Following the completion of the Old Testament, several systems of hermeneutics were used by the Rabbis. The literal method was used but tradition was added to tradition and interpretation to interpretation until the true meaning of Scripture was buried under the writings of the Rabbis. Jewish interpretation was often prefaced with statements such as: Rabbi Juda says that Rabbi Aqiba says that Rabbi Hillel says that this word etc. This false method of interpretation brought strong rebuke from Christ.

Mat 12:1-8, Mat 15:1-9, Mat 23:1-33 The traditions and writings of the Rabbis were written in books which actually took the place of Scripture.

They are the:

Targum The translation of the Old Testament into Aramaic

Talmud The discussions and decisions of the rabbis on the law

Mishna Biblical subjects arranged topically

Midrash Expositions by the rabbis on books of the Old Testament. In the inter-testament period the Jews were also attracted to the allegorical method.

“The allegorizing method of interpretation had its origin with the Alexandrian Jews of about two centuries before Christ, although it is claimed that the Greeks applied the method to their own religious poets at a still earlier date. At least, the Alexandrian Jews were the first to apply the

principle to the Old Testament Scriptures as a whole. It is generally conceded that Aristobulus (160 B.C.) was the first of the Alexandrian school. It was his conviction that Greek philosophy was borrowed from the Old Testament, and that, by reading between the lines, all the tenets of the Greek philosophers (especially Aristotle) are to be found in Moses and the prophets." Gerald B. Stanton, *Kept From The Hour*, pp. 145-146

The Development of the Jewish Canon

The first written Jewish canon that we have extensive evidence of today was established by Ezra, the prophet, in the period 450-400 B.C. This is not the canon that we have today. Ezra's canon developed until A.D. 90 when, following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the disciples of Rabbi Johanan ben Zacchai established the canon that we know today as The Old Testament or TANAK. This development is outlined in the following topics:

Structure of the Jewish Canon

The Jewish Canon is a collection of books. It is not an authored document. The books can be arranged in different orders in different versions of the collection. For example, the standard or Rabbinic collection ends with I & II Chronicles. But, the Septuagint translation ends with Malachi. Christian Bibles follow the Septuagint and also end with Malachi. The ordering of the canon depends on subtle points of interpretation. The books of Rabbinic canon are arranged according to three broad classifications: The Torah (Law) God's plan for Creation expressed in commandments The Prophets The most significant guide to Torah interpretation The Writings The secondary guide to Torah interpretation. The Hebrew spellings of these classifications produce the acronym: TANAK which serves as the title of the entire collection for Jewish people.

What is the Law As Defined by Rabbinic Interpretation?

The Hebrew word Torah refers to three interrelated realities:

1. God's plan for Creation revealed to men through Moses at Sinai
2. The Five Books of Moses--Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy--which record the Plan for men to study
3. The individual laws to be studied and put into practice.

Central to each of these is the understanding that Israel is a people who have entered into a Covenant (Testament) or Contract with God at Sinai. To live according to the Contract, which is also God's Plan for Creation, is to be made holy for God commanded: "You shall be holy; for I Yahweh your God am holy" (Lev 19:2).

The Function of the Torah Historically

The Jewish Canon began as a legal canon used as Jewish law under Persian law. Ezra, a Persian lawyer, appealed to the king to allow Jerusalem to have its own Jewish law under the broad umbrella of Persian law. The petition was granted. Ezra then took a document from Babylon to Jerusalem which Nehemiah the prophet and governor of the city calls "The Book of The Law of Moses" (Neh 8:1)--a term still used by Luke in his gospel (Luk 24:44) when he refers to the Old Testament as "The Law of Moses, The Prophets, and The Psalms." Nehemiah describes the ceremony in which the new legal canon was presented to the people of Jerusalem (Neh 7:73, Neh 8:1-18).

Each head of a household was obligated now, under Persian law, to learn the Torah and to instruct the members of his household in it. This gave rise to the synagogue as a gathering of heads of household to study the Law and discuss its proper application to daily, household life.

Under the Persians, the Torah defined both religious and civic duty. The Law of Moses was now the law of the land as well. Religious practice and civic responsibility were now unified. Obedience to the civic law could never be taken lightly. Obedience to the city was a ritual through which one worshipped God. Religion and the city could not be in conflict. This arrangement survived the Persian Empire. The Greeks and then the Roman Empires ratified it in turn. Only in A.D. 66 was it finally revoked by the Romans when they invaded Palestine and destroyed the Second Temple. This was an epoch making event which forced Judaism to re-interpret its canon. From this event, Judaism the world religion was born.

The Earliest Principles of Torah Interpretation (Hermeneutics)

With Ezra's Law of Moses, there came the problem of legal interpretation or hermeneutics.

First, the Law was written in Hebrew and the people of Jerusalem in 450 B.C. only understood Aramaic, a dialect of Syriac, the international language of commerce. The problem of interpretation arose even as Ezra presented the book. We are told that Levites, temple officials, translated for the people as Ezra read (Neh 8:7). This began the practice of making very loose translations from Hebrew to Aramaic known as Targum, an ancient equivalent of Good News for Modern Man. Only the legal scholars could read the Law of Moses in the ancient Hebrew. The problem of translation existed from the very first moment when the Bible was presented to Israel as their Torah.

Second, the Law had to be applied in every household both to satisfy the Covenant with God and to satisfy the Persian Empire. It was the Law of the land. Translating laws from their ancient cultural settings into the cultural context of the Persian Empire was a difficult and demanding task giving rise to a new tradition of legal-religious discussion which eventually constituted an Oral Torah called simply The Tradition or the Sayings of the Fathers which some took to be a binding canon beyond the canon. You can see this process reflected clearly in the Gospels in the New Testament (See Mat 15:1-39, for example).

Jewish life was patriarchal from its origins, but the function of the Law as the law of the land strengthened this. Only heads of households, males, were responsible to the government--a practice you see reflected in modern tax forms. They were obligated to teach the law of the land to their household and to secure compliance. Consequently, as the synagogue developed, it was a gathering of 10 or more heads of households to discuss the proper interpretation and application of the Law.

Schools of legal interpretation developed around the Sages. The schools of Hillel and Shammai dominated the New Testament period. Each had its own hermeneutic. Hillel, the Elder (60 B.C.-A.D. 20) developed the principles by which the oral tradition was derived from the scripture and applied to daily life. Shammai opposed Hillel's new principles, considering himself a strict traditional. Following the fall of the Temple, the principles of Shammai were repudiated. The School of Hillel was to shape Judaism as a world religion. The nature of worship changed within Israel in response to two epoch making events: the Exile into Babylon (B.C. 587) and the

destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans (70 A.D.).

Under the Davidic Empire, worship centered on sacrifices made in the Temple atop Mt. Zion for the life of the kingdom. The Sadducee Party of the first century tended the Temple and was the guardian of Israel's national heritage.

After the establishment of the Torah as the canon for civil and religious law under Ezra (B.C. 400), the Temple services increasingly became secondary to the study and living of the Law as a form of worship. The Pharisee Party of the first century presided over the Synagogue. The power of this new religious practice becomes most obvious when the Second Temple is destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. It was never rebuilt. The holy life lived according to the Torah--God's Plan for Creation--has served as the heart of Jewish life from then until today.

The Maccabean Revolt -An Epoch Making Event

The Maccabean Revolt changed the Jewish view of life in the world. The Pharisee Party is born in this conflict as a movement of the "separated ones." Religious hope came to focus on the End of the World and the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Greek Empire sought to impose Greek culture on the world it conquered. The gymnasium was a temple where Zeus Hercules was worshipped through body culture. It functioned as a community cultural center and a school where one could study Greek literature and philosophy. The Greeks sought to build a gymnasium in every major city, including Jerusalem.

Greek scholars attempted to demonstrate that the gods and goddesses of local religion were merely forms of the Greek gods and goddesses. The idea was to establish a universal religion which would unify the Empire in a single worldview. This program was pursued most energetically by Antiochus IV who called himself "God manifest among men" or "Epiphanes." The special dispensation given to Jewish people which allowed the Law of Moses to function under the broad umbrella of Greek law had to be revoked if Greek culture was to be imposed successfully upon Palestine. Antiochus negotiated with savvy political leaders in Jerusalem for the construction of a gymnasium (1Ma 1:11-15). The "ordinances of the Gentiles" and "Gentile custom" replaced "the holy covenant." Soon the Temple was seized and dedicated to Zeus. A proclamation went out through Palestine holding up the Jews of Jerusalem as a model of good citizenship to be imitated (1Ma 1:41). The imposition of Greek culture was blocked by a priest who lived in the rural area, Mattathias. He refused to follow the model of Jerusalem and rallied all who were willing to die rather than to depart from "the religion of his fathers," the religious tradition (1Ma 2:19-20). These men and women refused to "desert the law and the ordinances" of the "covenant of our fathers." The Maccabean Revolt began (167 B.C.). It ended in an briefly independent Jewish state and the re-dedication of the Temple, Hanukkuh. Jewish people would be allowed to live under Jewish law as their civil law for another two centuries. In A.D. 66 the Romans would revoke the Torah as they invaded Palestine. The Maccabean Revolt succeeded because of those "zealous for the law" (1Ma 2:27) and the "covenant." These were known as the Hasideans--one's set apart by their life according to the law. Following the Revolt, they developed into the Pharisee Party and initiated a fruitful period of legal debate which prepared the way for Jewish religious survival following the Roman Invasion. In confrontation with the epoch making program of Antiochus IV, the Maccabean Revolt produced a new Jewish literary vision to supplement the vision of Moses on Sinai. It was Apocalyptic--the mystic revelation of what God planned for the End of the World. The book of

Daniel is the product of the Revolt, written in the period (167- 164). Daniel, like apocalyptic in general, envisions a succession of oppressive political regimes degenerating into a final crisis when God himself will come and bring the successor to David, the Messiah or Christ, to create the final kingdom of the world. For the next two centuries, the appeal of apocalyptic would grow. The Revolt proved temporary. It did not lead to a final kingdom.

People began to live in hope of a new and final revolution. The Hasidim provided a model. These saints had ignored worldly political realities, had trusted God and defended the Tradition. God had miraculously given them victory. If one would act like this and rebel against Rome, God would send a new miracle. This model produced a very volatile political climate in Palestine. The Romans were constantly having to suppress revolutionary fervor and action. Finally, they had enough. They invaded Palestine. Even this did not end the matter. A final Jewish revolt was staged under Simon bar Kochba (Kosebah) in 132-135 A.D. This resulted in the expulsion of Jews from Palestine. Jerusalem became a Roman city. Jewish people entered upon a worldwide exodus, living without a state until 1948 and the establishment of the modern state of Israel.

Rabbi Johanan ben Zacchai

Most Jews viewed the Roman invasion of 66 as the beginning of the final war. Zeal for the Law would once again bring victory and with it the Messiah. Hence, the people of Jerusalem were determined to die in defense of the city. For those who weakened, the Sicarri, a terrorist arm of the Zealot party, had a remedy: death. No one would defect to the Romans!

Johanan ben Zacchai did. He compromised with the Romans. He agreed to accept Roman political rule if Rome allowed him to preserve Jewish Tradition as a form of religious life. As a result, Jewish religion could be practiced even as Roman law was obeyed. Jewish religion was severed from Jewish political identity for the first time ever. This allowed Judaism to become a world religion. Johanan ben Zacchai founded Judaism by severing Jewish national identity from Jewish religious identity.

Ben Zacchai went to Jamnia, on the Syrian border, and began to rebuild a shattered religion. The temple had previously announced the times for religious observance. Ben Zacchai now made these announcements. He and his disciples traveled through Palestine and eventually to Jewish communities around the world rallying a defeated Jewish population. Jamnia and its rabbis became the new center for a revitalized Judaism, a new world religion.

Ben Zacchai ended his career as a rejected leader. Survivors of the siege of Jerusalem deeply resented his willingness to compromise. They ousted him as the leader of the council of Rabbis, and he ended his life as a wandering teacher. Till this day, Jewish historians largely ignore this man who is the founding father of modern rabbinical Judaism.

Rabbi Akiva ben Joseph (50 CE - 135 CE)

A poor, semi-literate shepherd, Akiva became one of Judaism's greatest scholars. He developed the exegetical method of the Mishnah, linking each traditional practice to a basis in the biblical text, and systematized the material that later became the Mishnah.

Rabbi Akiva was active in the Bar Kokhba rebellion against Rome, 132 - 135 CE. He believed that Bar Kokhba was the Moshiach (messiah), though some other rabbis openly ridiculed him for that

belief (the Talmud records another rabbi as saying, "Akiba, grass will grow in your cheeks and still the son of David will not have come.") When the Bar Kokhba rebellion failed, Rabbi Akiva was taken by the Roman authorities and tortured to death

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai

Rabbi Shimon, known as Rashbi, was a student of Rabbi Akiva. In addition to his Talmudic greatness he was also a great mystic and the author of the Holy Zohar. We celebrate his Yartzeit on Lag B'Omer.

Judah Ha-Nasi (Judah the Prince) (135-219 CE)

The Patriarch of the Jewish community, Judah Ha-Nasi was well-educated in Greek thought as well as Jewish thought. He organized and compiled the Mishnah, building upon Rabbi Akiva's work.

Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki) (1040 - 1105 CE)

A grape grower living in Northern France, Rashi wrote the definitive commentaries on the Babylonian Talmud and the Bible. Rashi pulled together materials from a wide variety of sources, wrote them down in the order of the Talmud and the Bible for easy reference, and wrote them in such clear, concise and plain language that it can be appreciated by beginners and experts alike. Almost every edition of the Talmud printed since the invention of the printing press has included the text of Rashi's commentary side-by-side with the Talmudic text. Many traditional Jews will not study the Bible without a Rashi commentary beside it.

Maimonides (Rambam; Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon) (1135-1204 CE)

A physician born in Moorish Cordoba, Maimonides lived in a variety of places throughout the Moorish lands of Spain, the Middle East and North Africa, often fleeing persecution. He was a leader of the Jewish community in Cairo.

Maimonides was the author of the Mishneh Torah, one of the greatest codes of Jewish law, compiling every conceivable topic of Jewish law in subject matter order and providing a simple statement of the prevailing view in plain language. In his own time, he was widely condemned because he claimed that the Mishneh Torah was a substitute for studying the Talmud.

Maimonides is also responsible for several important theological works. He developed the 13 Principles of Faith, the most widely accepted list of Jewish beliefs. He also wrote the Guide for the Perplexed, a discussion of difficult theological concepts written from the perspective of a philosopher.

Baal Shem Tov (the Besht, Yisrael ben Eliezer) (1698 - 1760 CE)

The founder of Chasidic Judaism. He wrote no books, perhaps because his teachings emphasized the fact that even a simple, uneducated peasant could approach G-d (a radical idea in its time, when Judaism emphasized that the way to approach G-d was through study). He emphasized prayer, the observance of commandments, and ecstatic, personal mystical experiences.

"Baal Shem Tov" means the "Master of a good name". Rabbi Israel gained a good name through his travels to encourage and awaken Jews, especially the simple people, to the service of G-d. The following are two important teachings of the Baal Shem Tov.

Divine Providence is a basic tenet of Judaism. The Baal Shem Tov taught that, not only the major events in the world, but every detail is governed by Divine Providence. Even a leaf that is carried by the wind from one place to the other, is determined by Divine Providence how many times it will turn over and exactly where it will land!

He also taught that the simple, honest and sincere person is just as valued to Hashem as the most learned and educated Rabbi. In fact, the Baal Shem Tov said that sometimes a simple person in his sincerity can accomplish more than the scholar.

Maggid of Mezritch (lit., "the preacher of Mezritch"): R. Dov Ber (d. 1772)

Disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, and mentor of the Alter Rebbe.

Rabbinic Interpretation

The crisis of the Roman invasion required a creative response, such as that of Johanan ben Zacchai. It also required a reconsideration of the canon. The Law of Moses was no longer a legal canon. Citizenship in Heaven was now divorced from citizenship on Earth. The Jews were once more a people of the Exodus. In their wandering with God, they would become a holy people, holy as their God is holy. The rabbis at Jamnia defined the present Jewish Canon (A.D. 90-92). New principles of interpretation had to be developed. The older principles for the interpretation of the Torah as civil law were now largely invalid. The cardinal principle of all rabbinic interpretation comes from the story of the Exodus. At Mount Sinai God appeared historically to all the people as a community and revealed all His plan for Creation, Torah, to Moses completely. This principle places personal experience in a secondary position and thus minimizes the importance of the prophetic experience which is a private, individual experience. The prophet receives unique, individual visions of revelation and conveys them to the people as God's messenger. The Rabbinic Principle confers the highest value on God's historical revelation made in the presence of the people of Israel. The community receives the revelation from God. This is how the community is formed and sustained. Interpretation is a matter of community consensus. The Bible now becomes an eternal text. Historical interpretation is largely abandoned. This was necessary. The text as a history refers to Israel as a political entity. The text must now be interpreted spiritually. Hence, the important stipulation of the Rabbinic Principle that God revealed everything to Moses on Mt. Sinai, at least by implication.

Practically speaking, this means that every text may be used, without regard for time, to help explain any other text.

It means that new interpretations are accepted only if they can be shown to have been implied in what God revealed to Moses at Sinai.

Since God hid himself from the people and Moses in a cloud, it is made clear that God himself cannot be known directly. His Glory is to be seen reflected by all Creation. Men stand as if they had their backs to God. They see the Light of the Divine Countenance reflected from the eyes of other men and from the other creatures made by God.

Since God cannot be known directly all knowledge of God relative and thus not wholly true. Man has no access to absolute Truth, which is God Himself. The Torah leads men to Wisdom. This reveals what can be known of God to men. All speech about God ultimately fails. There is no image of God which can be articulated. Hence, one tells stories. Story is about the events in history and their significance, and yet in story telling we admit that what we are telling is not an absolute Truth. Mystery is ultimately impenetrable. At the end of all understanding, man is called to obedience and commitment; hence, the Shema (Creed), " Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is One." The Rabbinic Principle clearly implied that God spoke the Torah and is thus the author of the Torah.

God spoke in Hebrew to Moses, therefore the Torah exists purely only in Hebrew. Any translation would be a human interpretation of what God had spoken. The Rabbis refused to accept the Greek language writings which were a part of the Septuagint translation as scripture. Only the Hebrew (Aramaic) books were retained. The Rabbinic Principle established the wilderness wandering with God as the key Jewish experience. Life is an Exodus. This new image guaranteed that Apocalyptic can never again lead the way. Private visions are made subservient to community experience of revelation. Only what God reveals in the presence of the community on an historical occasion, like Mt. Sinai, can be used as a canonical standard.

The Talmud

The Tank was closed as the canon, but events intervened and the canonical process continued. Following the expulsion of the Jews from Palestine in 135 A.D., it was imperative that the oral teaching be committed to writing or be lost. Rabbi Judah the Prince compiled this as the Mishnah, the teaching of the early sages. In 325--375 the teaching of the Rabbis of Palestine and of Babylon were committed to writing as the Jerusalem and the Babylonian Talmuds respectively. This later interpretation was called both Talmud and Gemarah. The principle is important. The Talmud is composed of the Torah and two levels of interpretation: the early sages or Mishnah and the later sages or Gemarah. The pattern of the TANK is carried over to the Talmud. The Talmud is the collection of Torah, Mishnah, and Gemrah into a single work of many volumes. It is, at least theoretically, a new and open-ended canon for Judaism. It functions as if it were a Jewish "new testament" in so far as its guidance takes practical precedence over the Prophets and the Writings. The Talmud serves to open a closed canon. The Torah is fixed at Sinai. Interpretation goes on until the end of time itself. Not even God knows all the valid interpretations yet.

The Septuagint Translation Of The TANK

During the period of the Greek Empire, Jews began to migrate to the urban centers of the world. As new generations grew up, they spoke the Greek of the Empire. (Remember: Jews in Palestine spoke a dialect of Syraic because it was the language of the larger culture. Only scholars spoke Hebrew.) There arose a great need for the Hebrew TANK to be accessible to this Greek speaking Jewish community.

Alexandria in Egypt--named for Alexander the Great--attracted a highly educated and influential Jewish community. This community produced the first translation of the TANK, the Septuagint. The Septuagint Greek translation spread throughout the Hellenistic (Greek) world, supplanting several rival Greek translations.

It is of great interest to scholars because:

1. It contains books later excluded from the canon by the Council of Jamnia 2. It is the basis for the traditional or Catholic Christian canon.

According to legend, The Septuagint or LXX was translated around 250 B.C. by a group of 72 Jewish translators who produced the translation in 72 days for Ptolemy II Philadelphus whose librarian requested a copy of the Jewish laws. Hence, the name Septuagint or LXX (the 70).

Canon Lists

The Jewish Canon list

Torah (Pentateuch) Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Prophets

Early Joshua, Judges, I-II Samuel, I-II Kings

Later Large or major sized books Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel Small or minor sized books Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obidiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Writings

Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Ester, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, I & II Chronicles

The Septuagint Canon List

Pentateuch - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I-II Regnorum (I-II Samuel) , III-IV Regnorum, (I-II Kings), I-II Paralipomenon (I-II Chronicles) I ESDRAS, II Esdras (Ezra-Nehemiah), Ester, JUDITH, TOBIT, I-IV MACCABEES, Psalms, ODES, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job, WISDOM OF SOLOMON, SIRACH (ECCLESIASTICUS), PSALMS OF SOLOMON, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obidiah, Jonah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, I BARUCH, Lamentations, EPISTLE OF JEREMIAH, Ezekiel, SUSANNA, Daniel, BELL AND THE DRAGON, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. The works in Capitals were excluded at Jamnia. They were also excluded by Protestants who follow the Jewish canon. Protestants call these works: Apocrypha and regard them as edifying but not scripture.

Through a decision of printers about cost, it has become customary not to print them in Protestant Bibles.

The Jewish interpreters were

Hillel (70 B.C. - 110 A.D.) (Chaff, vol. I, pp 160-162)

Hillel classified the 613 Mosaic laws into 'six orders' and "drew up the seven exegetic rules...which were the basis of all later developments of the Oral Law." His followers became allegorical in their interpretation.

Shammai (c.50 B.C – c.30 A.D.) (ha-Zekan, "the Elder")

“shammai interpreted every legal maxim with the extremist rigidity.” He abused the literal method. A Jewish proverb concerning Hillel and Shammai says “shammai bound and Hillel loosed.”

“shammai was responsible for much of the ritual and ceremony that Christ condemned.”

Shammai adopted a rigorous style of interpretation of Halakah that opposed the teachings of Hillel.

Shammai was one of the leading Jewish sages of Palestine in his time. With the sage Hillel, he was the last of the zugot ("pairs"), the scholars that headed the Great Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court and executive body.

Little is known about Shammai's life. He became av-bet-din ("presiding justice") of the Great Sanhedrin during the time that Hillel was nasi (president). Like Hillel, he was a member of the pharisees, a scholarly religious party with popular backing (as opposed to the Sadducees, a group of priestly aristocrats).

Shammai is best remembered for the school, Bet Shammai ("House of Shammai"), that he founded. His school, which advocated a strict, literal interpretation of Jewish law, competed with that of Hillel (Bet Hillel), which advocated more flexible interpretations. Shammai is cited in the Talmud and its commentaries in such a way as to emphasize his austere views. Bet Shammai opposed the Bet Hillel "principle of intention," which holds that the legal consequences of a man's act must be partly based on his intention. The two schools lasted until the second century AD. Bet Shammai encouraged the zealots, a Jewish sect that fought Roman rule. For a time, the strict interpretations of Bet Shammai found more favour within the Jewish community than did those of Bet Hillel. In AD 90, however, an assembly that met in Jabneh (an ancient biblical city near the site of the Israeli settlement of Yibna) ruled that the views of Bet Hillel were authoritative. A famous Jewish scribe who together with Hillel made up the last of "the pairs" (zúgóth), or, as they are sometimes erroneously named, "presidents and vice-presidents" of the Sanhedrin. The schools of Shammai and Hillel held rival sway, according to Talmudic tradition (Shabbath 15a), from about a hundred years before the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). Comparatively little is known about either of the great scribes. The Mishna, the only trustworthy authority in this matter, mentions Shammai in only eight passages (Maaser sheni, II, 4, 9; Orla, II, 5; Eduyoth I, 1-4, 10, II; Aboth, I, 12, 15, V, 17; Kelim, XXII, 4; Nidda, I, 1). He was the very opposite of Hillel in character and teaching. Stern and severe in living the law to the letter, he was strict to an extreme in legal interpretation. The tale tells that, on the feast of the Tabernacles, his daughter-in-law gave birth to a child; straightway Shammai had the roof broken through and the bed covered over with boughs, so that the child might celebrate the feast in an improvised sukka (tent or booth) and might not fail of keeping the law of Leviticus (xxiii, 42). The strictness of the master characterizes the school of Shammai as opposed to that of Hillel. The difference between the two schools had regard chiefly to the interpretation of the first, second, third and fifth parts of the "Mishna" i.e. to religious dues, the keeping of the Sabbath and of holy days, the laws in regard to marriage and purification. The law, for example, to prepare no food on the Sabbath had to be observed by not allowing even the beast to toil; hence it was argued that an egg laid on the Sabbath might not be eaten (Eduyoth, iv, 1). Another debate was whether, on a holy day, a ladder might be borne from one dove-cote to another or should only be glided from hole to hole. The need of fringes to a linen night-dress was likewise made a matter of difference between the two schools (Eduyoth, iv, 10). In these and many other discussions we find much straining out of gnats and swallowing of camels (Mat 23:24), much

pain taken to push the Mosaic law to an unbearable extreme, and no heed given to the practical reform which was really needed in Jewish morals. It was the method of the school of Shammai rather than that of Hillel which Christ condemned. On this account non-Catholic scholars generally make Him out to have belonged to the school of Hillel. This opinion has been shared in by a few Catholics (Gigot, "General Introduction to the Study of the Holy Scripture", New York, 1900, p. 422). Most Catholic exegetes, however, refuse to admit that Christ belonged to any of the fallible Jewish schools of interpretation. He established His own school to wit, the infallible teaching body to which He gave the Old Testament to have and to keep and to interpret to all nations without error.

Hillel & Shammai

These two great scholars born a generation or two before the beginning of the Common Era are usually discussed together, and contrasted with each other, because they were contemporaries and the leaders of two opposing schools of thought (known as "houses"). The Talmud records over 300 differences of opinion between Beit Hillel (the House of Hillel) and Beit Shammai (the House of Shammai). In every one of these disputes, Hillel's view prevailed.

Rabbi Hillel was born to a wealthy family in Babylonia, but came to Jerusalem without the financial support of his family and supported himself as a woodcutter. It is said that he lived in such great poverty that he was sometimes unable to pay the admission fee to study Torah, and because of him that fee was abolished. He was known for his kindness, his gentleness, and his concern for humanity. One of his most famous sayings, recorded in Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers, a tractate of the Mishnah), is "If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?"

Rabbi Shammai was an engineer. He was known for his more stringent nature and demanded high standards from himself and others. For example, the Talmud tells that a gentile came to Shammai saying that he would convert to Judaism if Shammai could teach him the whole Torah in the time that he could stand on one foot. Shammai drove him away with a builder's measuring stick. Hillel, on the other hand, converted the gentile by telling him, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary. Go and study it."

Philo (20 B.C.- 54 A.D.)

The best known of the Alexandrian Jewish allegorizers. A Jew living in Alexandria about the time of Christ, Philo, was attracted to the ancient Greek philosophers. In continuing to make the Old Testament and Greek philosophy harmonize, he used the Greek method of allegory. The Greeks used this method to harmonize their pagan religious heritage (Homer) with their philosophical tradition (Plato etc.). By rejecting the literal meaning of words, Philo could make Moses and Plato say the same things. He could thus "unite philosophy with revelation, and thus could use the borrowed jewels of Egypt to adorn the sanctuary of God." Farrar, pp.182-183 Allegorical exegesis is based on the concept that under a literal meaning of Scripture, one can find the true meaning. In terms of history, allegorism came about to end the conflict between Greek philosophy and religion, tradition and myth. Because so much of Greek religion and philosophy contained immoral thoughts and deeds, the stories that were not to be interpreted as literal, but allegorized, i.e. stories that had deeper meaning only to the initiated.

Philo believed that the literal meaning of Scripture represented the immature level of understanding.

Rules for allegorical method 1. Unworthy of God 2. Contradictory statements 3. Claims to be allegory 4. Superfluous words are used

5. Repetition 6. Varied expression 7. Synonyms used 8. Play on words 9. Abnormal number or verb tense

10. Symbols

Although we know that Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, the Bible indicates that many of them desired to return. By the fifth century B. C. there was a colony of Jews living at Elephantine in Egypt. Even though these Jews built a temple, it "has been argued by some scholars that the Jerusalem priests regarded the Jews in Egypt as semi-heretical, and therefore did not encourage them in their apostasy." (The Bible and Archaeology, by J. A. Thompson, 1962, page 226) In any case, we know that by the time of Jesus there was a large Jewish population in Egypt, which was at that time a Roman province. Jesus, himself, was brought to Egypt by his father and mother to escape the rage of Herod. On page 62 of his book, "Jesus The Magician", Morton Smith says that "There was a long standing legend that the god of the Jews was a donkey, or donkey-headed.... The Jews were among the largest groups of foreigners in Egypt, so their god, Iao, was identified with Seth."

F.F. Bruce says that "Philo of Alexandria estimated about A.D. 38 that there were at least a million Jews in Egypt and the neighboring territories. We may subject this figure to a substantial discount, but the Jewish population of Egypt was certainly very great. In Alexandria itself at that time one out of the five wards of the city was entirely Jewish and a second was very largely so." (New Testament History, 1980, page 136) Bruce felt that "Christianity had found its way to Alexandria by A.D. 41." (Ibid., p. 294)

Though about the time of Christ the name Jesus appears to have been fairly common (Jos., "Ant.", XV, ix, 2; XVII, xiii, 1; XX, ix, 1; "Bel. Jud.", III, ix, 7; IV, iii, 9; VI, v, 5; "Vit.", 22) it was imposed on our Lord by God's express order (Luke, i, 31; Matt., i, 21), to foreshow that the Child was destined to "save his people from their sins." Philo ("De Mutt. Nom.", 21) is therefore, right when he explains Iesous as meaning soteria kyrion; Eusebius (Dem., Ev., IV, ad fin.; P. G., XXII, 333) gives the meaning Theou soterion; while St. Cyril of Jerusalem interprets the word as equivalent to soter (Cat., x, 13; P.G., XXXIII, 677). This last writer, however, appears to agree with Clement of Alexandria in considering the word Iesous as of Greek origin (Paedag., III, xii; P. G., VIII, 677); St. Chrysostom emphasizes again the Hebrew derivation of the word and its meaning soter (Hom., ii, 2), thus agreeing with the exegesis of the angel speaking to St. Joseph (Matt., i, 21).

Ezra (Esdras)

Esdras is a famous priest and scribe connected with Israel's restoration after the Exile. The chief sources of information touching his life are the canonical books of Esdras and Nehemias. A group of apocryphal writings is also much concerned with him, but they can hardly be relied upon, as they relate rather the legendary tales of a later age. Esdras was of priestly descent and belonged to the line of Sardo (1Es 7:1-5). He styles himself "son of Saraias" (1Es 7:1), an expression which

is by many understood in a broad sense, as purporting that Saraias, the chief priest, spoken of in IV Kings, xxv, 18-21, was one of Esdras's ancestors. Nevertheless he is known rather as "the scribe" than as "priest": he was "a ready scribe [a scribe skilled] in the law of Moses", and therefore especially qualified for the task to which he was destined among his people. The chronological relation of Esdras's work with that of Nehemias is, among the questions connected with the history of the Jewish Restoration, one of the most mooted. Many Biblical scholars still cling to the view suggested by the traditional order of the sacred text (due allowance being made for the break in the narrative -- 1Es 4:6-23), and place the mission of Esdras before that of Nehemias. Others, among whom we may mention Professor Van Hoonacker of Louvain, Dr. T.K. Cheyne in England, and Professor C.F. Kent in America, to do away with the numberless difficulties arising from the interpretation of the main sources of this history, maintain that Nehemias's mission preceded that of Esdras. The former view holds that Esdras came to Jerusalem about 458 B.C., and Nehemias first in 444 and the second time about 430 B.C.; whereas, according to the opposite opinion, Esdras's mission might have taken place as late as 397 B.C. However this may be, since we are here only concerned with Esdras, we will limit ourselves to summarizing the principal features of his life and work, without regard to the problems involved, which it suffices to have mentioned.

Many years had elapsed after permission had been given to the Jews to return to Palestine; amidst difficulties and obstacles the restored community had settled down again in their ancient home and built a new temple; but their condition, both from the political and the religious point of view, was most precarious: they chafed under the oppression of the Persian satraps and had grown indifferent and unobservant of the Law. From Babylon, where this state of affairs was well known, Esdras longed to go to Jerusalem and use his authority as a priest and interpreter of the Law to restore things to a better condition. He was in favour at the court of the Persian king; he not only obtained permission to visit Judea, but a royal edict clothing him with ample authority to carry out his purpose, and ample support from the royal treasury. The rescript, moreover, ordered the satraps "beyond the river" to assist Esdras liberally and enacted that all Jewish temple officials should be exempt from toll, tribute, or custom. "And thou, Esdras, appoint judges and magistrates, that they may judge all the people, that is beyond the river" (Ezr 7:25). Finally, the Law of God and the law of the king were alike to be enforced by severe penalties. The edict left all Jews who felt so inclined free to go back to their own country. Some 1800 men, including a certain number of priests, Levites, and Nathinites, started with Esdras from Babylon, and after five months the company safely reached Jerusalem. Long-neglected abuses had taken root in the sacred city. These Esdras set himself vigorously to correct, after the silver and gold he had carried from Babylon were brought into the Temple and sacrifices offered. The first task which confronted him was that of dealing with mixed marriages.

Regardless of the Law of Moses, many, even the leading Jews and priests, had intermarried with the idolatrous inhabitants of the country. Horror-stricken by the discovery of this abuse -- the extent of which was very likely unknown heretofore to Esdras -- he gave utterance to his feelings in a prayer which made such an impression upon the people that Sechenias, in their names, proposed that the Israelites should put away their foreign wives and the children born of them. Esdras seized his opportunity, and exacted from the congregation an oath that they would comply with this proposition. A general assembly of the people was called by the princes and the ancients;

but the business could not be transacted easily at such a meeting and a special commission, with Esdras at its head, was appointed to take the matter in hand. For three full months this commission held its sessions; at the end of that time the "strange wives" were dismissed.

What was the outcome of this drastic measure we are not told; Esdras's memoirs are interrupted here. Nor do we know whether, his task accomplished, he returned to Babylon or remained in Jerusalem. At any rate we find him again in the latter city at the reading of the Law which took place after the rebuilding of the walls. No doubt this event had rekindled the enthusiasm of the people; and to comply with the popular demand, Esdras brought the Book of the Law. On the first day of the seventh month (Tishri), a great meeting was held "in the street that was before the watergate", for the purpose of reading the Law. Standing on a platform, Esdras read the book aloud "from the morning until midday". At hearing the words of the Law, which they had so much transgressed, the congregation broke forth into lamentations unsuited to the holiness of the day; Nehemias therefore adjourned the assembly. The reading was resumed on the next day by Esdras, and they found in the Law the directions concerning the feast of the Tabernacles. Thereupon steps were at once taken for the due celebration of this feast, which was to last seven days, from the fifteenth to the twenty-second day of Tishri. Esdras continued the public reading of the Law every day of the feast; and two days after its close a strict fast was held, and "they stood, and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers" (2Es 9:2). There was a good opportunity to renew solemnly the covenant between the people and God. This covenant pledged the community to the observance of the Law, the abstention from intermarriage with heathens, the careful keeping of the Sabbath and of the feasts, and to various regulations agreed to for the care of the Temple, its services, and the payment of the tithes. It was formally recited by the princes, the Levites, and the priests, and signed by Nehemias and chosen representatives of the priests, the Levites, and the people (strange as it may appear, Esdras's name is not to be found in the list of the subscribers -- 2Es 10:1-27). Henceforth no mention whatever is made of Esdras in the canonical literature. He is not spoken of in connection with the second mission of Nehemias to Jerusalem, and this has led many to suppose that he was dead at the time. In fact both the time and place of his death are unknown, although there is on the banks of the Tigris, near the place where this river joins the Euphrates, a monument purporting to be Esdras's tomb, and which, for centuries, has been a place of pilgrimage for the Jews.

Esdras's role in the restoration of the Jews after the exile left a lasting impression upon the minds of the people. This is due mostly to the fact that henceforth Jewish life was shaped on the lines laid down by him, and in a way from which, in the main, it never departed. There is probably a great deal of truth in the tradition which attributes to him the organization of the synagogues and the determination of the books hallowed as canonical among the Jews. Esdras's activity seems to have extended still further. He is credited by the Talmud with having compiled "his own book" (that is to say Esd.-Nehem.), "and the genealogies of the book of Chronicles as far as himself" (Treat. "Baba bathra", 15a). Modern scholars, however, differ widely as to the extent of his literary work: some regard him as the last editor of the Hexateuch, whereas, on the other hand, his part in the composition of Esdras-Nehemias and Paralipomenon is doubted. At any rate, it is certain that he had nothing to do with the composition of the so-called Third and Fourth books of Esdras. As is the case with many men who played an important part at momentous epochs in history, in the course of time Esdras's personality and activity assumed, in the minds of the people, gigantic proportions;

legend blended with history and supplied the scantiness of information concerning his life; he was looked upon as a second Moses to whom were attributed all institutions which could not possibly be ascribed to the former. According to Jewish traditions, he restored from memory -- an achievement little short of miraculous -- all the books of the Old Testament, which were believed to have perished during the Exile; he likewise replaced, in the copying of Holy Writ, the old Phoenician writing by the alphabet still in use. Until the Middle Ages, and even the Renaissance, the crop of legendary achievements attributed to him grew up; it was then that Esdras was hailed as the organizer of the famous Great Synagogue -- the very existence of which seems to be a myth -- and the inventor of the Hebrew vocal signs.

Aristobulus of Paneas (160 B.C.)

Jewish Hellenistic philosopher who, like his successor, Philo, attempted to fuse ideas in the Hebrew Scriptures with those in Greek thought.

Aristobulus lived at Alexandria in Egypt, under the Ptolemies. According to some Christian church fathers, he was a Peripatetic, but he also used Platonic and Pythagorean concepts. The Stoic technique of allegorizing the Greek myth served as a model for Aristobulus' writings, and for him the Old Testament God became an allegorical figure. In like manner, the Mosaic laws in the Scriptures were translated into allegorical symbols in his system. He believed that part of his mission in life was to prove that Greek culture was overshadowed and heavily influenced by Judaism.

He represents one of the first major figures in the tradition of Jewish Hellenistic exegetes. The fragments of Aristobulus delineate an apologetic, didactic work that sought to demonstrate to both conservative Jewish intellectuals and the Hellenised world the Greek dependence and derivation of Peripatetic philosophy on the Law. Written in the form of a dialogue, the work was originally addressed to king Ptolemy VI Philometer and has been dated from 175-170 BCE.

There are five existing fragments of the work of Aristobulus, which are preserved in the works of Clement, Anatolius, and Eusebius. The preface to a letter from Palestinian Jews to Egyptian Jews in 2Ma 1:10 is the earliest biblical reference to a Jewish figure named Aristobulus. The preface identifies him as a member of a priestly family, a teacher of Ptolemy (unspecified) the king, and links him to the Jews in Egypt. Although the Ptolemy to which the preface refers is unnamed, readers are expected to identify Philometer (181-145) from the context of the letter and the text of 2 Maccabees. The testimony of 2 Maccabees/ Clement/ Eusebius can be seen to represent one independent tradition. The account of Anatolius, bishop of Laodicea, represents a second independent tradition. Like his counterparts, Anatolius identifies Aristobulus as the eminent Jewish author of 'commentaries on the Law of Moses' which were dedicated to a king Ptolemy.

However, his testimony diverges from the first in the following ways:

Anatolius dates Aristobulus earlier than Philo and Josephus.

He links him with the translation of the LXX under the auspices of Ptolemy I Soter and Ptolemy II Philadelphus. By doing so he indicates that the work is dedicated to these kings rather than to Philometer, as both Clement and Eusebius claim.

Aristobulus is designated the role of LXX translator rather than Peripatetic philosopher.

Anatolius fails to mention his priestly status.

He fails to mention Aristobulus' allegorical approach to scripture, focusing instead on his astronomical observations relating to Passover.

The scholars Hody and Simon began a tradition of scepticism, beginning in the 17th century, which sought to disprove the authenticity of the work of Aristobulus. They claimed that the account of the origins of the LXX as presented by The Epistle of Aristeas was unreliable. The reliability of this assumption rested on the belief that an independent tradition had been previously cited by Aristobulus. Hody and his followers attempted to prove that Aristobulus was later than Aristeas and that his account only perpetuated the fantastic story of the LXX origins. Against this claim stands Walter, whose work represents the most decisive case for authenticity. He argues, among other points, that Aristobulus stands at the beginning of a long line of tradition of Jewish Alexandrian exegesis.

Cleodemus Malchus was a Hellenistic historian who flourished around the second century BCE. There exists only one fragment of his work, and it exists in two separate forms. This fragment is cited by Eusebius, who cites from Josephus, who in turn cites from Alexander Polyhistor. Cleodemus is given the title of prophet and is reported to have written a work on the history of the Jews. Scholarly debate has focused on the following:

- 1) Cleodemus' identity: what are the ethnic origins and meaning of his surname, Malchus?
- 2) The meaning of the appellation 'prophet.'
- 3) The blending of pagan mythological traditions with biblical traditions as reflected in the fragment. The text of Cleodemus consists of an elaboration on the genealogical description of Abraham's descendents. The work represents an attempt to link the history and people of Africa and Assyria to Abraham.

New Testament and Christian Views

Christ

"Christ has nowhere given a system of interpretation. However, the interpretative principles which He employed may be discovered from His teaching. A study of some of the actual interpretations which He made reveals the literal method which He used. He always interpreted the Scripture with an understanding of the whole, of particular books and of parts of books. His interpretation was always in accord with grammatical and historical meaning. He understood and appreciated the meaning intended by the writers according to the laws of grammar and rhetoric. The Savior never perverted, distorted or misused any portion of the Word as His followers have so often done." Lightner, *The Savior*, p.30 Mat 4:3-10; Mat 12:40; Mat 22:41-46; Mat 22:23-32; Luk 4:16-21, Mat 5:17-18; Luk 24:25-27, Luk 24:44-47; Joh 5:30-47 Authoritative, accurate, we will answer to it.

Christ expected those who read the Scriptures to understand it.

Apostles

They too used a literal method of interpretation Act 2:25-31, Act 24:14 - Paul's statement, Rom 11:26-27, Gal 3:16

Post-Apostolic Fathers (Early & Late Church Fathers)

100-200 A.D.

Allegory was already coming in.

“...so the Apostolic Fathers...were driven to it in order to make the Old Testament an immediate witness for Christian truth.” Farrar, p.167

Song of Solomon

200-450 A.D.

Several schools of thought arose:

Alexandrian School

Clement was the first teacher of importance. He taught that the literal sense is the milk of the word but the allegorical is the strong meat. He taught Origen who is the most famous teacher from this school. This school followed the method of Philo.

Origen “appealed to the subjective impression effected by the Bible.”

“The Bible, he argued, is meant for the salvation of man, but man, as Plato tells us, consists of three parts - body, soul, and spirit. Scripture therefore must have a three-fold sense of corresponding to this trichotomy. It has a literal, a moral, and a mystic meaning...” Farrar, p. 196
The last method is allegory and was widely used.

Antiochian School

This was not actually a school as such but a school of thought. Those associated with it taught a literal, grammatical, historical method instead of the allegorical method. Some distinguished between normal literal and figurative literal.

Lucian, Diodorus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and John Chrysostom were some of those who used this method. Sadly, the church rejected the method of Antioch and by using the allegorical method led the world into the Dark Ages.

Western School

It emphasized the authority of tradition.

Constantine (306-337 a.d.)

When Constantine became emperor of the Roman Empire he changed the attitude of the Roman government concerning religion, allowing a tolerance of various religions, and personally favoring Christianity. Christianity became the preferred religion. While a segment of Christians rejected such an arrangement with the state, the majority view of “orthodox” Christianity saw this rise to favor as a great triumph. There was one serious problem; where in prophecy is such a state-church victory foretold? The Alexandrian school had long practiced the solution - the allegorical method of interpretation. By literal interpretation only Israel of the future had any such promises. Coupling allegorical interpretation with the anti Semitism that characterized much of

Christianity, the answer was found. Augustine (4th -5th century) championed this answer by teaching that the church was The Kingdom of God on earth and Physical Israel had been replaced by spiritual Israel, the church.

Jerome's canon of interpretation was applied- "what things the Jews, and our people, yea, not our people, Judaizing carnally (literal interpretation) maintain as events still future, let us (orthodox) teach, spiritually, as already past." Many in Christianity today 'still play the Alexandrian music, with the 4th century accompaniment." (Nathaniel West) Under Constantine's son Constantius, "hosts now came over to Christianity, though, of course, for the most part with the lips only, not with the heart." (Schaff) The twin heresies of amillennialism and post-millennialism accounted for the Christian state. One emphasizing The Church and the millennium - "Ahhmillennialism" while the other emphasized the return of Christ and the millennium, post-millennialism-Christ will return to the earth after the Christian state has "Christianized" the times of the Gentiles.

It is only to be expected that since The Kingdom of God was present on earth and physical Israel had been replaced by The Church, a king was needed now for The Kingdom. This king was found in the Vicar of Christ - the pope in the sixth century. The Christian state is a misconception. The Kingdom of Dan 2:1-49 will continue until the "Cloud-Comer" returns, the "Rock Hammer" who crushes Gentile rule and sets up His Kingdom as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. Amen!

Hos 3:4-5; Eze 21:26-27; Dan 2:44-45, Dan 7:13-14, Dan 7:27; Zec 14:1-9; Mat 25:31-34; Luk 19:11-13; Rom 1:25-29; 1Ti 4:1; Rev 19:11, Rev 20:6

Famous Fathers

The course of theology throughout church history has been guided by the often unseen hand of hermeneutics. The Church Fathers are used to support or oppose various doctrinal issues. Like it or not, Protestantism has been and still is greatly influenced by tradition and the 'succession of theologians". The Reformers and certain Church Fathers are often relied upon far too much to be consistent with our claim, "the Bible is our only rule of faith and practice." No Reformers or Fathers had a corner on the truth and a Christianity that backtracks to these men to get the final word on faith or practice will be to varying degrees misled. The Fathers and the Reformers were men of their times and were all guilty of twisting Scripture to fit their times. The hermeneutics they used determined their theology.

Origen (158-ca253)

He was "strictly asectic".

Schaff says of him:

"His mode of life durin the whole period was strictly ascetic. He made it a mater of principle to renounce every earthly thing not indispensably necessary. He refused the gifts of his pupils, and in literal obedience to the Saviour's injunction he had but one coat, no shoes and took no thought of the morrow. He rarely ate flesh, never drank wine, devoted the greater part of the night to prayer and study, and slept on the bare floor. Nay, in his youthful zeal for ascetic holiness, he even committed the act of self-emasculation partly to fulfill literally the words of Christ, in Mat 19:12, for the sake of the kingdom of God, partly to secure himself agagainstll temptation and calumny which

might arise from his contacts with many female catechumens.”

He became the head of the Alexandrian School at age 18.

“His knowledge embraced all departments of the philology, philosophy, and theology of his day. With this he united profound and fertile thought, keen penetration, and glowing imagination. As a true divine, he consecrated all his studies by prayer, and turned them, according to his best convictions, to the service of truth and piety.”

“His leaning to idealism, his bias for Plato, and his noble effort to reconcile Christianity with reason, and to commend it even to educated heathens and Gnostic, led him into many grand and fascinating errors. Among these are his extremely ascetic and almost docetistic conception of corporeity, his denial of a material resurrection, his doctrine of the pre-existence and the pre-temporal fall of souls (including the pre-existence of the human soul of Christ), of the eternal creation, of the extension of the work of redemption to the inhabitants of the stars and to all rational creatures, and the final restoration of all men and fallen angels. Also in regard to the dogma of the divinity of Christ, though he powerfully supported it, and was the first to teach expressly the eternal generation of the Son, yet he may be almost as justly considered a forerunner of the Arian heteroousion, or at least of the semi-Arian homoiousion, as of the Athanasian homoousion.”

“Origen remained the exegetical oracle until Chrysostom far surpassed him, not indeed in originality and vigor of mind and extent of learning, but in sound, sober tact, in simple, natural analysis, and in practical application of the text. His great defect is the neglect of the grammatical and historical sense and his constant desire to find a hidden mystic meaning. He even goes further in this direction than the Gnostic, who everywhere saw transcendental, unfathomable mysteries. His hermeneutical principle assumes a threefold sense - somatic, psychic, and pneumatic; or literal, moral, and spiritual. His allegorical interpretation is ingenious, but often runs far away from the text and degenerates into the merest caprice; while at times it gives way to the opposite extreme of a carnal literalism, by which he justifies his ascetic extravagance.” A false method of hermeneutics produced amillennialism and postmillennialism as well as Arianism (generation of son - Schaff, vol.III).

Ambrose (340-397)

He was a very Godly man and defender of the faith. He was Bishop of Milan and greatly admired. Only Jerome and Augustine equalled or surpassed him. “In exegesis he adopts the allegorical method entirely, and yields little substantial information.” Schaff, Vol.III, p.965 He was a strong advocate for celibacy and monastic piety and was the “teacher and forerunner of Augustine.” Of Ambrose, Nanthaniel West said:

“Ambrose of Milan, a good, great bold, and eloquent, and who moulded Augustine’s view, and cherished the spirit that formed the new canon of interpretation, was a zealot against the Jews, encouraging the conflagration of their synagogues, and rebuking Theodosius for insisting on restitution by the incendiaries.”

“He wrote to the Emperor, saying: ‘I declare that I would burn a Synagogue myself, lest a place should exist where Christ was denied,’ and avowed that he would have ‘set fire’ to the Synagogue

at Milan, if God had not already applied the torch with His own hand!"

"In the heat of such hatred, the Church-Teachers of the 4th century, zealous for Christ, and believing the Millennial Age was born, and the Devil was bound, rejected the Chiliasm of the Aniti-Nicene fathers and the first apologists of Christianity, and formulating the new canon concerning 'Israel,' applied to themselves the Old Testament prophecies, and voted Israel nationally dead forever! It was the doctrine of the Middle-Age, and is Rome's doctrine to-day. The Church is the 'Kingdom,' and the 'Church' is 'Israel.' In such times as these, Post-Millennialism came to the throne. The temporal splendor of the Church was the climate of the 'First Resurrection,' and the dining hall of Constantine yet unbaptized, was deemed by Eusebius possible to be the fulfilment of John's Apocalypse concerning the 'Holy Oblation!'"

"The 1000 years had come! The Dry Bones in the Valley had stood up, an exceeding great Christian army, the adult population of the Roman Empire! A 'feast of fat things' smoked on the Emperor's table, and Christian Bishops and Post-Nicene Fathers were experts to tell what was meant 'by wines on the lees well refined!' It was a part of pre-Advent Millennialism! All the Apocalypses of both Testaments clearly foreshadowed, as Eusebius said, 'The Splendor of our Affairs!'"

West, The Thousand Years in both Testaments. P 421-423

Jerome (340-419)

Schaff says of him:

"Jerome had the natural talent and the acquired knowledge, to make him the father of grammatico-historical interpretation, upon which all sound study of the Scriptures must proceed. He very rightly felt that the expositor must not put his own fancies into the Word of God, but draw out the meaning of that word, and he sometimes finds fault with Origen and the allegorical method for roaming in the wide fields of imagination, and giving out the writer's own thought and fancy for the hidden wisdom of the Scriptures and the church. In this healthful exegetical spirit he excelled all the fathers, except Chrysostom and Theodoret. In the Latin church no others, except the heretical Pelagius (whose short exposition of the Epistles of Paul is incorporated in the works of Jerome), and the unknown Ambrosiaster (whose commentary has found its way among the works of Ambrose), thought like him. But he was far from being consistent; he committed the very fault he censures in Eusebius, who in the superscription of his Commentary on Isaiah promised a historical exposition, but, forgetting the promise, fell into the fashion of Origen. He could not resist the impulse to indulge, after giving the historical sense, in fantastic allegorizing, or, as he expresses himself, "to spread the sails of spiritual understanding"."

"He distinguishes in most cases a double sense of the Scriptures: the literal and the spiritual, or the historical and the allegorical; sometimes, with Origen and the Alexandrians, a triple sense: the historical, the topological (moral), and the pneumatical (mystical)."

"The word of God does unquestionably carry in its letter a living and life-giving spirit, and is capable of endless application to all times and circumstances; and here lies the truth in the allegorical method of the ancient church. But the spiritual sense must be derived with tender conscientiousness and self-command from the natural, literal meaning, not brought from without,

as another sense besides, or above, or against the literal.”

“Jerome goes sometimes as far as Origen in the unscrupulous twisting of the letter and the history, and adopts his mischievous principle of entirely rejecting the literal sense whenever it may seem ludicrous or unworthy. For instance: By the Shunamite damsel, the concubine of the aged King David, he understands (Imitating Origen’s allegorical obliteration of the double crime against Uriah and Bathsheba) the ever-virgin Wisdom of God, so extolled by Solomon; and the earnest controversy between Paul and Peter he alters into a sham fight for the instruction of the Antiochian Christians who were present; thus making out of it a deceitful accommodation, over which Augustine (who took just offence at such patrocinium mendacii) drew him into an epistolary controversy characteristic of the two men.”

“In the exposition of the Prophets, Jerome sees too many allusions to the heretics of his time (as Luther everywhere allusions to the Papists, fanatics, and sectarians); and, on the other hand, with the zeal he inherited from Origen against all chiliasm, he finds far too little reference to the end of all things in the second coming of our Lord. He limits, for example, even the eschatological discourse of Christ in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and Paul’s prophecy of the man of sin in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, to the destruction of Jerusalem.”

West says of Jerome:

“Jerome’s canon of interpretation, - ‘what things the Jews, and our people, - yea, not our people, - Judaizing carnally, maintain, as such events still further, let us (orthodox) teach, spiritually, as already past,’— has been remanded to the age that gave it birth, save by some who still play the Alexandrian music, with the 4th century accompaniment, telling us that we are living in the millennium ‘now,’ when the Devil is bound, and war is no more!”

“With the change of the Church’s condition came a change of interpretation” it was a total revelation and signal departure of the whole church, from the early faith as to prophecy, led by men who partook of the ‘spirit of the age,’ fixing the canon of interpretation for Israel in Old Testament prediction, and in Apocalypse of John. No sooner was the martyr-flame extinguished by the first imperial law of toleration, and the Church protected by the State, than laws most cruel were enacted against Pagans, Heretics and Jews. By the Church, which assumed to ‘take Israel’s place in the kingdom of God,’ the Jews were consigned to an irreversible curse; ostracised, hated, persecuted, their synagogues burned to the ground.” West, The Thousand Years in both Testaments. P 420-421

John Chrysostom (347-407)

Schaff says of him:

“John, to whom an admiring posterity since the seventh century has given the name CHRYSOSTOMUS, THE GOLDEN MOUTHED, is the greatest expositor and preacher of the Greek church, and still enjoys the highest honor in the whole Christian world. No one of the Oriental fathers has left a more spotless reputation; no one is so much read and so often quoted by modern commentators.”

“...he belonged to the same Antiochian school with his teacher Diodorus of Tarsus, his fellow-student Theodore of Mopsuestia, and his successor Nestorius. From this school, whose

doctrinal development was not then complete, he derived a taste for the simple, sober, grammatico-historical interpretation, in opposition to the arbitrary allegorizing of the Alexandrians, while he remained entirely free from the rationalizing tendency which that school soon afterwards discovered. He is thus the soundest and worthiest representative of the antiochian theology.”

“Valuable as the contributions of Chrysostom to didactic theology may be, his chief importance and merit lie not in this department, but in homiletical exegesis, pulpit eloquence, and pastoral care. Here he is unsurpassed among the ancient fathers, whether Greek or Latin.”

“In the pulpit Chrysostom was a monarch of unlimited power over his hearers. His sermons were frequently interrupted by noisy theatrical demonstrations of applause, which he indignantly rebuked as unworthy of the house of God.”

“He took up whole books and explained them in order, instead of confining himself to particular texts, as was the custom after the introduction of the periscopes. His language is noble, solemn, vigorous, fiery, and often overpowering. Yet he was by no means wholly free from the untruthful exaggerations and artificial antitheses, which were regarded at that time as the greatest ornament and highest triumph of eloquence, but which appear to a healthy and cultivated taste as defects and degeneracies.”

Augustine (354-430)

Augustine is without question the most influential man in church history. Schaff’s estimation of him is not uncommon. “As a theologian he is facile princeps, at least surpassed by no church father, scholastic, or reformer.” p. 997, Vol III.

Luther and Calvin were both indebted to Augustinian theology. The following extensive quotations give us understanding of the man and his methods of interpretation.

Schaff, Vol. 3. pp.1001-1002, 1020-1021,1022,1024-102

“But his knowledge of Greek literature was mostly derived from Latin translations. With the Greek language, as he himself frankly and modestly confesses, he had, in comparison with Jerome, but a superficial acquaintance. Hebrew he did not understand at all. Hence, with all his extraordinary familiarity with the Latin Bible, he made many mistakes in exposition. He was rather a thinker than a scholar, and depended mainly on his own resources which were always abundant.

“In the doctrine of baptism he is entirely Catholic, though in logical contradiction with his dogma of predestination; but in the doctrine of the holy communion he stands, like his predecessors, Tertullian and Cyprian, nearer to the Calvinistic theory of a spiritual presence and fruition of Christ’s body and blood. He also contributed to promote, at least in his later writings, the Catholic faith of miracles, and the worship of Mary; though he exempts the Virgin only from actual sin, not from original, and, with all his reverence for her, never calls her mother of God.”

“At first an advocate of religious liberty and of purely spiritual methods of opposing error, he afterwards asserted the fatal principle of the *cogere intrare*, and lent the great weight of his authority to the system of civil persecution, at the bloody fruits of which in the middle ages he himself would have shuddered.”

“Thus even truly great and good men have unintentionally, through mistaken zeal, become the authors of much mischief.” The Reformers were led by his writings into a deeper understanding of Paul, and so prepared for their great vocation. No church teacher did so much to mould Luther and Calvin; none furnished them so powerful weapons against the dominant Pelagianism and formalism, none is so often quoted by them with esteem and love.”

“Luther says of him, ‘Augustine often erred; he cannot be trusted. Though he is good and holy, yet he, as well as other fathers, was wanting in the true faith.’”

“The doctrine of universal baptismal regeneration, in particular, which presupposes a universal call (at least within the church), can on principles of logic hardly be united with the doctrine of an absolute predestination, which limits the decree of redemption to a portion of the baptized. Augustine supposes, on the one hand, that every baptized person, through the inward operation of the Holy Ghost, which accompanies the outward act of the sacrament, receives the forgiveness of sins, and is translated from the state of nature into the state of grace, and thus, qua baptizatus, is also a child of God and an heir of eternal life....”

“Augustine assumes that many are actually born into the kingdom of grace only to perish again; Calvin holds that in the case of the non-elect baptism is an unmeaning ceremony, the one putting the delusion in the inward effect, the other in the outward form.”

Augustine’s most famous works are his “Confessions”, “The City of God”, and “On Christian Doctrine”.

Confessions, pp. 34-36

“For first, these things also had now begun to appear to me capable of defense; and the Catholic faith, for which I had thought nothing could be said against the Manichees’ objections, I now thought might be maintained without shamelessness; especially after I had heard one or two places of the Old Testament resolved, and oft-times ‘in a figure’, which when I understood literally, I was ‘slain’ spiritually. Very many places then of those books having been explained, I now blamed my despair in believing that no answer could be given to such as hated and scoffed at the Law and the Prophets.”

“I joyed also that the old Scriptures of the Law and the Prophets were laid before me, not now to be perused with that eye to which before they seemed absurd, when I reviled Thy holy ones for so thinking, whereas indeed they thought not so: and with joy I heard Ambrose in his sermons to the people oftentimes most diligently recommend this text for a rule, “The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life”, whilst he drew aside the mystic veil, laying open spiritually what according to the ‘letter’ seemed to teach something unsound; teaching herein nothing that offended me, though he taught what I knew not as yet whether it were true.” (cf. 2Co 3:6) His Conversion pp. 60-61

“so was I speaking, and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo! I heard from a neighboring house a voice, as of a boy or girl, I know not, chanting, and oft repeating, ‘Take up and read, take up and read.’ Instantly, my countenance altered, I began to think most intently whether children were wont in any kind of play to sing such words; nor could I remember ever to have heard the like... Eagerly I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there had I laid the volume of the Apostle, when I arose thence. I seized, opened, and in silence read that section,

on which my eyes first fell: 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh', in concupiscence. No further would I read; nor needed I: for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away." (cf. Rom 13:14)

"For thou covertest me unto Thyself, so that I sought neither wife, nor any hope of this world, standing in that rule of faith where Thou hadst shewed me unto her in a vision, so many years before. And Thou didst convert her mourning into joy, much more plentiful than she had desired, and in a much more precious and purer way than she erst required, by having grandchildren of my body."

Visions p.65

"Then didst Thou by a vision discover to Thy forenamed Bishop where the bodies of Gervasius and Protasius the martyrs lay hid (whom Thou hadst in Thy secret treasury stored uncorrupted so many years), whence Thou mightest seasonably produce them to repress the fury of a woman, but an Empress. For when they were discovered and dug up, and with due honour translated to the Ambrosian Basilica, not only they who were vexed with unclean spirits (the devils confessing themselves) were cured, but a certain man who had for many years been blind, a citizen and well known to the city, asking and hearing the reason of the people's confused joy, sprang forth, desiring his guide to lead him thither. Led thither, he begged to be allowed to touch with his handkerchief the bier of Thy saints, whose death is precious in Thy sight."

Mass for his mother p. 71

"These things she enjoined us not; but desired only to have her name commemorated at Thy Altar, which she had served without intermission for one day; whence she knew that holy sacrifice to be dispensed by which the hand-writing that was against us is blotted out; through which the enemy was triumphed over, who, summing up our offenses and seeking what to lay to our charge, found nothing in Him in Whom we conquer. Who shall restore to Him the innocent blood? Who repay Him the price wherewith He bought us, and so take us from Him? Unto the Sacrament of which our ransom, Thy handmaid bound her soul by the bond of faith. Let none sever her from Thy protection; let neither the 'lion' nor the 'dragon' interpose himself by force or fraud. For she will not answer that she owes nothing, lest she be convicted and seized by the crafty accuser; but she will answer that her 'sins are forgiven' her by Him, to Whom none can repay that price, which He Who owed nothing paid for us."

Books 11-13 of the Confessions are based on Gen 1:1-31. His exposition is almost all allegory.

"If therefore we conceive of the natures of the things themselves, not allegorically, but properly, then does the phrase 'increase and multiply' agree unto all things that come of seed. But if we treat of the words as figuratively spoken (which I rather suppose to be the purpose of Scripture, which doth not, surely, superfluously ascribe this benediction to the offspring of aquatic animals and man only), then do we find 'multitude' to belong to creatures spiritual as well as corporeal, as in heaven and earth, and to souls both righteous and unrighteous, as in light and darkness; and to holy authors who have been the ministers of the Law unto us, as in the firmament which is settled betwixt the waters and the waters; and to the society of people yet in the bitterness of infidelity, as

in the sea; and to the zeal of holy souls, as in the dry land; and to works of mercy belonging to this present life, as in the herbs bearing seed, and in trees bearing fruit; and to spiritual gifts set forth for edification, as in the lights of heaven, and to affections formed into temperance, as in the living soul. In all these instances we meet with multitudes, abundance, and increase; but what shall in such wise 'increase and multiply' that one thing may be expressed many ways, and one expression understood many ways, we find not, except in signs corporeally expressed, and things mentally conceived. By signs corporeally pronounced we understand the generations of the waters, necessarily occasioned by the depth of the flesh; by things mentally conceived, human generations, on account of the fruitfulness of reason. And for this end do we believe Thee, Lord, to have said to these kinds, "Increase and multiply." For in this blessing I conceive Thee to have granted us a power and a faculty, both to express several ways what we understand but one, and to understand several ways what we read to be obscurely delivered but in one. Thus are the waters of the sea replenished, which are not moved but by several significations; thus with human increase is the earth also replenished, whose dryness appeareth in its longing, and reason ruleth over it." On Christian Doctrine, note these statements:

"There are two things on which all interpretation of Scripture depends; the mode of ascertaining the proper meaning and the mode of making known the meaning when it is ascertained."

"For if he takes up rashly a meaning which the author whom he is reading did not intend, he often falls in with other statements which he cannot harmonize with this meaning. And if he admits that these statements are true and certain, then it follows that the meaning he had put upon the former passage cannot be the true one: and so it comes to pass, one can hardly tell how, that, out of love for his own opinion, he begins to feel more angry with Scripture than he is with himself. And if he should once permit that evil to creep in, it will utterly destroy him. 'For we walk by faith, not by sight.' Now faith will totter if the authority of Scripture begins to shake. And then, if faith totter, love itself will grow cold."

Song of Solomon 4:2

"...how is it, I say that if a man says this, he does not please his hearer so much as when he draws the same meaning from the passage in Canticles, where it is said of the Church, when it is being praised under the figure of a beautiful woman, "Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are shorn, which came up from the washing, whereof every one bears twins, and none is barren among them"? Does the hearer learn anything more than when he listens to the same thought expressed in the plainest language, without the help of this figure? And yet, I don't know why, I feel greater pleasure in contemplating holy men, when I view them as the teeth of the Church, tearing men away from their errors, and bringing them into the Church's body, with all their harshness softened down, just as if they had been torn off and masticated by the teeth. It is with the greatest pleasure too, that I recognize them under the figure of sheep that have been shorn, laying down the burdens of the world like fleeces, and coming up from the washing, i.e., from baptism, and all bearing twins, i.e., the twin commandments of love, and none among them barren in that holy fruit."

"Ignorance of numbers, too, prevents us from understanding things that are set down in Scripture in a figurative and mystical way. A candid mind, if I may so speak, cannot be anxious, for example, to ascertain what is meant by the fact that Moses and Elijah, and our Lord Himself, all fasted for

forty days. And except by knowledge of and reflection upon the number, the difficulty of explaining the figure involved in this action cannot be got over. For the number contains ten four times, indicating the knowledge of all things, and that knowledge interwoven with time. For both the diurnal and the annual revolutions are accomplished in periods numbering four each; the diurnal in the hours of the morning, the noontide, the evening, and the night; the annual in the spring, summer, autumn, and winter months. Now while we live in time, for the sake of that eternity in which we wish to live; although by the passage of time we are taught this very lesson of despising time and seeking eternity. Further, the number ten signifies the knowledge of the Creator and the creature, for there is a trinity in the Creator; and the number seven indicates the creature, because of the life and the body. For the life consists of three parts, whence also God is to be loved with the whole heart, the whole soul, and the whole mind; and it is very clear that in the body there are four elements of which it is made up. In this number ten, therefore, when it is placed before us in connexion with time, that is, when it is taken four times, we are admonished to live unstained by, and not partaking of, any delight in time, that is, to fast for forty days. Of this we are admonished by the law personified in Moses, by prophecy personified in Elijah, and by our Lord Himself, Who, as if receiving the witness both of the law and the prophets, appeared on the mount between the other two, while His three disciples looked on in amazement. Next, we have to inquire in the same way, how out of the number forty springs the number fifty, which in our religion has no ordinary sacredness attached to it on account of the Pentecost, and who this number taken thrice on account of the three divisions of time, before the law, under the law, and under grace, or perhaps on account of the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the Trinity itself being added over and above, has reference to the mystery of the most Holy Church, and reaches to the number of the one hundred and fifty-three fishes which were taken after the resurrection of our Lord, when the nets were cast out on the right hand side of the boat. And in the same way many other numbers and combinations of numbers are used in the sacred writings, to convey instruction under a figurative guise, and ignorance of numbers often shuts out the reader from this instruction.”

“Not a few things, too, are closed against us and obscured by ignorance of music. One man, for example, has not skillfully explained some metaphors from the difference between the psaltery and the harp. And it is a question which is not out of place for learned men to discuss, whether there is any musical law that compels the psaltery of ten chords to have just so many strings; or whether, if there be no such law, the number itself is not on that very account the more to be considered as of sacred significance, either with reference to the ten commandments of the law (and if again any question is raised about that number, we can only refer it to the Creator and the creature), or with reference to the number ten itself as interpreted above. And the number of years the temple was in building, which is mentioned in the Gospel - viz., forty-six - has a certain undefinable musical sound, and when referred to the structure of our Lord’s body, in relation to which the temple was mentioned, compels many heretics to confess that our Lord put on, not a false, but a true and human body. And in several places in the Holy Scriptures we find both numbers and music mentioned with honor.”

“It is a wretched slavery which takes the figurative expressions of Scripture in a literal sense.

“ But the ambiguities of metaphorical words, about which I am next to speak, demand no ordinary care and diligence. In the first place, we must be aware of taking a figurative expression literally.

For the saying of the apostle applies in this case too: 'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.' For when what is said figuratively is taken as if it were said literally, it is understood in a carnal manner. And nothing is more fittingly called the death of the soul than when that in it which raises it above the brutes, the intelligence, namely, is put in subjection to the flesh by a blind adherence to the letter. For he who follows the letter takes figurative words as if they were proper, and does not carry out what is indicated by a proper word into its secondary signification; but, if he hears of the Sabbath, for example, thinks of nothing but the one day out of seven which recurs in constant succession; and when he hears of a sacrifice, does not carry his thoughts beyond the customary offerings of victims from the flock, and of the fruits of the earth. Now it is surely a miserable slavery of the soul to take signs for things, and to be unable to lift the eye of the mind above what is corporeal and created, that it may drink in eternal light."

"Whatever there is in the Word of God that cannot, when taken literally, be referred either to purity of life or soundness of doctrine, you may see down as figurative."

"Rule regarding passages of Scripture in which approval is expressed of actions which are now condemned by good men."

"Therefore, although all, or nearly all, the transactions recorded in the Old Testament are to be taken not literally only, but figuratively as well, nevertheless even in the case of those which the reader has taken literally, and which, though the authors of them are praised, are repugnant to the habits of the good men who since our lord's advent are the custodians of the divine commands, let him refer the figure to its interpretation, but let him not transfer the act to his habits of life. For many things which were done as duties at that time cannot now be done except through lust."

"One passage susceptible of various interpretations."

"When, again, not some one interpretation, but two or more interpretations are put upon the same words of Scripture, even though the meaning of the writer intended remain undiscovered, there is no danger if it can be shown from other passages of Scripture that any of the interpretations put on the words is in harmony with the truth. And if a man in searching the Scriptures endeavors to get at the intention of the author through whom the Holy Spirit spake, whether he succeeds in this endeavor, or whether he draws a different meaning from the words, but one that is not opposed to sound doctrine, he is free from blame so long as he is supported by the testimony of some other passage of Scripture. For the author perhaps saw that this very meaning lay in the words which we are trying to interpret; and assuredly the Holy Spirit who through him spake these words, foresaw that this interpretation would occur to him, seeing that it too is founded on truth. For what more liberal and more fruitful provision could God have made in regard to the Sacred Scriptures than that the same words might be understood in several senses, all of which are sanctioned by the concurring testimony of other passages equally divine?"

"That spiritual Israel, therefore, is distinguished from the carnal Israel which is of one nation, by newness of grace, not by nobility of descent, in feeling, not in race; but the prophet, in his depth of meaning, while speaking of the carnal Israel, passes on, without indicating the transition, to speak of the spiritual, and although now speaking of the latter, seems to be still speaking of the former; not that he grudges us the clear apprehension of Scripture, as if we were enemies, but that he deals with us as a physician, giving us a wholesome exercise for our spirit. And therefore we ought

to take this saying, 'And I will bring you unto your own land', and what he says shortly afterwards, as if repeating himself, "And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers", not literally, as if they referred to Israel after the flesh, but spiritually, as referring to the spiritual Israel. For the Church, without spot or wrinkle, gathered out of all nations, and destined to reign for ever with Christ, is itself the land of the blessed, the land of the living, and we are to understand that this was given to the fathers when it was promised to them in the sure and immutable purpose of God..."

Augustine is widely hailed in amillennial circles as the champion who wiped millennial teachings (Chiliasm) from the Church. Even if I was an amillennialist (2class condition), I hope I could support my arguments without having to go to Augustine! Note his hermeneutics in the City Of God, pp. 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541.

West say this concerning Ezk 40-48: "How to interpretet these chapters, do they belong to the thousand years of John, are these also a millenial picture, we answer yes, they cannot be literalized into the times of the reformation under Zurrubbael, or spiritualized by the times of the New Testament Church, nor celestialized into the heavenly state, or allegorized into the new final heaven and earth, or idealized into an oriental phantasmagorail abstraction."

West quotes "a professor Orelli who said 'The national element in prophecy was more and more ignored and everything received the Christain coloring , Israel is always now to be spiritually interpreted, after the age of persecution was past, the attitude of the Church toward prophecy was remarkably changed, its fulfillment being no longer anxiously looked for. Old Testament prophecy was regarded as finally fulfilled and done with and where the words of prophecy were not responded to by the actual history, all was spiritualized, this spiritualistic intepretation did not scruple to refer the promises pertaining to Israel's future to the Christian Church, as the spiritual prosperity of Abraham according to Gal 3:7.'"

"'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' There should follow on the completion of six thousand years, as of six days, a kind of seventh-day Sabbath in the succeeding thousand years; and that it is for this purpose the saints rise, viz., to celebrate this Sabbath. And this opinion would not be objectionable, if it were believed that the joys of the saints in that Sabbath shall be spiritual, and consequent on the presence of God; for I myself, too, once held this opinion. But, as they assert that those who then rise again shall enjoy the leisure of immoderate carnal banquets, furnished with an amount of meat and drink such as not only to shock the feeling of the temperate, but even to surpass the measure of credulity itself, such assertions can be believed only by the carnal. They who do believe them are called by the spiritual Chiliasts, which we may literally reproduce by the name Millenarians. It were a tedious process to refute these opinions point by point: we prefer proceeding to show how that passage of Scripture should be understood."

"The Lord Jesus Christ Himself says, 'No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man' - meaning by the strong man the devil because he had power to take captive the human race; and meaning by his goods which he was to take, those who had been held by the devil in diverse sins and iniquities, but were to become believers in Himself. It was then for the binding of this strong one that the apostle saw in the Apocalypse 'an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss, and a chain in his hand. And he laid hold,'

he says, 'on the dragon, that old serpent, which is called the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years' - that is, bridled and restrained his power so that he could not seduce and gain possession of those who were to be freed. Now the thousand years may be understood in two ways, so far as occurs to me; either because these things happen in the sixth thousand of years or sixth millennium (the latter part of which is now passing), as if during the sixth day, which is to be followed by a Sabbath which has no evening, the endless rest of the saints, so that, speaking of a part under the name of the whole, he calls the last part of the millennium - the part, that is, which had yet to expire before the end of the world - a thousand years; or he used the thousand years as an equivalent for the whole duration of this world, employing the number of perfection to mark the fullness of time. For a thousand is the cube of ten. For ten times ten makes a hundred, that is, the square on a plane superficies. But to give this superficies height, and make it a cube, the hundred is again multiplied by ten, which gives a thousand. Besides, if a hundred is sometimes used for totality, as when the Lord said by way of promise to him that left all and followed him, 'He shall receive in the world an hundredfold', of which the apostle gives, as it were an explanation when he says, 'As having nothing, yet possessing all things' - for even of old it had been said, 'The whole world is the wealth of a believer' - with how much greater reason is a thousand put for totality since it is the cube, while the other is only the square? And for the same reason we cannot better interpret the words of the Psalm, 'He hath been mindful of His covenant for ever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations,' than by understanding it to mean 'to all generations.'"

"And he cast him into the abyss' i.e., cast the devil into the abyss. By the abyss is meant the countless multitude of the wicked whose hearts are unfathomably deep in malignity against the Church of God; not that the devil was not there before, but he is said to be cast in thither, because, when prevented from harming believers, he takes more complete possession of the ungodly. For that man is more abundantly possessed by the devil who is not only alienated from God, but also gratuitously hates those who serve God. 'And shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more til the thousand years should be fulfilled.' 'shut him up' -i.e., prohibited him from going out, from doing what was forbidden. And the addition of 'set a seal upon him' seems to me to mean that it was designed to keep it a secret who belonged to the devil's party and who did not. For in this world this is a secret, for we cannot tell whether even the man who seems to stand shall fall, or whether he who seems to lie shall rise again. But by the chain and prisonhouse of this interdict the devil is prohibited and restrained from seducing those nations which belong to Christ, but which he formerly seduced or held in subjection. For before the foundation of the world God chose to rescue these from the power of darkness, and to translate them into the kingdom of the Son of His love, as the apostle says. For what Christian is not aware that he seduces nations even now, and draws them with himself to eternal punishment, but not those predestined to eternal life? And let no one be dismayed by the circumstance that the devil often seduces even those who have been regenerated in Christ, and begun to walk in God's way. For "the Lord knoweth them that are His", and of these the devil seduces none to eternal damnation. For it is as God, from Whom nothing is hid even of things future, that the Lord knows them; not as a man, who sees a man at the present time (if he can be said to see one whose heart he does not see), but does not see even himself so far as to be able to know what kind of person he is to be. The devil, then, is bound and shut up in the abyss that he may not seduce the nations from which the Church is gathered, and which he formerly seduced before the Church existed. For it is not said 'that he should not seduce any man' - meaning, no doubt, those among which the

Church exists - 'till the thousand years should be fulfilled' - i.e., either what remains of the sixth day which consists of a thousand years, or all the years which are to elapse till the end of the world. The words, 'that he should not seduce the nations till the thousand years should be fulfilled', are not to be understood as indicating that afterwards he is to seduce only those nations from which the predestined Church is composed, and from seducing whom he is restrained by that chain and imprisonment; but they are used in conformity with that usage frequently employed in Scripture and exemplified in the psalm, 'so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He have mercy upon us' - not as if the eyes of His servants would no longer wait upon the Lord their God when He had mercy upon them. Or the order of the words is unquestionably this, 'And he shut him up and set a seal upon him, till the thousand years should be fulfilled', and the interposed clause, 'that he should seduce the nations no more', is not to be understood in the connexion in which it stands, but separately, and as if added afterwards, so that the whole sentence might be read, 'And He shut him up and set a seal upon him till the thousand years should be fulfilled, that he should seduce the nations no more' - i.e., he is shut up till the thousand years be fulfilled, on this account, that he may no more deceive the nations." Of binding and loosing the devil...

"After that", says John, 'he must be loosed a little season.' If the binding and shutting up of the devil means his being made unable to seduce the Church, must his loosing be the recovery of this ability? By no means. For the Church is predestined and elected before the foundation of the world, the Church of which it is said, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His,' shall never be seduced by him. And yet there shall be a Church in this world even when the devil shall be loosed, as there has been since the beginning, and shall be always, the places of the dying being filled by new believers. For a little after John says that the devil, being loosed, shall draw the nations whom he has seduced in the whole world to make war against the Church, and that the number of these enemies shall be as the sand of the sea. 'And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil who seduced 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.' This relates to the last judgment, but I have thought fit to mention it now, lest any one might suppose that in that short time during which the devil shall be loosed there shall be no Church upon earth, whether because the devil finds no Church, or destroys it by manifold persecutions. The devil, then, is not bound during the whole time which this book embraces - that is, from the first coming of Christ, to the end of the world, when he shall come the second time - not bound in this sense, that during this interval, which goes by the name of a thousand years, he shall not seduce the Church, for not even when loosed shall he seduce it. For certainly if his being bound means that he is not able or not permitted to seduce the Church, what can the loosing of him mean but his being able or permitted to do so? But God forbid that such should be the case! But the binding of the devil is his being prevented from the exercise of his whole power to seduce men, either by violently forcing or fraudulently deceiving them into taking part with him. If he were during so long a period permitted to assail the weakness of men, very many persons, such as God would not wish to expose to such temptation, would have their faith overthrown, or would be prevented from believing; and that this might not happen, he is bound."

"But when the short time comes he shall be loosed. For he shall rage with the whole force of himself and his angels for three years and six months; and those with whom he makes war shall

have power to withstand all his violence and stratagems. And if he were never loosed, his malicious power would be less patent, and less proof would be given of the steadfast fortitude of the holy city: it would, in short, be less manifest what good use the Almighty makes of his great evil. For the Almighty does not absolutely seclude the saints from his temptation, but shelters only their inner man, where faith resides, that by outward temptation they may grow in grace. And He binds him that he may not, in the free and eager exercise of his malice, hinder or destroy the faith of those countless weak persons, already believing or yet to believe, from whom the Church must be increased and completed; and he will in the end loose him, that the city of God may see how mighty an adversary it has conquered, to the great glory of its Redeemer, Helper, Deliverer. And what are we in comparison with those believers and saints who shall then exist, seeing that they shall be tested by the loosing of an enemy with whom we make war at the greatest peril even when he is bound? Although it is also certain that even in this intervening period there have been and are some soldiers of Christ so wise and strong, that if they were to be alive in this mortal condition at the time of his loosing, they would both most wisely guard against and most patiently endure, all his snares and assaults. Now the devil was thus bound not only when the Church began to be more and more widely extended among the nations beyond Judea, but is now and shall be bound till the end of the world, when he is to be loosed. Because even now, men are, and doubtless to the end of the world shall be, converted to the faith from the unbelief in which he held them. And this strong one is bound in each instance in which he is spoiled of one of his goods; and the abyss in which he is shut up is not at an end when those die who were alive when first he was shut up in it, but these have been succeeded, and shall to the end of the world be succeeded, by others born after them with a like hate of the Christians, and in the dept of whose blind hearts he is continually shut up as in an abyss. But it is a question whether, during these three years and six months when he shall be loose, and raging with all his force, any one who has not previously believed shall attach himself to the faith. For how in that case would the words hold good, 'Who entereth into the house of a strong one to spoil his goods unless first he shall have bound the strong one?' Consequently this verse seems to compel us to believe that during that time, short as it is, no one will be added to the Christian community, but that the devil will make war with those who have previously become Christians, and that, though some of these may be conquered and desert the devil, these do not belong to the predestinated number of the sons of God. For it is not without reason that John, the same apostle as wrote this Apocalypse, says in his epistle regarding certain persons, 'They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have remained with us.' But what shall become of the little ones? For it is beyond all belief that in these days there shall not be found some Christian children born, but not yet baptized, and that there shall not also be some born during that very period; and if there be such, we cannot believe that their parents shall not find some way of bringing them to the laver of regeneration."

"Therefore the Church even now is the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven. Accordingly, even now His saints reign with Him, though otherwise than as they shall reign hereafter; and yet, though the tares grow in the Church along with the wheat, they do not reign with Him. For they reign with Him who do what the apostle says, 'If ye be risen with Christ, mind the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Seek those things which are above, not the things which are on the earth.' Of such persons he also says that their conversation is in heaven. In fine, they reign with Him who are so in His kingdom that they

themselves are His kingdom. But in what sense are those the kingdom of Christ, who, to say no more, though they are in it until all offenses are gathered out of it at the end of the world, yet seek their own things in it and not the things that are Christs?"

"It is then of this kingdom militant, in which conflict with the enemy is still maintained, and war carried on with warring lusts, or government laid upon them as they yield, until we come to that most peaceful kingdom in which we shall reign without any enemy, and it is of this first resurrection in the present life that the Apocalypse speaks in the words just quoted. For, after saying that the devil is bound a thousand years and is afterwards loosed for a short season, it goes on to give a sketch of what the Church does or of what is done in the Church in those days, in the words, 'And I saw seats and the them that are within?' 'And the souls,' says John, 'of those who were slain for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God' - understanding what he afterwards says - 'reigned with Christ a thousand years' - that is, the souls of the martyrs not yet restored to their bodies. For the souls of the pious dead are not separated from the Church, which even now is the kingdom of Christ; otherwise there would be no remembrance made of them at the altar of God in the partaking of the body of Christ, nor would it do any good in danger to run to His baptism, that we might not pass form this life without it; nor to reconciliation, if by penitence or a bad conscience any one may be severed from His body. For why are these things practiced, if not because the faithful, even though dead, are His members? Therefore, while these thousand years run on, their souls reign with Him, though not as yet in conjunction with their bodies."

"The rest of them,' he says, 'did not live.' For now is the hour when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live; and the rest of them shall not live. The words added, 'until the thousand years are finished', mean that they did not live in the time in which they ought to have lived by passing from death to life. And therefore, when the day of the bodily resurrection arrives, they shall come out of their graves, not to life, but to judgment, namely, to damnation, which is called the second death. For whosoever has not lived until the thousand years be finished, i.e., during this whole time in which the first resurrection is going on - whosoever has not heard the voice of the Son of God, and passed from death to life, that man shall certainly in the second resurrection, the resurrection of the flesh, pass with his flesh into the second death." Of Gog and Magog, who are to be roused by the devil to persecute the Church when he is loosed in the end of the world.

"The meaning of these names we find to be Gog, - a roof, Magog, - from a roof, a house, as it were, and he who comes out of the house. They are therefore the nations in which we found that the devil was shut up as in an abyss, and the devil himself coming out from them and going forth, so that they are the roof, he from the roof. Or if we refer both words to the nations, not one to them and one to the devil, then they are both the roof, because in them the old enemy is at present shut up, and as it were roofed in; and they shall be from the roof when they break forth from concealed to open hatred. The words, 'And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and encompassed the camp of the saints and the beloved city,' do not mean that they have come, or shall come, to one place, as if the camp of the saints and the beloved city should be in some one place; for this camp is nothing else than the Church of Christ extending over the whole world. And consequently wherever the Church shall be - and it shall be in all nations, as is signified by 'the breadth of the earth' - there also shall be the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and there it shall be encompassed by the savage persecution of all its enemies; for they too shall exist along with it in

all nations - that is, shall be straitened, and hard pressed, and shut up in the straits of tribulation, but shall not desert its military duty, which is signified by the word camp.”

“This last persecution by Antichrist shall last for three years and six months, as we have already said, and as is affirmed both in the Book of Revelation and by Daniel the prophet.”

A. T. Robertson wrote the following statements in *Regnum Dei*, pp. 124-125, 131, 134-135, 169, 176, 222.

“Briefly, it may be said the Realistic Eschatology prevailed in the Church generally for two centuries and a half, and in the Western Church for four centuries - that is until the time of Augustine, who shared it himself, until, as he expressly tells us, reflexion led him to a different mind on the subject. His vast influence coupled with other more general causes, carried the Church’s mind in a new direction; Millenarianism quickly lost ground and ceased to be even a tolerated doctrine.”

“There was then before A.D. 200 no widespread influence in Christian thought to counteract the realism of early Christian Eschatology.”

“When persecution no longer kept it alive, - when the active hostility of the State no longer counteracted the natural Christian instinct of good citizenship, exemplified in St. Paul, - the old Realistic Eschatology silently melted away.”

“Once more, a cycle of belief which centered round the imminent return of Christ was essentially out of sympathy with a Church order and organization calculated for a lasting and permanent state of things. Finally, whatever causes tended towards the identification of the Kingdom of GOD with the visible Church, for that reason tended to render Chiliasm superfluous by satisfying in another way the fundamental instinct upon which it was founded, - the desire for the realization of earth of the Kingdom of GOD.”

“The history of the conception of the Kingdom of GOD relates mainly to these more variable elements. Its history in the early Church is the history of the prevalence and decline of Millenarianism. It ends with St. Augustine. The history of the medieval idea of the Kingdom of God and of its more modern interpretations is, mainly, the history of the theology and constitution of the Church. It begins with St. Augustine. Augustine, as a Western Churchman, inherited a refined and spiritualized Millenarianism, which later reflexion led him deliberately to abandon.”

“It was schism, then, rather than heresy, that first presented to the mind of Churchmen the issues that are involved in the analysis of the idea of the Church, and it was mainly in Africa, the province of Augustine, that the first formal answer was given by Christian theology to the challenge of pure and simple schism, disengaged from any doctrinal issues. Cyprian, and a century later Optatus, deal with this question...but their interest is practical, not theological; they have not gone back to the essential conception, not laid the foundations of a systematized theology of the Church. This was reserved for Augustine. Although therefore we cannot say, in the face of the strong drift of converging tendencies of thought, and of the notorious risks of an argument from silence, that no one before Augustine, in writing or in speech, spoke of the Catholic Church as the Kingdom of GOD, the fact remains that extant literature records no instance of such language, and this fact becomes intelligible when we notice that Augustine grounds the identification upon a revision of

received exegesis, and that it is with him part of a new theological analysis - the analysis of the conception of the Church.”

“Hence the visible hierarchically organized Church acquires in his thought and language much of the ideal character of the Kingdom of GOD. It was only required to slightly change the significance of the latter idea, to substitute for the Reign of the saints with Christ, for the Reign of Christ in the soul, the familiar thought of a kingdom in the sense of an organized government, to make Augustine’s doctrine of the Church the foundation for the ecclesiastical superstructure, raised by Gregory VII. and Innocent III., of an omnipotent hierarchy set over nations and kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy, and to overthrow and to build and to plant.” In summary of patristic times, Milton S. Terry wrote in his *Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 666,

“As we review the history of patristic exegesis we notice the progress of two opposite tendencies operative from the beginning of the Christian era. The one was a speculative spirit, a habit of allegorizing, begotten of associated Judaism and Platonism; it received a mighty impulse in the Alexandrian school, and has maintained more or less influence even to the present day. The other tendency was of a more practical character. It originated with our Lord and His apostles, who condemned the fanciful speculations and Hagadic traditions of their time, and set the example of a sober and rational interpretation of the Scriptures. It was the distinguishing feather of the school of Antioch, and exhibits some of its best results in the exegetical works of Chrysostom and Theodoret. But this more grammatical and logical method of interpretation attained no complete development among the ancient fathers. The prevalence of superstitions, the blind credulity of the masses, the strong tendencies to asceticism and mysticism, and the defective knowledge of the original languages of the Bible, gave, in the main, an advantage to the allegorists, and rendered a thorough grammatico-historical interpretation impossible. Hence, we are not to look to the ancient fathers for models of exegesis. Their writings contain numerous imperishable gems of thought, and exhibit great intellectual acumen and logical subtlety, but as interpreters of the sacred volume they have been far surpassed by the moderns. Notwithstanding his extravagant allegorizing, Origen will ever be prized for his great learning and remarkable service in biblical criticism, and the works of Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Jerome, despite their frequent errors, will ever hold high rank in biblical literature; but the time is passed when an appeal to the opinions of the early fathers has any considerable weight with men of learning.”

Early Church Fathers

Clement of Rome (92 – 101)

St. Clement of Rome is believed to have been the third or fourth bishop of Rome (after the apostles) and served during the last decade of the first century. Around 96, he sent a letter from the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth, a major city in northeastern Greece and the site of St. Paul’s evangelization. This letter, known as Clement’s First Epistle to the Corinthians [DOC], is most likely directed against immoral practices of prostitution connected with the Temple of Aphrodite. In the letter, Clement expresses his dissatisfaction with events taking place in the Corinthian Church and asks the people to repent for their unchristian ways. The letter is important because it indicates that the author was acting as the head of the Christian Church and that it was centered in Rome. Clement was allegedly put to death under Emperor Domitian. The early apostolic fathers interpreted Scripture according to a "functional hermeneutic," meaning that they

applied the text to their own situation, often without regard for its original context. For example, Clement included 166 quotations or allusions to the Old Testament in his Epistle to the Corinthians, seeking not so much to discover the Old Testament's message on its own or even with regard to the work of Christ, but more so to offer types and other pictures of Christ as a basis for moral obedience. His predecessors are Linus and Cletus (or Anacletus, or Anencletus), about whom almost nothing is known. They are simply names on a list. Clement is a little more than this, chiefly because he wrote a letter to the Corinthians, which was highly valued by the early church, and has been preserved to the present day. The letter itself does not carry his name, but is merely addressed from the congregation at Rome to the congregation at Corinth. However, a letter from Corinth to Rome a few decades later refers to "the letter we received from your bishop Clement, which we still read regularly." Other early writers are unanimous in attributing the letter to Clement. Perhaps because this letter made his name familiar, he has had an early anonymous sermon (commonly called II Clement) attributed to him, and is a character in some early religious romances (e.g. the Clementine Recognitions).

One story about Clement is that he was put to death by being tied to an anchor and thrown into the sea. Accordingly, he is often depicted with an anchor, and many churches in port towns intended to minister chiefly to mariners are named for him. The Epistle of Clement to The Corinthians (also called I Clement) can be found in collections of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, such as the Penguin Paperback Early Christian Writings, translated by Maxwell Staniforth. The letter is commonly dated around 96 AD, but an earlier date is suggested by John Robinson in his Redating the New Testament. The letter is occasioned by the fact that a group of Christians at Corinth had banded together against their leaders and had deposed them from office. Clement writes to tell them that they have behaved badly, and to remind them of the importance of Christian unity and love. He speaks at length of the way in which each kind of official in the church has his own function for the good of the whole. The letter is an important witness to the early Christian understanding of Church government, but an ambiguous witness in that we are never told precisely why the Corinthians had deposed their leaders, and therefore the letter can be read as saying that presbyters ought not to be deposed without reasonable grounds, or as saying that they cannot be deposed on any grounds at all. The letter refers only to the presbyters of Corinth, and makes no reference to the bishop of Corinth. Moreover, there is no mention of a bishop at Rome--the letter is sent as from the Church at Rome collectively, and Clement's name does not appear. From this, some have inferred that the office of bishop had not yet developed at either Rome or Corinth, and that in both congregations the office of presbyter was the highest office known. A probable alternate explanation, however, is that the troubles in Corinth had arisen when the bishop of that congregation had died, and the congregation had split into factions, none containing both a majority of the presbyters and a majority of the congregation. The letter makes no apology for intervening in what might be thought an internal affair of the congregation at Corinth. On the contrary, the writer apologizes for the delay in commenting, as if an earlier intervention might have been expected. From this, some have inferred that, even at this early date (96 AD or, some think, earlier), when the Apostle John was perhaps still alive, the authority and jurisdiction of the Roman congregation over every other congregation of the Christian Church was already universally conceded. However, a perfectly reasonable alternative explanation is that the congregation at Corinth, torn by division, had agreed to settle their disputes by inviting another congregation, or the head of another congregation, to act as arbitrator. This would be a reasonable

thing to do, and the choice of Rome as that congregation was natural, partly because of the prestige of the city, and the prestige of one of the largest congregations in the Church, and because the Corinth of Clement's day had been built as a Roman colony, with a special dependence directly on the city of Rome (a civil relation that might affect the habits of thought of the Corinthians on matters ecclesiastical as well), but also because Rome was far enough away so that it could be assumed to be impartial and not affected by local personalities. From Clement's Letter to the Corinthians:

Let the one truly possessed by the love of Christ keep his commandments. Who can express the binding power of divine love? Who can find words for the splendor of its beauty? Beyond all description are the heights to which it lifts us. Love unites us to God; "it cancels innumerable sins," has no limits to its endurance, bears everything patiently. Love is neither servile nor arrogant. It does not provoke schisms or form cliques, but always acts in harmony with others. By it all God's chosen ones have been sanctified; without it, it is impossible to please him. Out of love the Lord took us to himself; because he loved us and it was God's will, our Lord Jesus Christ gave his life's blood for us -- he gave his body for our body, his soul for our soul.

See then, beloved, what a great and wonderful thing love is, and how inexpressible its perfection. Who are worthy to possess it unless God makes them so? To him therefore we must turn, begging of his mercy that there may be found in us a love free from human partiality and beyond reproach. Every generation from Adam's time to ours has passed away; but those who by God's grace were made perfect in love and have a dwelling now among the saints, and when at last the kingdom of Christ appears, they will be revealed. "Take shelter in your rooms for a little while," says Scripture, "until my wrath subsides. Then I will remember the good days, and will raise you from your graves."

Happy are we, beloved, if love enables us to live in harmony and in the observance of God's commandments, for then it will also gain for us the remission of our sins. Scripture pronounces "happy those whose transgressions are pardoned, whose sins are forgiven. Happy the one," it says, "to whom the Lord imputes no fault, on whose lips there is no guile." This is the blessing given those whom God has chosen through Jesus Christ our Lord. To him be glory for ever and ever.

Let us fix our attention on the blood of Christ and recognize how precious it is to God his Father, since it was shed for our salvation and brought the grace of repentance to all the world.

If we review the various ages of history, we will see that in every generation the Lord has "offered the opportunity of repentance" to any who were willing to turn to him. When Noah preached God's message of repentance, all who listened to him were saved. Jonah told the Ninevites they were going to be destroyed, but when they repented, their prayers gained God's forgiveness for their sins, and they were saved, even though they were not of God's people.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the ministers of God's grace have spoken of repentance; indeed, the Master of the whole universe himself spoke of repentance with an oath: "As I live," says the Lord, "I do not wish the death of the sinner but the sinner's repentance." He added this evidence of his goodness: "House of Israel, repent of your wickedness. Tell my people: If their sins should reach from earth to heaven, if they are brighter than scarlet and blacker than sackcloth, you

need only turn to me with your whole heart and say, 'Father,' and I will listen to you as to a holy people." In other words, God wanted all his beloved ones to have the opportunity to repent and he confirmed this desire by his own almighty will. That is why we should obey his sovereign and glorious will and prayerfully entreat his mercy and kindness. We should be suppliant before him and turn to his compassion, rejecting empty works and quarreling and jealousy which only lead to death.

We should be humble in mind, putting aside all arrogance, pride, and foolish anger. Rather, we should act in accordance with the Scriptures, as the Holy Spirit says: "The wise must not glory in wisdom nor the strong in strength nor the rich in riches. Rather, let the one who glories glory in the Lord, by seeking him and doing what is right and just." Recall especially what the Lord Jesus said when he taught gentleness and forbearance. "Be merciful," he said, "so that you may have mercy shown to you. Forgive, so that you may be forgiven. As you treat others, so you will be treated. As you give, so you will receive. As you judge, so you will be judged. As you are kind to others, so you will be treated kindly. The measure of your giving will be the measure of your receiving."

Let these commandments and precepts strengthen us to live in humble obedience to his sacred words. As Scripture asks: "Whom shall I look upon with favor except the humble, peaceful one who trembles at my words?"

Sharing then in the heritage of so many vast and glorious achievements, let us hasten toward the goal of peace, set before us from the beginning. Let us keep our eyes firmly fixed on the Father and Creator of the whole universe, and hold fast to his splendid and transcendent gifts of peace and all his blessings.

Prayer (traditional language)

Almighty God, who didst choose thy servant Clement of Rome to recall the Church in Corinth to obedience and stability: Grant that thy Church may be grounded and settled in thy truth by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and may evermore be kept blameless in thy service; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Prayer (contemporary language)

Almighty God, who chose your servant Clement of Rome to recall the Church in Corinth to obedience and stability: Grant that your Church may be grounded and settled in your truth by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and may evermore be kept blameless in your service; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Psa 78:3-7 or Psa 85:8-13

2Ti 2:1-7

Luk 6:37-45 (St2) In the late first century, a letter was drafted in the name of the Roman church to deal with what it saw as a serious breach in Corinthian ecclesiastical order. The author was Clement who may have been mentioned in Php 4:3, was probably noted in Hermas's Shepherd, and is often identified or connected with Favius Clemens, a consul in 95, who perished, possibly for his Christian faith, near the end of Domitian's reign (81-96). More likely a spokesman for and leader of the Roman presbyter-bishops than the third sole bishop of Rome after Peter and Paul as

he was later declared to be by Irenaeus, Clement is distressed by incidents in the church at Corinth in which blameless and properly appointed presbyters have been unlawfully deposed. He responds by stressing God's goodness, omnipotence, and judgment, God's imposition of proper order and harmony on creation which thus requires discipline, concord, and obedience among all God's creatures, Christ's salvific life and death which models to and works in believers humility, righteousness, forgiveness, and love, and Christ's calling of the disciples who then obediently initiated an inviolate order of apostolic succession in the church (imaged, in part, by the Roman army), which means that since Christ granted to the laity no power to install presbyters, he certainly gave it no authority to depose them. Other works, such as an early homily that became known as "Second Clement" or "The Second Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians," have been attributed to Clement, but he wrote none of them.

Writings

I Clement or Letter to the Corinthians (c. 96): earliest piece of literature outside the NT historically attested; addressed disputes in the Church at Corinth;

II Clement (a sermon)(c. 140): Clementine authorship disputed

Ignatius of Antioch

Personal

Martyr for the faith

Disciple of John the Evangelist

Condemned to die by wild beasts in Rome

Brought from Antioch to Rome and wrote seven letters to churches and individuals along the way

Place and dates d. 110

Writings

Letter to Ephesians

Letter to Magnesians

Letter to Tralles

Letter to Philadelphians

Letter to Smyrnans

Letter to Polycarp of Smyrna

Letter to Romans

These contain warnings against heretical doctrines; contain detailed summaries of doctrines; and a picture of Church organization with bishops, presbyters (elders) and deacons

First to stress Virgin Birth and to use the term "catholic church"

The Epistle of Barnabas

Justin Martyr

Irenaeus of Symrna

Tertullian of Carthage

Alexandrian Fathers

Pantaenus of Alexandria

Clement of Alexandria

Origen (ca. 185-254)

Antiochian Fathers of Syria

Dorotheus

Lucian

Diodorus

Theodore of Mopsuestia

John Chrysostom of Constantinople (ca. 354-407)

Theodoret (386-4580)

Late Church Fathers

Jerome (ca. 347-4190)

Augustine (354-4300)

John Cassian (ca. 360-435)

Eucherius of Lyons (ca. - 450)

Adrian of Antioch (a.d. 435)

Junilius (a.d 550)

Middle Ages

“During the period extending from Gregory the Great to the time of Luther (A.D.600 to A.D. 1500), the true exegetical spirit could scarcely be expected to maintain itself, or produce works of great merit. The monasteries became the principle seats of learning, and the treasures of theological literature gradually found their way to them as to so many asylums. The Scriptures were everywhere regarded as a holy treasure, and many were wont to consult them for oracular responses. If one was about to embark in some dangerous enterprise, he would open the Bible and regard the first words which met his eye as a special revelation to himself.” Terry, p. 661

About the only men of the middle ages who were of any exegetical value were Cecumenius (a tenth century compiler of the writings of the Fathers) who followed Chrysostom’s works and

hermeneutical method and Theophylact, an eleventh century follower of Chrysostom.

Although Thomas Aquinas (13 century) and Bonaventura are recognized by some as distinguished theologians, “exegesis made no real advance” with them. “Far fetched and worthless speculations” ruled interpretation. Thomas attempted to combine faith and reason (based on the logic of Aristotle) in his famous work, Summa Theologiae. He stated, “The literal sense of Scripture is manifold, its spiritual sense, threefold, viz., allegorical, moral and analogical.’ The literal sense teaches the things which have happened, the allegorical what we are to believe, the moral what we are to do and the analogical directs to things to be awaited.” Schaff, vol.VI., p.717

Bonaventura sometimes used a seven-fold sense, “The historical, the allegorical, the mystical, the moral, the symbolical, the synecdochical, and the hyperbolical.”!!! “The whole seven correspond with the seals of the Apocalypse.” Terry, pp. 666,667

Light finally began to dawn with Nicholas de Lyra, John Wycliffe, John Huss and John Wessel. These 14-15 century reformation forerunners gave the literal method a more important place. John Wycliffe said, “It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture, if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances considering what goeth before and what followeth.” The reformation was not the bolt of lightening some think but was the result of a general revival of learning and a serious study of the Word. The invention of printing hastened the spread of knowledge and the Scriptures. In the 16th century John Reuchlin revived the study and grammatical interpretation of Hebrew and Erasmus published a Greek New Testament, which provided fuel for the reformers.

Some of the men who played an important part during this period of time were

Gregory the Great (540-604)

Venerable Bede (637-734)

Alcuin of York, England (735-804)

Rabanus Maurus

Rashi Shilomo son of Issac (1040-1105)

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)

Joachim of Flora (1132-1202)

Steven Langton (ca. 1155-1228)

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Nicholas of Lyra (1279-1340)

John Wycliff (ca. 1330-1384)

Reformation 1517-1600

The Bible so long chained by Satanic Popery, was released and the literal method of interpretation became the standard of the reformation. Hermeneutics finally received new life and began to

develop as a science.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

“The literal sense of Scripture alone is the whole essence of faith and of Christian theology.”

“I ask for Scripture and Eck offers me the Fathers. I ask for the sun, and he shows me his lantern. I ask, ‘Where is your Scripture proof?’ and he adduces Ambrose and Cyril. With all due respect to the Fathers, I prefer the authority of Scripture.”

“I have observed this, that all heresies and errors have originated, not from the simple words of Scripture...but from neglecting the simple words of Scripture, and from the affection of purely subjective tropes and inferences.”

“Each passage has one clear, definite, and true sense of its own. All others are but doubtful and uncertain opinions.”

“The Bible is a river in which the lamb may ford and the elephant must swim.” Quotes by Farrar of Luther, p. 327

Luther said of allegory, “An interpreter must as much as possible avoid allegory, that he may not wander in idle dreams.”

“Origen’s allegories are not worth so much dirt.”

“Allegories are empty speculations, and as it were the scum of Holy Scripture.”

“Allegory is a sort of beautiful harlot, who proves herself specially seductive to idle men.”

“He (Luther) is least true to his own principle in the comments on Job, Psalms, and Canticles, and is by no means always consistent.” Farrar, p. 328 As a general rule, the reformers and those who were directly connected to them used the literal method of interpretation.

“Luther also prepared notes on Genesis, the Psalms, the Sermon on the Mount, the Gospel of John, and other portions of the New Testament. His knowledge of Hebrew and Greek was limited, and he sometimes mistook the meaning of the sacred writer, but his religious intuitions and deep devotional spirit enabled him generally to apprehend the true sense of Scripture.” Terry, p.674

Calvin (1509-1564)

“One of the greatest interpreters that ever lived.” Wrote on all but ten books of the Bible in complete commentary form. “He will not tamper with allegory.” Farrar, p. 345

Calvin said, “It is better to confess ignorance than to play with frivolous guesses.” He was more consistent than Luther.

“It is the first business of an interpreter to let his author say what he does say instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say.”

“We may most truly declare that we have brought more light to bear on the understanding of Scripture than all the authors who have sprung up amongst Christians since the rise of the Papacy; nor do they themselves venture to rob us of this praise.” Farrar, pp. 347,353

“Yes! to the Reformers was fulfilled once more the old promise, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

“Of all the exegetes of the period of the Reformation the first place must unquestionably be given to John Calvin,... In textual and philological criticism he was not equal to Erasmus, Melanchthon, Ceolampadius, or his intimate friend, Beza, and he occasionally falls into notably incorrect interpretations of words and phrases; but as a whole, his commentaries are justly celebrated for clearness, good sense, and masterly apprehension of the meaning and spirit of the sacred writers. In his Preface To The Epistle To The Romans he maintains that the chief excellence of an interpreter is a perspicuous brevity which does not divert the reader’s thoughts by long and prolix discussions, but directly lays open the mind of the sacred writer. His commentaries, accordingly, while not altogether free from blemishes, exhibit a happy exegetical tact, a ready grasp of the more obvious meaning of words, and an admirable regard to the context, scope, and plan of the author. He seldom quotes from other commentators, and is conspicuously free from mystical, allegorical, and forced methods of exposition.” Terry, pp. 676,677 For more information on the reformers see Farrar, History of Interpretation, pp. 308-354, and Chaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 7 & 8. One should also study commentaries by both Luther and Calvin. The philosophy of the times consciously or unconsciously influences all. Men are products of their times, acting and reacting. God help the person who looks back in order to regulate his doctrine and deportment. No one in church history had “arrived”.

“I am persuaded that the Lord hath more truths yet to come for us out of His Holy Word. Neither Luther nor Calvin have penetrated into the whole Council of God.” John Robinson, Farewell Address To The Pilgrim Fathers “Living variety is better than dead uniformity.” Farrar

“Lord help us to learn how to better balance ourselves by the knowledge of church history but lead us to your Word to learn what to believe.”

John Reuchlin

Desiderius Erasmus (1560)

Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560)

Melanchthon said: “save us from the ‘fury of theologians”.

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531)

William Tyndale (ca. 1494-1536)

Anabaptist movement (1525)

Conrad Grebel

Felix Manz

Georg Balurock

Balthasar Hubmaier

Michel Sattler

Pilgram Marpeck

Menno Simons

Council of Trent (1545-1563)

Post-reformation 1600-1750

This era was marked more by a hermeneutics controlled by theology than a theology controlled by hermeneutics. Thus a mixture of literal and allegorical is seen. There were various systems that developed.

Socinian school

Human reason is judge of interpretation.

Pietist

Desire to keep the literal, grammatical, historical interpretation from becoming spiritually cold. Emphasis on application of scripture to Godly living. It influenced many men and movements- Moravians, Puritans, Wesley, Edwards.

Men

Farrar traces the progress of interpretation in pages 357-437. Protestantism became a "scholastic" type of religion. "Petrified dogmas", "creed-bondage", "dogmatic traditionalism", "dead orthodoxy", and "proof-text" are all descriptive of the state of Christianity.

"Their dogmas were based not upon secure evidence, but on dominant authority...enforce them by anathema and banishment, yes even by axe and stake." Farrar, p. 360

Many today are guilty of "interpreting Scripture solely from our creeds" and using the proof-text method or even the absurd mystical magic of looking at the first words seen after a random selection of Scripture as God's immediate message! A survey of key men in the post-reformation period is also to be found in Terry, pp. 604-738. A brief survey of that era follows.

Lightfoot

.... "pre-eminent for his attainments in Hebrew and rabbinical literature...his principle works are a Chronological Arrangement of the Books of the Old And New Testaments, Gleanings in Exodus, Erubhim, or Miscellaneous Tracts on Sunday Biblical Themes, A Harmony of the Four Gospels, a Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, Description of the Temple at Jerusalem in the Time of Our Savior, and Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae, on the Gospels, Acts, Romans, and First Corinthians."

Some of the Englishmen of this time period were:

William Pemble "...an eminent Calvinistic preacher and scholar..."

Henry Ainsworth "an early leader of the Independents, and author...on several books of the Bible.."

Thomas Gataker

“one of the ablest divines of the Westminster Assembly and one of the principal authors of the Annotations upon all the Books of the Old and New Testaments...”

Joseph Caryl “known chiefly from his immense work on the Book of Job..”

Richard Baxter

“distinguished for his modifications of Calvinism, and pre-eminent as theologian, preacher, and pastor, was author of a paraphrase of the New Testament.”

Thomas Godwin “composed a useful treatise on the Civil and Ecclesiastical Rites of the Ancient Hebrews...”

John Goodwin “famous English Arminian, wrote...and exposition of Romans ix...”

Thomas Goodwin “contemporary Calvinistic divine, wrote on Ephesians and Revelation.”

James Usher

“accomplished biblical scholar, whose Annals of the Old and New Testaments established a chronology of the Bible which has been quite generally adopted until the present time.”

John Owen “acknowledged leader of the Congregationalists during the time of Cromwell...”

James Arminius

“professor of theology in 1603.fell into controversy with.Francis Gomar, a strenuous Calvinist.continued with increased bitterness after the death of Arminius (1609) and led to the holding of the Synod of Dort (1618) at which (the Calvinists being largely in the majority) the opinions of the Arminian Remonstrants were condemned, their ministers were deposed, and many of them banished from the country: and all who embraced Arminian doctrines were excluded from the fellowship of the Church, and their religious assemblies were suppressed by law. The Arminian theology was, however, too deeply grounded in a comprehensive and rational exegesis of the Scriptures to be thus put down.”

“Neander calls him (Arminius) the “pattern of a conscientious and zealously investigating theologian, who endeavoured to guard himself against all partiality”.”

Hugo Grotius

”Dutch divine of the Arminian school.a most remarkable man of the seventeenth century, and eminent alike in theology, civil jurisprudence, apologetics, and dogmatic theology, he wrote annotations on the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha.good sense and good taste displayed. Often noticeably fails to grasp the plan and scope of the sacred writers. He lacked the profound religious intuition of Luther and Calvin, and leaned to a rationalistic treatment of Scripture.”

Heinsius

“acted as secretary to the Synod of Dort and is known as the editor of many of the Greek and Roman classics...”

Voetius

“Dutch Reformed Church. aimed rather to support and defend a theological system than to ascertain by valid reason the exact meaning of the sacred writers. assumed to adhere strictly to the literal sense, but, at the same time, regarded all biblical criticism as highly dangerous to the orthodox faith. The Voetians would fain have made the dogmas of the Synod of Dort the authoritative guide to the sense of Scripture, and were restless before an appeal to the original texts of the Bible and independent methods of interpretation.”

John Cocceius

“devoted himself chiefly to biblical expositions. Although his labours revived and encouraged allegorical and mystical methods of interpretation, it must be conceded that he exhibited many of the very best qualities of a biblical exegete and did as much as any man of his time to hold up the Holy Scriptures as the living fountain of all revealed theology, and the only authoritative rule and standard of faith.”

ROBINSON'S FAREWELL COUNSEL

“Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the King a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, ‘The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.’” Ezr 8:21-22

“The arrangements for the departure of the emigrants being completed, the whole congregation met for humiliation and prayer on the 21st of July, 1620, when Mr. Robinson preached with deep emotion, from Ezr 8:21-22. The close of his discourse is thus given by Mr. Winslow: “We are now ere long to part asunder, and the Lord knoweth whether ever he should live to see our faces again. But whether the Lord had appointed it or not, he charged us before God and his blessed angels, to follow him no further than he followed Christ; and if God should reveal any thing to us by any other instrument of his, to be as ready to receive it, as ever we were to receive any truth by his ministry; for he was very confident the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy word. He took occasion also miserably to bewail the state and condition of the Reformed churches who were come to a period in religion, and would go no further than the instruments of their reformation. As for example, the Lutherans, they could not be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw; for whatever part of God's will he had further imparted and revealed to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it. And so also, saith he, you see the Calvinists, they stick where he left them, a misery much to be lamented; for though they were precious shining lights in their times, yet God had not revealed his whole will to them; and were they now living, saith he, they would be as ready and willing to embrace further light, as that they had received. Here also he put us in mind of our church covenant, at least that part of it whereby we promise and covenant with God and one another to receive whatsoever light or truth shall be made known to us from his written Word; but withal exhorted us to take heed what we received for truth, and well to examine and compare it and weigh it with other Scriptures of truth before we received it. For, saith he, it is not possible the Christian world would come so lately out of such thick antichristian darkness, and that full perfection of knowledge should break forth at once”

Confirming and Spread of Calvinism

Westminster Confession (1647)

Francis Turretin (1623-1687)

Jean-Alphonse Turretin (1648-1737)

Johann Ernesti (1707-1781)

Reactions to Calvinism

Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609)

Jakob Boehme (1635-1705)

Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705)

August H. Francke (1663-1727)

John Wesley (1703-1791)

Textual and Linguistic Studies

Louis Cappell

Johann A. Bengel (1687-1752)

Johnann J. Wettstein (1693-1754)

Rationalism

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677)

Modern Era 1750-1973

During the modern era there have been a number of excellent works dealing with hermeneutics.

Bengel was a great scholar and Godly saint. Noble intellect, pure spirit, blameless life. " He wrote Gnomon, a "mine of priceless gems."

"His principles of interpretation are in the main essentially sound, and his methods of exposition have not been greatly improved upon by any later writers. In his attempt to expound prophecy, however, especially the book of Revelation, he showed defective judgment, and indulged in vain speculations." Terry, p. 699 John Ernesti, William Gesenius, Horne, all contributed to the science of hermeneutics.

John Ernesti

"He is regarded," says Hagenback, "as founder of a new exegetical school, whose principle simply was that the Bible must be rigidly explained according to its own language, and, in this explanation, it must neither be bribed by any external authority of the Church, nor by our own feelings, nor by a sportive and allegorizing fancy..." "...he was orthodox...defended the Lutheran

view...further distinguished...by a certain freedom and mildness of judgment which men had not been accustomed to find in theologians.” Terry, pp. 707,708

Matthew Henry

Probably no English commentary has had a wider circulation or is better known than that of Matthew Henry.”“...not a critical work, and not strictly exegetical,...but full of practical good sense...”

John Gill “eminent English Baptist, ...sometimes runs into the spiritualizing processes...”

Immanuel Kant

“contributed little directly to biblical exegesis, but his philosophical principles have influenced three generations of biblical critics.”

“The development of speculative philosophy through Jacobi, Herbart, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel exerted a profound influence upon the critical minds of Germany, and affected the exegetical style and methods of many of the great biblical scholars of the nineteenth century. The influence of this philosophy has tended to make the German mind intensely subjective, and has led many theologians to view both history and doctrines in their relations to some preconceived principle rather than in their practical bearings on human life.” Terry, p. 712 Terry says of the following men:

William M.I. DeWitte

“In critical tact and exegetical ability, DeWitte probably stands unsurpassed by any biblical scholar of modern times.”

Hengstenberg

“was recognized for almost half a century as one of the staunchest defenders of orthodoxy. He was a man of decided ability and great learning, but often needlessly dogmatic and supercilious in setting forth his views.”

Herman Olshausen

“mystical in tone, ...but profound and comprehensive in his treatment of scripture. Accepting the Bible as God’s Word, he aimed to penetrate to the innermost sense, and gather up the divine thoughts of the Spirit. His mystical tendency led him at times too far from the path of sound criticism, but his expositions as a whole are well worthy of the hearty reception and extensive use they have obtained. His great work is a commentary on the New Testament, which he did not live to finish.”

Karl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch

“a most excellent and convenient series of commentaries on the Old Testament...eminently critical and exegetical, and deals fully and fairly with all the great questions which the modern higher criticism has raised.”

J.P.Lange

“series of commentaries still more comprehensive in its plan is the immense Bible work...aims to be a complete critical, exegetical, and homiletical commentary on the Old and New Testaments. Lange himself contributed to this great work more than any other writer...the most learned and comprehensive commentary on the whole Bible which has appeared in modern times.”

Many others could be cited, but in a brief history it is more needful to see the rise of differing schools of thought that have given rise to the varying theological groups all classified as “Christian”.

Arising with the reformation was the renaissance. A logical result was the emphasis upon human reason. By the middle of the 18th century, rationalism had begun its criticism of the Bible. Throughout the 19th century numerous ‘scholars’ directed their efforts to explain the Bible by purely rationalistic methods. Hobbs, Spinoza, Hegel, Wellhausen were among this group.

Farrar says on pages 429 and 430 of History of Interpretation, “The reformers had struck the Apocrypha out of the Canon, and gone too far to place some books of the Bible - as had been done centuries earlier by some of the Rabbis, and by some of the Fathers - in the ranks of deutero-canonicity. In 1753 the French physician, Astruc, discovered the double stratum of Elohistic and Jehovistic elements in the Book of Genesis. Since his day criticism, both historic and philological, has been applied to every narrative and every section of Scripture. Many of its results have taken their place among valued truths...many of its assertions have been triumphantly refuted. But the notion of verbal infallibility could not possibly survive the birth of historic inquiry, which showed in Scripture as elsewhere an organic growth, and therefore a necessary period of immature development...we are compelled to make the extravagant admission that the Pastoral Epistles were pseudonymous, and the Fourth Gospel was not written by St. John. Where the Spirit of God is there is liberty.”

Results of rationalistic methods of hermeneutics and confusing applications have left their marks in the numerous theological groups of the present. Lightner in Neo-Evangelicalism lists 13 terms and their definitions that help explain the present religious confusion. (see pp. 16-19)

Roman Catholic

“If the Catholic Church cannot decide, none can.” 2Pe 1:20

“A sentence of Holy Writ always means more than the actual words of which it is composed; over and above the concrete, literal meaning it awakens echoes, hints at secret truths and reveals figuratively what human language cannot express.” Henry Daniel-Rops, p.98

“Jesus himself surely legitimized the procedure when he spoke of ‘the miracle of Jonas’...the Church is adopting exactly the same point of view when she exalts Mary, the Mother of God made man...it is possible to carry this interpretation still further...” Daniel-Rops, p. 99

“...the Bible has three sense: a literal, an allegorical or spiritual and an accommodated sense.” ibid. p. 99 “inner meaning” Daniel-Rops p. 100

“First duty is to know and thoroughly understand the literal sense...but it is also clear that to rest content with this sense is to condemn oneself to stripping the Bible of its richest harmonies...away with the ‘watery breasts of the literal sense’, the spiritual interpretation furnishes richer milk.” ibid.

100-101 Catholics believe:

1) Latin Vulgate is inspired Word of God. Greek and Hebrew are of secondary importance.

2) The church is above the Bible and determines the meaning of the Bible in light of tradition, church Fathers and church infallibility. "The Church produced the Bible, not the Bible the Church." Noll, Father Smith, p.34

"However, it was never intended that the nations should be taught and saved by it (the Bible) alone." *ibid.* p.34

"Yes, and 'searching the scriptures' independently of a divinely protected Church, to which difficult passages should be referred for correct interpretation, has produced the hundreds of contradictory sects which make Christianity ridiculed by the infidel." *ibid.* p. 39

"Infallible Book...could have no weight unless an infallible authority had declared it to be inspired, and then protected readers from misunderstanding or misinterpreting it." *Ibid.* p.74

Liberalism - The Bible contains the word of God

This is the result of rationalistic views. What seems contrary to the unsaved, atheistic reason of men, educated in an anti-bible, anti-supernatural atmosphere, is to be rejected. Loudly proclaiming their own scholarship and thus ability to critically investigate Scripture, they have substituted their presuppositions for hermeneutical principles.

Human reason

To use human reason as the final appeal is to them being scientific and educated.

Supernatural

The supernatural is rejected and thus miracles and prophecy cannot be true. Philosophy is more important than theology.

Naturalistic

Evolution is accepted and applied to the Bible. Archaeology is destructive to liberalism.

Accommodation

The writers of the Bible spoke on the level of the people, including myths, superstitions, etc.

Inspiration

They reject any kind of verbal inspiration.

"What is permanent in Christianity is not mental frameworks, but abiding experiences..." Fosdick, Ramm p.65

Nineteenth Century

Subjectivism

Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834)

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

Historical Criticism

Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893)

Ferdinand C. Baur (1792-1860)

David F. Strauss (1808-1874)

Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918)

Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930)

Exegetical Works

E.W. Hengstenberg

Carl F. Keil

Franz Delitzch

H.A.W. Meyer

J.P. Lange

Frederic Godet

Henry Alford

Charles J. Ellicot

J.B. Lightfoot

B.F. Westcott

F.J.A. Hort

Charles Hodge

John Albert Broadus

Theodor Zahn

J.A. Alexander

Albert W. Barnes

John Eadie

Robert Jameison

Richard C. Trench

Twentieth Century

Liberalism

Nels Ferre

Harry Emerson Fosdick

W.H. Norton

L. Harold DeWolf

Neo Orthodox

Karl Barth (1886-1968)

Emil Brunner (1889-1966)

Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)

Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976)

The New Hermeneutic

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

Ernest Fuchs

Gerhard Ebeling

Hans-Georg Gadamer

Neo-orthodoxy - The Bible becomes the word of God

Spiritually, neo-orthodoxy is little or no more Biblical than liberalism, but it is much more dangerous because it uses Biblical terminology. It is a twentieth century reaction that attempted to position itself between liberalism and orthodoxy. It is built on liberalism's view of the Bible, using orthodox terms. Orthodox terms but unorthodox definitions.

"It is characterized by an emphasis upon the subjective experience of man as a criterion of truth." Lightner, *Savior And Scriptures*, p. 107 Now borrowed by many evangelicals.

Sometimes called: "crisis theology, Barthianism, Theology of feeling and Neo-Supernaturalism."

Barth, Brunner, Niebuhr, Tillich, Bultman. The hermeneutics of Neo-orthodoxy is based upon certain presuppositions. Their view of history is the key. There is regular history and then there is a history behind history, a salvation history. One is visible by sight, the other by faith. Thus they can talk of creation or of resurrection but not mean what the orthodox understand those words to mean.

"Adam has no existence on the plane of history and of psychological analysis." Barth, *Lightner, Savior*, p. 109

Adamic sin "is in no strict sense an historical or psychological happening...the sin which entered the world through Adam is like the righteousness manifested to the world in Christ, timeless and transcendental." Barth, *ibid.* p. 109

Subjective

“Revelation is something that happened...” Brunner

Kierkegaard - Modern father of feeling. Existential- subjective, feeling, experience. “The Bible becomes the Word of God.”

“There is no such thing as revealed truth.” Temple, p. 114

Fallibility of Bible

The Bible is fallible - contains errors and contradictions.

Inspiration of Bible

Reject verbal inspiration “Holy scripture is a token of revelation.” Barth

“What is revealed is not a body of information or of doctrine. God...gives us Himself in communion.” Baillie

“I myself am an adherent of a rather radical school of biblical criticism which, for example, does not accept the Gospel of John as a historical source and which finds legends in many parts of the synoptic gospels.” Brunner, Lightner, p. 119

“Only through a serious misunderstanding will genuine faith find satisfaction in the theory of verbal inspiration of the Bible.” Brunner, *ibid*, p. 121

Christological

Christ is the main thing - “His person in its concrete reality.” Barth Talk like Christ is center of their belief but they do not accept all that the bible says concerning Him.

They seek an infallible Christ in a fallible Bible!

Mythological

“The myth is a form of theological communication. It presents a truth about man’s religious existence in historical dress.” Ramm p. 74 The true meaning is hidden behind the words of historical events.

Creation, the fall, the second coming, the incarnation, the cross are not to be taken literally, truths are hidden in these errors.

Dialectic

Many truths will appear paradoxical to man. Man must be content with being unable to comprehend doctrine fully and thus remain satisfied with inconsistent views.

Neo-evangelicalism - Allow room for error

“All of these factors helped to produce a reaction to these tendencies within fundamentalism - a reaction that has come to be known as “The New Evangelicalism”.” Nash p. 29 Although hermeneutics does play a part, Neo-evangelicalism is more application than interpretation.

Many of the trends argued about in the last decade are now plain teachings. Neo-evan. is an attempt on the part of ex-fundamentalists to bridge the gap between Neo-orthodoxy and

fundamentalism. A distinction between evangelical and fundamental is now made. The trends that separated the two are: “a friendly attitude toward science; a willingness to re-examine beliefs concerning the work of the Holy Spirit; a more tolerant attitude toward varying views on eschatology; a shift away from so-called dispensationalism; an increased emphasis on scholarship; a reopening of the subject of biblical inspiration; and a growing willingness on the part of evangelicals to converse with liberal and dialectical theologians.” Nash p. 31

Many thought and still think that evangelicalism or for that matter Biblical Christianity, can be made acceptable to apostate Christianity and the unsaved world. This is contrary to the words of Christ in John 17:1-26. In his book on the New Evangelicalism, Charles Woodbridge gives 7 reasons why this is a “deadly”, “subtle menace”.

1. It is from within, not outside evangelical circles.
2. Some leaders in it were long known as Bible-believing evangelicals.
3. It is not a clearly defined system of alien theology.
4. It emphasizes love at the expense of doctrine.
5. It “courts and caters to the theological intelligentsia of the liberal camp...”
6. Many Christians are deceived by its false but appealing views.

7. The “camel’s nose of New Evangelicalism is already in the Christian tent. The hermeneutics of the Neo-evangelicals are difficult to pin down because of the differences of those involved. Men like Ockenga, Nash, Henry, Carnell, Graham., Linsell, Fuller Seminary men, etc.. Their rules tend to be based on their position which is anti-dispensational, a covenant theology. As a result:

The New Testament always interprets the Old.

Thus O.T. prophecy concerning Israel must come through the N.T. and in Covenant Theology the church replaces Israel. So most Neo-evangelicals are flexible in major areas of eschatology. With keen insight Lightner says, “The essential eschatological interpretations are not merely speculations to fascinate the human intellect; they are rooted in hermeneutical principles. They lie at the basis of either a literal or allegorical interpretation of Scripture. Eschatological interpretations have a definite bearing upon many other doctrines which one holds. One’s entire system of theology, view of history, interpretation of Scripture, view of the Church as an organism and as an organization in relation to other organizations, and view of Biblical theology is determined to a great extent by his view of eschatology.” Lightner, Neo-Evan. p. 80

Dispensationalism is the result of hermeneutics.

Covenant Theology makes its own hermeneutics.

The Allegorical Method

History

This method was used by many 2nd & 3rd century church fathers. It was established as the preferred method of interpretation by Augustine and was dominant in Catholicism throughout the Middle

Ages. It is also used by amillennialists in interpreting unfulfilled prophecy.

Definition

The literal meaning of the text is either not the true meaning or only one of many meanings. The elements of each passage have a corresponding spiritual reality which is the "real" or ultimate meaning of the passage.

Origen interpreted Noah's Ark to have 3 meanings (literal, moral, and spiritual) to correspond to man's body, soul and spirit: salvation from the Flood, salvation of the believer from a specific sin and salvation of the church through Christ.

Popes used this method to uphold papal supremacy. Innocent III taught that the two great lights in Gen 1:1-31 refer to the order of authority on earth. Thus, the sun symbolized spiritual authority (i.e., the pope) and the moon symbolized civil authority (the emperor). Boniface VIII referring to Luk 22:38, taught that the two swords held by the disciples meant that the apostles were authoritative in both the secular and spiritual kingdoms.

Why This Method Is Unacceptable

Since there is no objective standard to which the interpreter must bow, the final authority ceases to be the scripture and becomes the interpreter. Whose allegorical symbols are right? This question leads to the establishment of a church hierarchical authority which effectively replaces Scripture as the true locus of authority.

Allegorical interpretation is only rarely seen in scripture (Gal 4:21-31; 1Co 10:1-4). Parables are usually not allegories. When would allegorical interpretation be allowable? An even more extreme example of this kind of over-interpretation is numerology. In numerology, numbers in the Bible (whether actual numbers, or the number of letters in names and passages) are seen to hold secret symbolic message. There is no warrant in the Bible for this kind of interpretation. It should be avoided at all times.

Interpreters distinguish between types and allegories. Types are restricted in several ways that allegories are not. See "Elements of Biblical Typology" by the present authors for a description of types.

The Literalistic Method

History

This method was used by the Jews after the Babylonian Exile. It is also used by extreme fundamentalists and many cults (Children of God, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, etc.).

Definition

Every word is taken absolutely literally including figures of speech and symbolism. Historical background is considered unnecessary and ignored. Any deviation from this rule is regarded as sacreligious.

Mormonism teaches that God has a body because of references to God's "eye," "hand," etc. However, see Psa 91:1-4. Does this mean He also has feathers and wings?

Roman Catholic interpretation of Luk 22:19 leads to the doctrine of transubstantiation. However, does this also mean that Christ is a door (John 7:1-53)?

Jehovah's Witnesses use Col 1:15 to prove that Christ was a created being. But "first-born" was also used to refer to the inheritor of the family estate (Num 21:15-17).

Why This Method Is Unacceptable Subscribers always use it selectively (see the above examples).

It makes scripture unintelligible, contradictory, and unlivable (i.e., Luk 14:26).

The Naturalistic Method

History

This system arose during the Enlightenment (18th century). It is used by old-line liberal theology as their basic hermeneutic.

Definition

The naturalistic world-view (i.e. the universe is a closed system of cause and effect) is the standard by which scripture must be interpreted. Scripture becomes intelligible only as ancient man's attempt to explain nature. It also assumes that religion has evolved through several stages which can be used to date the material in the Bible.

Miracles are rejected as primitive explanations or myths. The goal is to rediscover the "true record" (i.e., the "historical" Jesus, or the "strata" in the Pentateuch) within the legendary accounts of the Bible.

Why This Method Is Unacceptable It makes an unproved world-view the final authority. The attempt to separate the historical from the "legendary" has been proven to be impossible.

Neo-Orthodox Interpretation

History

Neo Orthodox theology arose after World War I which shattered the optimism of liberal theologians. Its founders, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Karl Barth, began a movement which dominates both Catholic and Protestant theology today.

Definition

Neo-orthodoxy takes an approach to theology that places the religious experience of the interpreter in the center. The Bible is important for stimulating such an experience. When it does so, it "becomes the word of God" for that reader, at that time. Neo- orthodox theologians are generally willing to accept the conclusions of the naturalistic theologians regarding errors in the Bible, but feel that these do not affect the reader's ability to encounter God through it.

Through seeing the wonder and rapture of the disciples as they behold the "miracles" of Christ, we can enter into the same sense of rapture. Thus, as we see the amazement of the disciples when they behold the resurrected Christ, we too are amazed to find that He has risen in our hearts. Of course, whether Christ actually did rise from the dead is not important. Thus the Neo-orthodox

theologian can declare, "He is risen!"

Neo orthodox theologians routinely refer to miraculous events as though they were history, when they actually believe that the experience of the authors rather than the events themselves that are historical.

Why this method is unacceptable The separation of "truth" or "encounter with Jesus" from the factual content of scripture lowers the Bible to the same level as any other book about religion.

Unless Christ was physically raised from the dead, our experience of his "resurrection" is superfluous (1Co 15:12-19). The criticisms of the naturalistic school also apply.

Devotional Interpretation

History

This method grew out of the post-Reformation as a reaction against sterile creedalism. This is the system unconsciously used by most Christians today.

Definition

The devotional method focuses almost exclusively on what is personally applicable and edifying. It tends to ignore context, historical background, and other important interpretive principles.

Watchman Nee uses Mar 14:3, Joh 12:3, Joh 3:30 & Mar 8:6 to support the necessity of "brokenness" in the Christian life.

Extremists use Col 3:15 to support being led by the Holy Spirit on the basis of feelings.

Why This Method Is Unacceptable Devotional interpretation can easily lead to uncontrolled allegorizing and inaccurate interpretation through eisogesis.

While the goals of this approach to Scripture are commendable, a critical analysis of the text has to precede the devotional question.

Ideological Interpretation

History

The "New Criticism" advanced in the 1940's began to focus on text and reader rather than on the author. The author has no more authority over the meaning of the text than anyone else because: 1) He didn't realize his own bias at the time he wrote, and 2) We have no way to read his mind and thus know his intentions.

Definition

Ideological interpreters approach the Bible looking for material relevant to their ideology. They usually are open about the fact that they have an agenda, and usually claim they are correcting oversights from earlier years by focusing on their area of interest. Most ideological readers also entertain a reader-centered hermeneutic. They are skeptical about ever knowing what the author intended to say, and focus instead on how the text affects the modern reader.

Feminist Theology

Seeks to study women in the Bible, and to demonstrate that the more enlightened speakers in Scripture were anti-patriarchy. In general, their studies are intended to explode the myth of patriarchy and to uncover cruelty to women. Some advance gender-neutral language in translation, including God as "she," sometimes based on lady wisdom Pro 1:20ff.

Marxist or Liberation Theology

Seeks to show that the true intent of God in the Bible is to teach that poor and oppressed classes should be liberated from their oppression by the love of God. Tends to interpret redemptive language in terms of economics and political power. They see class struggle in much of the conflict in the Bible.

Deconstruction

Postmodern readers see the Bible, not as teaching liberation, but as a tool used for exploitation. The Bible is propaganda intended to show why patriarchy is appropriate. The authors of Scripture sought to legitimize the status quo of society by teaching people to obey their authorities. They also sought to justify aggrandizement of the state of Israel and the subjugation of neighboring peoples.

Why this method is unacceptable

Most systems seek to decrease reader bias through the application of rules. These rules introduce objectivity to the interpretive process, according to traditional methods. Ideological and reader-centered methods hold that objectivity is never possible, because the text was never objective in the first place. The first act of interpretation was the author's decision about what to include and what to exclude in his text. Also, the uncertainty of language means modern readers might as well supply their own interpretation, because we will never know what the "true" interpretation should be. To hold to such a thing as a "true" or "real" interpretation is naive, because such faith fails to take into account the arbitrary nature of language and the social forces which distort people's (both readers and author's) view of the world.

Consequently, reader-centered theories are openly biased, but they hold that in this they are no different than other approaches except that they are more honest and less naive. The reader is not under the authority of Scripture. Scripture is pressed into the ideological mold of the reader, leaving the reader in authority.

Inspiration

This is a key area and again depends upon the man being read. Some Neo-evangelicals maintain verbal inspiration but many do not. They speak of "inspiration" but not verbal, plenary inspiration. Or "propositional revelation" which leaves the door open for allowing all kinds of errors in the text but the truths are unaffected. This idea can lead to Neo-orthodoxy.

"Many of us admit that the Bible unquestionably contains factual errors, but we still maintain that it is inerrant in divine purpose." Bass, Woodbridge, p. 50 Revelational part vs. non-revelational parts Infallible rule of faith and practice See how this weakened view relates to other areas:

Science

Many Neo-evangelicals have been far too concessive to “science” [evolution] Ramm believes “progressive creationism.”

“Almighty God is Creator, World Ground. In His mind the entire plan of creation was formed with man as the climax. Over the millions of years of geological history the earth is prepared for man’s dwelling. The vast forests grew and decayed for his coal. The millions of sea life were born and perished for his oil. The surface of the earth weathered for his forests and valleys. From time to time the great creative acts, de novo, took place. Then he whom all creation anticipated is made, MAN, in whom alone is the breath of God.” Ramm, *Christian View*, p. 155 This view, rejected by Neo-evangelicals like Henry, is very close to theistic evolution.

“The changeableness of science and the stability of the Bible must be pondered deeply before concessions are made to ‘science’.” Lightner, *Neo-Evan.* p. 83

Separation and Evangelism

“Evangelicals are more conscious than fundamentalists of the need to carry on an exchange of ideas with liberal and neo-orthodox theologians. Vernon Grounds has stated that an “evangelical can be organizationally separated from all Christ-denying fellowship and yet profitably engage in an exchange of ideas with men who are not evangelicals.” Indeed, unless the conservative does this he is not fulfilling Christ’s injunction to carry the Gospel to all men.” Nash, p. 102

“The evangelical attitude toward ecumenicity is not an easy thing to define. This is largely due to its being a mediating position that attempts to transcend the perspectives of both independency and church unionism.” Nash, pp. 105,106

“...capitalize on the opportunities afforded by cooperative evangelism without sacrificing the purity of his message.” Nash p. 108 (Methods unbiblical, but message - Biblical?)

“Difficult situations and demanding responsibilities call for desperate action. And so the evangelical admits (or ought to admit) that perhaps cooperative evangelism is not the normal thing. But when faced with a choice between an evangelism that reaches the masses and one that will not do it as effectively, the evangelical chooses cooperative evangelism.” Nash, p. 109 On page 110, Nash implies that Neo-evangelicals are guilty of theological heresy but fundamentalists are guilty of “practical heresy” in denouncing others of theological heresy!!! Can the Gospel be divorced from the rest of the Word? One’s view of the Scriptures and rules of hermeneutics will determine his way of life.

“While we must be solicitous about doctrine, Scripture says that our primary business is love. While doctrine illuminates the plan of salvation, the mark of a true disciple is love, not doctrine. Scripture teaches this with such clarity and force that only a highly developed sense of religious pride could miss it.” Carnell, Lightner, *Neo-Evangelism*, p.121 Two questions...Does God’s love overrule His Holiness? Will He relax revelation about hell?

04. Principles of Hermeneutics

4. Principles of Hermeneutics

4.1 The Text 4.1.1 Its Inspiration 4.1.2 Its Illumination 4.1.3 Its Authority 4.1.3.1 The reason 4.1.3.2 The result 4.2 The Technique

4.2.1 The Rules

4.2.1.1 Literal 4.2.1.1.1 Its definition 4.2.1.1.2 Its distinction 4.2.1.1.2.1 Inaccurate statements 4.2.1.1.2.2 Accurate statements 4.2.1.1.3 Its delineation 4.2.1.1.4 Its direction 4.2.1.2 Grammatical - Tools that take apart — (wrenches, pliers and sockets) 4.2.1.3 Historical - Disassembles (shovels, pick and map) 4.2.1.4 Contextual - Measure (level, square, tape, plumb) 4.2.2 The Results 4.2.2.1 Consistency of interpretation 4.2.2.2 Progressive nature of revelation 4.2.2.3 A check on imagination 4.2.2.4 The distinction of Scripture maintained 4.2.2.5 Everything essential for the Christian life is clearly revealed.

4.2.2.6 Obscure passages will be seen in the light of the plain.

4.2.2.7 Ignorance on some passages will be acknowledged.

4.2.2.8 The faith and practice of the interpreter will be based upon the solid foundation of facts and should result in consistent Godly living.

Introduction

The Importance of Hermeneutics

The History of Hermeneutics

Principles of Hermeneutics

The Bible was written over a period of 1,500 years in three different languages--Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. It covers many different cultural settings and historical backgrounds. Moses lived 1,000 years before the most ancient Greek philosopher or mentor; and John, the last writer of Scripture, wrote his work on the island of Patmos 1,500 years after Moses.

We would expect that from this great span of time the world would not remain static but would go through changes, especially in languages, customs, expressions, habits, and people, and the land itself would take on a different face. In order to avoid making blunders, the interpreter should be careful in his research down the road of Bible times.

Historical backgrounds are helpful in interpreting figures. These figures are often drawn from the physical features of the land, the daily life and customs, the history of the Jews, or the religious institutions of Israel. The consequences of ignoring the historical aspect of interpretation has been pointed out quite eloquently by Donald K. Campbell of Dallas Theological Seminary: "If the teacher of Scriptures ignores the historical element, he is in allegorizing, that is, seeking a deeper sense in

the text on the ground that the natural historical sense is unsatisfactory or inadequate" (Donald K. Campbell, "Interpretation and Its Use," Bibliotheca Sacra, CXII, No. 447 [July, 1955], p. 253).

There is a false teaching among liberal interpreters who use the Scripture in a historical method to discount the relevance of the Word of God for today. They do this by deducing that since literal interpreters insist on interpretation geared to the historical, the Bible is limited to its early readers and hearers. In his excellent book, *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, Tan commented: "By misunderstanding the concept of *Sitz im Leben* (life situation of the prophets), liberals eviscerate the practical relevance of the Scripture on the altar of the historical" (P. 97). This leaves us with the question, What is the proper concept of the historical in Bible interpretation? The answer must be that the Scriptures are to be viewed as having been written during given ages and cultures. With that in mind, we can draw applications which can be applied to our day and age. For example, the length of hair for men and women can only be interpreted from the historical and cultural setting of the New Testament times. The principles to be drawn are relevant for us today. Not only does the Bible deal with the historical situations of Bible times, but a great portion of the Word contains spiritual teachings as well as doctrinal concepts which are ageless or directly applicable in any age. Naturally we would not give as much credence to the historical and cultural if the passage in question were one of a doctrinal nature. A good rule of thumb in the interpretation of prophecy is to determine whether the prophet was talking about a specific historical and contemporary event or was predicting something in the future.

The Text

Its Inspiration

"Inspiration results from the divine act whereby the Holy Spirit supernaturally enabled the human authors of scripture to write divine truth. Inspiration guarantees that the original writings were verbally accurate in conveying the truth God wanted revealed to man." Schafer - class notes 2Ti 3:16 - "inspired" - "all scripture is God breathed." Product of God.

Old Testament only?

1Ti 5:18, cf. Luk 10:7 - equated as scripture 2Pe 3:15-16 other scripture Terminus of inspiration is the Scripture - not men Compare 2Pe 1:20-21 and 2Ti 3:16 Does it relate to translations, etc?

Verbal, plenary Verbal = words - all words - breadth verbal Plenary = full - equally inspired - depth plenary Mat 5:18 Infallible and inerrant Science, History

Its Illumination

Work of the Holy Spirit which enables a believer to understand the text or truth of Scripture.

Revelation is receiving truth. Terminus - usually human author Inspiration is recorded truth. Terminus - Scripture Illumination is recognizing truth. Terminus - believer 1Jn 2:20; 1Jn 2:27, Eph 1:18, Heb 5:11-14, Heb 6:1 cf. 1Co 2:14 & 2Co 4:3-4 Illumination is essential to accurate interpretation - Application

Its Authority

The reason

The Bible is the objective Word of God. Because it says what God said, it is authoritative.

The result

It is our rule of faith and practice.

It is alive - Heb 4:12 It can produce life and growth - 2Ti 3:15-16; Joh 17:17;

2Pe 3:18; 2Ti 4:2

“Historically, it is attested by the driftage of every school of thought which has sought to find a ground of faith in any lower than the Church’s doctrine of a plenary inspired Bible. The authority which cannot assure of a hard fact is soon not trusted for a hard doctrine. Sooner or later, in greater or less degree, the authority of the Bible in doctrine and life is replaced by or subordinated to that of reason, or of the feelings, or of the ‘Christian consciousness’...or of that corporate Christian consciousness which so easily hardens into simple ecclesiastical domination.” Warfield, *Inspiration And Authority*, p. 181

“The human mind is very subtle, but with all its subtlety, it will hardly be able to find a way to refuse to follow Scripture in one of the doctrines it teaches without undermining its authority as a teacher of doctrine.” Warfield, *Ibid.*, p. 208

“The real problem brought before the churches by the present debate ought now to be sufficiently plain. In its deepest essence it is whether we can still trust the Bible as a guide in doctrine, as a teacher of truth. It is not simply whether we can explain away the Biblical doctrine of inspiration so as to allow us to take a different view from what has been common of the structure and characteristics of the Bible...It is specifically whether the results proclaimed by a special school of biblical criticism - which are of such a character,...as to necessitate, if adopted, a new view of the Bible and of its inspiration - rest on a basis of evidence...which goes to show that the Biblical writers are trustworthy as teachers of doctrine... The real question, in a word, is not a new question but the perennial old question, whether the basis of our doctrine is to be what the Bible teaches or what men teach.” Warfield, p. 226

The Technique

There is a procedure to follow in order to arrive at the meaning of any given passage. Hermeneutics is the science of the rules that govern this procedure.

The Rules

Following the rules of hermeneutics does not mean that errors of interpretation will not be made nor does it mean that accurate interpretation will not take diligent study and long hours of work. The Spirit’s illumination is the key to accurate interpretation. Persistence is also needed.

Peering into the mists of gray That shroud the surface of the bay, Nothing I see except a veil Of fog surrounding every sail.

Then suddenly against a cape A vast and silent form takes shape, A great ship lies against the shore Where nothing has appeared before. Who sees a truth must often gaze Into a fog for many days;

It may seem very sure to him Nothing is there but mist-clouds dim.

Then, suddenly, his eyes will see A shape where nothing used to be.

Discoveries are missed each day By men who turn too soon away.

Clarence Edward Flynn Method -Literal – Tool Bar Rules -Gramatical- Tools that take apart

Historical- DisassemblesContextual- Measure

Literal

Its definition

“It adopts as the sense of the sentence the meaning of that sentence in usual or ordinary or normal conversation or writing.” Hauser, class notes

“To interpret literally (in this sense) is nothing more or less than interpreting words and sentences in their normal, usual, customary, proper designation.” Ramm, p. 91

Its distinction

“Literal” is in contrast to “allegorical”, “spiritual” or “mystical”. It is not hidden.

Inaccurate statements

“A large part of the Bible makes adequate and significant sense when literally interpreted.” Ramm, p. 94 (The above statement was corrected in the third edition, p. 124)

“Literal interpretation seems to make Bible study easy. It also seems reverent. It argues on this wise: “God must have said just what He means, and must mean just what He has said; and what He has said is to be taken just as He said it, i.e., literally.” But the New Testament makes it plain that literal interpretation was a stumbling block to the Jews. It concealed from them the most precious truths of Scripture.” Allis, p. 258

“Those who utilize this type of interpretation insist that the Scriptures, by and large, must be explained literally. Of course, it is impossible to be a thorough -going literalist, for one is coerced to interpret some statements figuratively. On the other hand, the literalist will explain many figurative passages in the literal sense because of his fear of diluting Scriptural truth. This approach reminds us that there are some passages that must be interpreted literally. Biblical authors often employ literal statements to convey their ideas. And where they use the literal means to express their thoughts, the expositor must employ the corresponding means to explain those thoughts, namely, the literal approach. On the other hand, it is equally true that Biblical writers frequently utilize the figurative method of communicating truth; and in those cases the expositor must likewise use the figurative approach if he is to understand their message.” Traina, Methodical Bible Study, p. 175

Accurate statements

“The basic issue is whether the Biblical documents are to be approached in the normal, customary, usual way in which men talk, write, and think; or whether that level is only preliminary to a second deeper level.” Ramm, p.93

“The term ‘spiritual’ should be rejected, I feel strongly, as a proper name for the anti-literal method of interpretation, for at least two reasons: first, the word is much too fine to be surrendered without protest for wrong uses. Second, no one of any consequence was ever known to employ the ‘spiritualizing’ scheme consistently and exclusively... Doubtless we should thank God that not all men are logically consistent in holding their erroneous opinions.” McClain, *Greatness Of The Kingdom*, p. 143

“...the Spirit of God does not communicate to the mind of even a teachable, obedient, and devout Christian, any doctrine or meaning of Scripture which is not contained already in Scripture itself. he makes men wise up to what is written, but not beyond it.” Angus, Green, *Bible Hand-Book*, p.179

Its delineation

“Of course the literal interpretation of Scripture does not blindly rule out figures of speech, symbols, allegories, and types. The literal meaning of a figure of speech is its proper meaning.” Ramm, p. 95

“The literal meaning of the figurative expression is the proper or natural meaning as understood by students of language. Whenever a figure is used its literal meaning is precisely that meaning determined by grammatical studies of figures. Hence figurative interpretation does not pertain to the spiritual or mystical sense of Scripture but to the literal sense.” Ramm, p. 141

“This method, as its adherents have explained times without number, leaves room for all the devices and nuances of language, including the use of figure, metaphor, simile, symbol, and even allegory. In their criticism of this literal method, most of its critics have been guilty of a ‘crasser literalism’ than ever used by any reputable adherent to the method in its application to the Word of God.” McClain, *Greatness*, p.139

“This is sometimes called the principle of grammatical-historical interpretation since the meaning of each word is determined by grammatical and historical considerations. The principle might also be called normal interpretation since the literal meaning of words is the normal approach to their understanding in all languages. It might also be designated plain interpretation so that no one receives the mistaken notion that the literal principle rules out figures of speech. Symbols, figures of speech and types are all interpreted plainly in this method and they are in no way contrary to literal interpretation. After all, the very existence of any meaning for a figure of speech depends on the reality of the literal meaning of the terms involved. Figures often make the meaning plainer, but it is the literal, normal, or plain meaning that they convey to the reader.” Ryrie, *Dispens. Today*, pp.86,87

“The grammatico-historical sense of a writer is such an interpretation of his language as is required by the laws of grammar and the facts of history. Sometimes we speak of the literal sense, by which we mean the most simple, direct, and ordinary meaning of phrases and sentences... The grammatical sense is essentially the same as the literal, the one expression being derived from the Greek, the other from the Latin.” Terry, *Bib. Her.*, p.203

“Normal is used instead of literal (the term generally employed in this connection) as more expressive of the correct idea. No terms could have been chosen more unfit to designate the two great schools of prophetic exegesis than literal and spiritual. These terms are not antithetical,

nor are they in any proper sense significant of the peculiarities of the respective systems they are employed to characterize. They are positively misleading and confusing. Literal is opposed not to spiritual but to figurative; spiritual is antithesis on the one hand to material, on the other to carnal (in a bad sense). The literalist (so called) is not one who denies that figurative language, that symbols are used in prophecy, nor does he deny that great spiritual truths are set forth therein; his position is, simply, that the prophecies are to be normally interpreted (i.e. according to the received laws of language) as any other utterances are interpreted - that which is manifestly literal being regarded as literal, that which is manifestly figurative being regarded as such. The position of the Spiritualist (so called) is not that which is properly indicated by the term. He is one who holds that whilst certain portions of the prophecies are to be normally interpreted, other portions are to be regarded as having a mystical (i.e. involving some secret meaning)...sense... The terms properly expressive of the schools are normal and mystical." Craven, Langes, vol.12, Revelation, note on p. 98 (see Hogg and Vine, Galatians, p. 219 on allegory.)

Its direction

This is the only approach to any language, and the usual practice in the interpretation of literature. See Ramm, 3rd edition, p.123 Any secondary meanings depend upon the literal meaning. Ramm, p. 124 It is the only safe check on imagination. Ramm, pp 124-125

"Once launched on the sea of conjecture, it is not surprising that interpreters finally arrive at strange ports, as far removed from reality as the popular 'beautiful isle of somewhere'." McClain, *ibid.* p. 140

"To rest one's theology on the secondary stratum of the possible meanings of Scripture is not interpretation but imagination." Ramm, 2edition, p. 95 If the literal sense makes good sense, seek no other sense lest it result in nonsense." anon.

It is the only view consistent with verbal, plenary inspiration. The Bible can be understood when interpreted in this way.

One does not have to shift back and forth between spiritualizing and literal methods. Then "the hermeneutical plow is pulled by "an ox and an ass"." McClain, p.144 (see Schaff, vol. 2, Church History, p. 816 Sensus plenior - Full sense Dynamic equivalency - Sheep, pig

Grammatical -Tools that take apart-(wrenches, pliers and sockets)

"...with due regard to the meaning of words, the form of sentences, and the peculiarities of idiom in the language employed." Angus, Green, HandBook,p.180

Text p. 99

"This is natural corollary to the belief in the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture, for if one holds that the words of the text were inspired of God, then one must interpret those very words." Ryrie, Basis Premil. p. 36 Text p. 100-122 (100, 101, 102, 105, 108, 114)

"The grammatical sense is to be always sought by a careful study and application of the well-established principles and rules of the language. A close attention to the meaning and relations of words, a care to note the course of thought, and to allow each case, mood, tense, and

the position of each word, to contribute its part to the general whole, and a caution lest we assign to words and phrases a scope and conception foreign to the *usus loquendi* of the language - these are rules, which, if faithfully observed, will always serve to bring out the real import of any written document." Terry, *ibid.* p. 210 This is where lexicons, concordances, good commentaries and Greek and Hebrew grammar books come into use. Strong's, Vine's – baptism, filling

Historical - Disassembles (shovels, pick and map)

"The total ways, methods, manners, tools, and institutions by which a people carry on their existence." Hauser, class notes

"The religious, moral, and psychological ideas, under whose influence a language has been formed and moulded; all the objects with which the writers were conversant, and the relations in which they were placed, are traced out historically. The costume of the ideas in the minds of the biblical authors originated from the character of the times, country, place, and education, under which they acted. Hence, in order to ascertain their peculiar *usus loquendi*, we should know all those institutions and influences whereby it was formed or affected." Davidson, quoted by Terry, *ibid.* p. 204

Culture, geography and history of the life and times of the bible should be known and used to determine the correct interpretation. For example: marriage customs, adoption, sonship, firstborn, etc., must all be interpreted in light of historical settings. (Archeology, lakes, climate, land, streams, agriculture and plagues)

Misuse must be guarded against. Writers of Scripture did not use accommodation to the point where truth was conveyed by errors, myths, etc. Historical is to help determine the literal meaning; it is not to be used to try to explain away what is not wanted. 1Ti 2:12

Contextual - Measure (level, square, tape, plumb)

Scripture interprets Scripture - study the materials immediately before and after any passage. - study the book the passage is in. Scope, design, etc. - study the Testament the passage is in. - study the passage in light of the whole Bible see Ramm 3rd edition, pp. 138-140 Usage determines meaning destroyed - Rom 6:6; 1Ti 1:10; Heb 2:14 etc. Obscure in light of the plain 1Co 15:29 "a text without a context is pretext." Hauser

"To ascertain, therefore, the meaning of any passage of Scripture, whether the words be employed figuratively or literally, we must ask the following questions: What is the meaning of the terms? If they have several, we then ask, which of those meanings is required by other parts of the sentence? If two or more meanings remain, then what is the meaning required by the context, so as to make a consistent sense of the whole? If, still, more than one meaning remains, what then is required by the general scope? And, if this question fails to elicit a clear reply, what then is required by other passages of Scripture? If, in answer to all these questions, it is found that more than one meaning may still be given the passage, then both interpretations are in themselves admissible; and we must either select the one which best fulfills most of the conditions, or look elsewhere for some further guide." Angus, *ibid.* pp. 200-201

"Do not choose a man who always preaches on isolated texts, I care not how powerful and eloquent he may be. The affect of his eloquence will be to banish a taste for the Word of God and

substitute a taste for the preacher in its place.” Ramm, *ibid.* p. 89

Several weeks ago while reading a legal opinion I came across several concepts which should sound familiar to all of us. They are: (Rick Booth - Grace Newsletter - 9/86)

1. in ascertaining the interpretation or intent of a legal statute the words will always be given their normal meanings.
2. the interpretation must always be consistent with the immediate text and its surrounding case law.
3. the interpretation must not lead to an absurdity, i.e. it cannot be made to yield a result which is not clearly delineated.

The Results

Consistency of interpretation

Progressive nature of revelation

A check on imagination

The distinction of Scripture maintained

The past dealings of God not read into the present. The present dealings of God not read into the past. The future dealings of God not read into the present.

Dispensationalism, pre-millennialism and a pre-tribulation view of the rapture result from a literal method of interpretation.

Certain distinctions 1. Before the fall 2. After 3. After flood 4. After Sinai 5. After Cross 6. After the 2coming The distinction between Israel and the Church and the Kingdom and the Church is another result.

Mosaic Law, Sabbath questions are answered

Everything essential for the Christian life is clearly revealed.

Obscure passages will be seen in the light of the plain.

No fanciful doctrine will be built on an obscure verse.

Ignorance on some passages will be acknowledged.

The faith and practice of the interpreter will be based upon the solid foundation of facts and should result in consistent Godly living.

“The word (*ereunao*, search), used six times in the New Testament and always with significance (Joh 5:39; John 7:52; Rom 8:27; 1Co 2:10; 1Pe 1:11; Rev 2:23), is three times related to an exercise on the part of men by which they examine the Bible with utmost care. The prophets of old so ‘searched’ (1Pe 1:11), and, if the imperative form by accepted, Christ so directed His hearers (Joh 5:39).” Chafer, *Systematic*, vol. I, p. 115 Spirituality should result from searching.

05. Application of Hermeneutics

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5.1 To Prophecy 5.1.1 The Problem 5.1.1.1 Allegorical or mixed views 5.1.1.2 Literal view 5.1.2 The Principles 5.1.2.1 Compare Scripture 5.1.2.2 Distinguish between interpretation and application 5.1.2.3 Observe time distinctions and time references 5.1.2.4 Watch for twofold application 5.1.3 The purpose of prophecy is basically threefold:

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5.1.5 The literal meaning 5.1.6 Common sense 5.1.7 Historical 5.1.8 No limitation 5.1.9 Double reference 5.1.10 Predictive or didactic 5.1.11 Past or future 5.1.12 In relation to Israel 5.1.13 Christ is central 5.1.14 Israel and the Church are separate 5.1.15 Preconceived interpretation of prophecy 5.1.16 New dimension

5.2 To Parables 5.2.1 The Problem (Zuck pp. 194-226, 198, 199, 200, 204-210) 5.2.1.1 Definition 5.2.1.2 Composition 5.2.1.3 Purpose (Zuck p. 197) 5.2.1.4 The results (Zuck pp. 204, 208-209) 5.3 To Types (Text pp. 169-193) 5.3.1 The Problem 5.3.1.1 Definition (person, event and thing) (Text pp. 172-175) 5.3.1.2 Kinds 5.3.2 The Principles 5.3.2.1 A type must be of divine origin 5.3.2.2 Observe the historical meaning 5.3.2.3 There must be a resemblance between the type and antitype 5.3.2.4 Be careful in the doctrinal use of types.

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Introduction

Importance of Hermeneutics

The History of Hermeneutics

Principles of Hermeneutics

Application of Hermeneutics

To Prophecy

"And when Phillip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And he said, 'Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?'" (Act 8:30-31).

I can readily sympathize with the Ethiopian eunuch who could not understand what he was reading in the Book of Isaiah. How often I myself have wished that I might have a sure guide who would help me understand prophecy. The age in which we live has brought into sharp focus certain prophecies which generations before us either overlooked or misapplied. Of these were such

prophecies as concerning the restoration of Israel, which have come to pass in part in our own time, namely, the regathering of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland Israel (Eze 36:16-24; Eze 37:10).

We of this generation have been privileged to be witnesses of the fulfillment of these prophecies. Others wait for their consummation at their appointed times. It behooves us to be humble and not too rigid in the interpretation of certain predicted events, knowing that there are certain areas of divine rule and providence which God has reserved for Himself. "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law" (Deu 29:29).

Prophecy was not given in order to satisfy the morbid curiosity of some sensational-hungry people, but to be a guide and "a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (1Pe 1:19-21). The study of Bible prophecy, although made "more sure" (2Pe 1:19) by literal interpretation, remains nevertheless a most demanding one. There exists no short cut to true prophetic interpretation. The interpreter who wishes to enter into the study of God's written revelation must diligently prepare himself for this sacred task. For one to be able to interpret Bible prophecy correctly, he must know something about the basic nature of prophecy, the principles of prophetic interpretation, and the language of prophecy.

There are certain principles by which most conservative scholars interpret general Scripture. These are called "the regular principles of hermeneutics." The question asked is whether these are sufficient for interpreting prophecy. Without being dogmatic, I think we say that they are not only insufficient but also dangerous if taken by themselves.

Because prophetic Scripture is a part of God's written revelation and intended for comprehension, it must be interpreted according to rules governing regular literature. Terry observed that "While duly appreciating the peculiarities of prophecy, we nevertheless must employ in its interpretation essentially the same great principles as in the interpretation of other ancient writings" (Terry, pp. 396-97).

The Problem

The problem is not so much in any change in style, grammar, etc. of Scripture but one's answer to the simple question - does God literally mean what He says about the future? Some answer "yes" others "no" and still others, "sometimes" or "maybe".

We will not waste time with those views that reject the fact of prophecy such as liberalism. The rejection of prophecy is humanism, not hermeneutics. The problem demanding attention is the disagreement seen in conservative Protestantism when prophetic passages are interpreted.

"The measure to which literal interpretation is to be followed in Old Testament interpretation is directly related to the problem of the restoration of Israel." Ramm, 3rd., p.255

Such a statement indicates that the real problem is not the rules of interpretation to be used with prophecy but the belief in the results those rules demand. Thus the degree of literalness accepted determines the position taken, premillennial, postmillennial or amillennial. premillennial - literal

postmillennial - mixed amillennial - allegorical (mostly)

"It is generally agreed by all parties that one of the major differences between amillennialism and premillennialism lies in the use of the literal method of interpretation. Amillenarians, while admitting the need for literal interpretation of Scripture in general, have held from Augustine to the present time that prophecy is a special case requiring spiritualizing or non-literal interpretation. Premillennarians hold (why?), on the contrary, that the literal method applies to prophecy as well as other doctrinal areas, and therefore contend for a literal millennium. In a somewhat less degree the same hermeneutical difference is seen in the pretribulation positions. Pretribulationism is based upon a literal interpretation of key Scriptures posttribulationism tends toward spiritualization of the tribulation passages. This is seen principally in two aspects. Posttribulationists usually ignore the distinction between Israel and the Church...tendency is to minimize its (the tribulation) severity and avoid any detailed exegesis." Walvoord, Rapture Question, pp.56-58 Also see Ryrie, Basis Of Premillennial Faith, pp. 38, 46-47

Allegorical or mixed views

A few quotations will show the problem.

"Dispensationalists insist, however, upon a rigid application of an exact literal interpretation, particularly as it has to do with Israel and the church. They insist on an unconditional literal fulfillment of all prophetic promises, failing to realize that by its very nature prophetic utterances are sometimes allegorical or symbolic." Bass, Backgrounds to Dispensationalists, p. 22

"since the canonization of the New Testament, a unitary view of the Bible has been the guiding principle of interpretation for the church. A continuity in the message of the Scriptures has been accepted as the basis for understanding it." Bass, *ibid*, p. 38

"It is true, of course, that literal interpretation of obviously literal prophecy is to be preferred. But a system of hermeneutics which requires all prophecy to be interpreted with absolute literalism is committed to forced exegesis." Ramm, p. 151

"May not the answer be found in the fact that the church is indeed the spiritual Israel; that the covenantal relations of God to Israel have indeed passed over to the church; that the promises to Abraham may be fulfilled in some measure in the church; that the kingdom offered by Christ was a spiritual kingdom which was instituted in the hearts of those who believe; that the church is neither a parenthesis nor an intercalation, but the cumulative display of God's total redemptive plan; that the millennium is to be a personal reign of Christ over a spiritually oriented kingdom rather than a theocratic, Jewish oriented one; that the blessed hope is the return of Christ, rather than the rapture of the church..." Bass, p. 152

"One of the most marked features of Premillennialism in all its forms is the emphasis which it places on the literal interpretation of Scripture. It is the insistent claim of its advocate that only when interpreted literally is the Bible interpreted truly; and they denounce as 'spiritualizers' or 'allegorizers' those who do not interpret the Bible with the same degree of literalness as they do... the question of literal versus figurative interpretation is, therefore, one which has to be faced at the very outset." Allis, Prophecy And Church, pp. 16-17

“While Dispensationalists are extreme literalists, they are very inconsistent ones. They are literalists in interpreting prophecy. But in the interpreting of history, they carry the principle of typical interpretation to an extreme which has rarely been exceeded even by the most ardent of allegorizers.” Allis, p. 21

Concerning a literal interpretation of prophecy he says, “This raises several questions...; the intelligibility of prophecy, the conditional element in prophecy, the relation of the Old Testament to the New Testament, futurism, and the basic distinction between Israel and the Church.” Allis, p.25

“The parenthesis view of the Church is the inevitable result of the doctrine that Old Testament prophecy must be fulfilled literally to Israel and that the Church is a mystery first revealed to the Apostle Paul.” Allis, p. 54

“The limitations and peculiarities of Judaism have been done away. They have been done away not for the time being only, but for ever. They are never to be restored. There is a great and glorious future for the Jews. But that future is to be found in and through the Christian Church...there is no distinctively Jewish age for the Jew to look forward to...Whether the Jews are to return to the earthly Canaan is a matter of relatively little importance...Whether there is to be such a millennium is a question which must be decided in the light of Scripture.” Allis, pp. 258, 259, 261

Note application of this view, “Not until that task is accomplished may she confidently expect Him to come reckon with His servants.” Allis, p. 26

Literal view

Prophecy is treated like all the rest of Scripture.

McClain answers the charge of Allis concerning types in history on page 141 of Greatness of the Kingdom...

Just because premils. recognize types in history does not mean that they do not take history as literal and use of types by premils. does not justify the allegorical view of prophecy that Allis holds. Application and interpretation are two different things, as will be seen in the next section of class notes.

Note how the literal method guided two 19th century writers. Blackstone writes concerning spiritualizing: “There can be no warrant for it. It subverts the authority and power of the Word of God, and Post-millennialists, by so doing, open wide the door for skeptics and latitudinarians of all descriptions...why! The same process of spiritualizing away the literal sense of these plain texts of Scripture will sap the foundation of every Christian doctrine and leave us to drift into absolute infidelity...What is the purpose of language, if not to convey definite ideas?...Surely, there is no symbolism in these plain prophecies, which gives us any authority to ‘spiritualize’ them. Rather let us expect that he will as literally fulfill these as He did the others at His first coming.” (1898) W.E. Blackstone, Jesus Is Coming, pp.22, 25

“Many deny the truth of the restoration and blessing of God’s ancient people, and spiritualize and explain away the numerous scriptures which refer to it, applying them often to the present blessing of the Church of God. Such would do well to ponder the eleventh chapter of Romans...” Chafer,

Coming And Reign...(1880), p. 94

The Principles

Some speak of a "special hermeneutics" due to the "exceptional character" of prophecy. Terry, p. 407 cf. p. 418 Some think that the symbols and figures of speech used in prophecy call for allegorical interpretation.

"To be thoroughly literal we would have to insist that a literal (actual) woman sat literally upon seven literal hills!" Ramm, 3rd, p. 268 Ramm is inconsistent here because he already defined literal as including types, symbols, etc. pp. 119-127 Surely fulfilled prophecy is a gauge which instructs us concerning how future prophecy will be fulfilled.

"Take for example, the words of Gabriel in the first chapter of Luke where he foretells the birth of Christ. According to the angel's words, Mary literally conceived in her womb; literally brought forth a son; His name was literally called Jesus; He was literally great; and he was literally called the Son of the Highest. Will it not be as literally fulfilled that God will yet give to Christ the throne of His father David, that He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and that of His glorious kingdom there shall be no end?" Feinberg, Premil. or Amil.?, quoted Ryrie, Basis, p.44

Since theology is not to determine the hermeneutics used, the only consistent approach to prophecy is to use the same rules that are used for all Scripture - literal, grammatical, historical and contextual.

"These are not principles deduced from premillennial exegesis, but rather these are special rules growing out of the general rules of hermeneutics and the particular problem of prophecy upon which premillennial exegesis is based. If, then, these special principles which concern interpretation of prophecy are consistent with the basic law of hermeneutics, that is, literal interpretation, and if they point the way to a comprehensive, consistent, and harmonious system of Biblical interpretation, then premillennialism rests on an exceedingly firm basis in relation to hermeneutics." Ryrie, Basis, p. 40 The following rules are thus aspects of literal interpretation that should be kept in mind when interpreting prophecy.

Compare Scripture

"Every prophecy is part of a wonderful scheme of revelation, and this entire scheme as well as the interrelationship between the parts must be kept in mind. No one prophet received the revelation of all the truth; rather, the Book unfolds little by little, without contradictions until we have a complete and perfect picture." Ryrie, Basis, p. 41

Most symbols, figures, etc. are explained in the context of the book or elsewhere in the bible. Dan 2:31-35, Dan 2:36-45; Dan 7:1-10, Dan 7:17-26; Dan 8:1-9, Dan 8:20-23; Rev 13:1-5

Distinguish between interpretation and application

"Interpretation is one; application is manifold." Ryrie, Basis, p. 42

"This does not mean that the preacher may never take a prophecy concerning Israel and apply it to the Church. But he should always know what he is talking about, and make certain that his hearers know, so that there can be no possible confusion between the history and its typical

application, or between a prophecy and any so-called "typical interpretation." McClain, p. 141
Interpretation - to Application - for See Scroggi, Guide to the Gospels, p. 552

Observe time distinctions and time references

A literal method demands certain time differences; before fall, after fall, after flood, Mosai, church, millennium and eternal state - at least.

Also notice the time words used in prophecy - Day of the Lord, that day, those days, latter days, then, afterward, Day of Christ, last days, etc.

Watch for twofold application

This aspect of prophecy is called "double reference", "telescopic character", "compenetration".

"All prophecy is complex, i.e., it sees together what history outrolls as separate; and all prophecy is apotelesmatic, i.e., it sees close behind the nearest-coming, epoch-making turn in history, the summit of the end." In other words, somewhat as a picture lacks the dimension of time; events appear together on the screen of prophecy which in their fulfillment may be widely separated in time. Thus the student may find a prophecy having all the external marks of literary unity, yet referring to some event in the near future connected with the historical phase of the Kingdom and also to some far-off event connected with the Messiah and His Millennial Kingdom. When the first event arrives, it becomes the earnest and divine forecast of the more distant and final event...Such a view of prophecy does not mean any abandonment of its literality, as some have argued. The double prediction is literal, and is to be literally fulfilled." McClain, p. 137

"Often a prophecy may have a double fulfillment, one being in the immediate circumstances and another in the distant future." Ryrie, Basis, P. 45 With this in mind always observe the local fulfillment as well as the future prophecy. Isa 7:14-16; Isa 9:6-7 The subject of a prophecy and its relationship to later events will be determined by the context and other scriptures which speak of the same event. Many times the time for the fulfillment is indicated both for the local and future fulfillments.

"No prophecy of scripture is of its own solution; it is constructed so as not to be. To limit it to the past would be an oversight; to set aside the future would destroy the most momentous object God has in it. Thus if to deny the past be an error, to deny the future is a still greater one. The one would have cut off somewhat of interest and profit then; the other shuts out its permanent witness to God's glory. In both respects divine wisdom is most apparent. He provided that which was a warning or encouragement to His people when the prophet was in view of the circumstances which surrounded him; but He pointed onward to a time that was not yet arrived, when the just results of what was in His own mind will be made good and manifest. Now those results can never be till the Kingdom of God come in power and glory. It is impossible that the Spirit of God could be satisfied with anything which either has been among men or is now." Kelly, Minor Prophets, p. 62
See also Vine on Isaiah, p. 61 and Gaebelien on Ezekiel, p. 166

Two aspects:

1. local and future prophecies written together i.e. same sentence, same verse, etc.

2. a single prophecy may have both a local, partial pre-fulfillment and a future, complete fulfillment. Isa 7:14; Zec 9:9-10; Isa 61:1-2; Luk 4:16-21

“From these considerations it will be also seen then, while duly appreciating the peculiarities of prophecy, we nevertheless must employ in its interpretation of other ancient writings. First we should ascertain the historical position of the prophet; next the scope and plan of his book, then the usage and import of his words and symbols, and finally, ample and discriminating comparison of the parallel Scriptures should be made.” Terry, p. 418 Also notice the conditional or unconditional nature of prophecy. Most future prophecy is unconditional.

Keep the purpose of prophecy in mind always: to motivate to Godly living (Joh 3:3; 1Co 15:58; 1Th 4:18).

Further quotes on interpretation and prophecy.

“It cannot be stated too often nor stressed too strongly that the basic and underlying difference between premillennialists and amillennialists is their respective principle of interpretation. Lehman has not overdrawn the case when he tells us: ‘Ultimately these differences (that is, in the matter of interpretation) affect evangelism and missions.’ The results are indeed far-reaching, and they extend into every phase of theological study.”

“Premillennialists recognize that the foundation principle of amillennialism is the allegorizing or spiritualizing method. Payne notes, ‘The cornerstone of amillennialism is its figurative approach to prophecy. By this it is not implied that all prophecy is given a nonliteral sense but that the spiritualizing principle is allowed as valid wherever content and context appear to warrant its use. This is a basic tenet of the system and crucial to its maintenance.’ Ladd correctly points out that, if the spiritualizers had their way consistently, then the second coming of Christ would have to be a spiritual coming instead of a literal one. Is this not precisely the conclusion and predicament of the liberals?”

“Interestingly enough, amillennialists themselves are prepared to admit the danger of allegorizing. Lehman states, ‘Allegorizing or spiritualizing Scripture is an entirely erroneous method of interpretation. This method regards unfigurative language as figurative. Its only limitation is the imagination of the interpreter.’ Berkhof maintains that ‘The Alexandrian school, and especially Origen, its most brilliant representative, undermined Chiliasm by means of its allegorizing interpretation of scripture.’ He shows further how Augustine’s view of the kingdom led unfortunately to the hierarchical conception of the Middle Ages. Rutgers reveals the disastrous results of this principle. Says he, ‘The whole Alexandrian School is tinged with Platonic idealism which tended to disparage the temporal and spacial. Indeed, this allegorical method made unreal the historic facts of Christianity.’ Yet he must acknowledge that the principles laid down in his (Augustine’s) theory of the millennium is that which coincides with the amillennial view, indorsed by the reformers and still held by those of reformed persuasion today.” Charles L. Feinberg, *Premillennialism or Amillennialism?* pp. 207-208

Again, Dr. Feinberg quotes Hospers saying, “Offense is often taken at Chiliasm because it gives the Jew such pre-eminence as if this trenches on the honor of believers. Granting this, who are we to say to God: What doest Thou? Least of any should the Calvinist take such offense. Who of us may complain of God because He did not bestow upon us the genius of a Kant? May some son of

degraded parents accuse God because he was not born into a godly family? And why then should Gentiles imagine that there may not be a special function initiated by God with the Jews rather than with us? Let us fear to obtrude our sense of the fitness of things upon All-wise God. As the cross was an offense to the Jew, standing in the way of darling preconceptions, so Christians may seriously consider whether their aversion to the reinstatement of Israel does not arise from 'high-mindedness'. There is a deep reason for the 'economy' (arrangement of God by which Israel is first singled out, then rejected, and then again put forward.)"

"Among the preconceptions of amillennialists is their unduly low view of the character of the millennial reign of Christ. Hospers points this out in this manner: 'But why cannot our Lord's Millennial reign be another step in His exaltation? Is there anything unworthy about the idea of His reigning on the Throne of David, not with the present-day limitations of earthly kings, but in a way befitting the King of Kings? Why should not a Millennial reign round out in this world of sin the highest contact of the Redeemer with a fallen world, the last of its kind in preparation for the New Heaven and the New Earth, which will be a totally different order of things? The Amillenarian entertains an altogether too low estimate of the Millennium.'" Feinberg, pp. 328-329

Berkhof, a covenant theologian, states concerning the interpretation of prophecy: "Although the prophets often express themselves symbolically, it is erroneous to regard their language as symbolical throughout. They did not, as some writers on prophecy supposed, construct a sort of symbolical alphabet to which they habitually resorted in the expression of their thoughts. Even P. Fairbairn falls into this error when he says that "in the prophecies of the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation, nations are a common designation for worldly kingdoms, stars for ruling powers, roaring and troubled seas for tumultuous nations, trees for the higher, as grass for the lower grades of society, running streams for the means of life and refreshment, etc." ...When the prophets do express themselves symbolically, the context will usually indicate it. Sometimes it is expressly stated, as it is in Dan 8:1-27 and Rev 17:1-18. As a rule the language of the prophets should be understood literally. Exceptions to this rule must be warranted by Scripture."

"While it was but natural that prophecies referring to the near future should be realized in all particulars, it is by no means self-evident that this should also be the case with prophecies that point to some dispensation. The presumption is that, after the forms of life have undergone radical changes, no more can be expected than a realization of the essential central idea. In fact, the New Testament clearly proves that a literal fulfillment is not to be expected in all cases, and that in some important prophecies the dispensational form must be stripped off. Hence it is precarious to assume that a prophecy is not fulfilled as long as the outer details are not realized." cf. Isa 11:10-16; Joe 3:18-21; Mic 5:5-8; Zec 12:11-14; Amo 9:11-12; Act 15:15-17."

"In the interpretation of the symbolical actions of the prophets, the interpreter must proceed on the assumption of their reality, i.e., of their occurrence in actual life, unless the connection clearly proves the contrary. Some commentators have too hastily inferred from a supposed moral or physical impossibility, that they merely occur in a vision. Such a procedure does violence to the plain sense of the Bible."

"Prophecies should be read in the light of their fulfillment, for this will often reveal depths that would otherwise have escaped the attention. The interpreter should bear in mind, however, that many of them do not refer to specific historical events, but enunciate some general principle that

may be realized in a variety of ways. If he should simply ask, in such cases, to what event the prophet refers, he would be in danger of narrowing the scope of the prediction in an unwarranted manner. Moreover, he should not proceed on the assumption that prophecies are always fulfilled in the exact form in which they were uttered. The presumption is that, if they are fulfilled in a later dispensation, the dispensational form will be disregarded in the fulfillment.” L. Berkhof, Principles of Biblical Interpretation, pp.150-151,153.

“The final refutation of early Premillennialism was given by the great theologian of the West, Augustine (died, 430, A.D.), and so thoroughly did he do his work that it did not again gain a prominent position until a thousand years later, following the Protestant Reformation.”

“Two really outstanding theologians of the period, Origen and Augustine, were strongly opposed to Premillennialism. As far as its presence in the early Church is concerned, surely it can be argued with as must reason that it was one of those immature and unscriptural beliefs that flourished before the Church had time to work out the true system of Theology as that its presence at that time is an indication of purity of faith. In any event, so thoroughly did Augustine do his work in refuting it that it practically disappeared for a thousand years as an organized system of thought, and was not seriously put forth again until the time of the Protestant Reformation. At that time it was advocated by numerous independent groups but was solidly opposed by the Reformers themselves. Since that time it has never been strong enough to be written into any of the principle church creeds.” L. Boettner, The Millennium, pp. 329,366

Dr. Boettner points out that each of these systems is consistently evangelical, that each has been held by many able and sincere men, and that the differences between them arise not because of the distinctive method employed by each in its interpretation of Scripture. Strange it is that Origen and Augustine are so highly praised in light of their almost total use of allegory! In a recent book entitled The Meaning of the Millennium, representatives of the four views present their arguments. Ladd, the historic premillennialist says, “Dispensational theory insists that many of the Old Testament prophecies predict the millennium and must be drawn in to construct the picture of Messiah’s millennial reign. This view is based upon the hermeneutic that the Old Testament prophecies must be interpreted literally.”

Boettner, the postmillennialist says, “It is generally agreed that if the prophecies are taken literally, they do foretell a restoration of the nation of Israel in the land of Palestine with the Jews having a prominent place in the kingdom.”

Earl Radmacher in the “Christianity Today” review summarizes the problem in these words: “The crux of the problem then is literal interpretation (given the proper understanding of figurative language as a legitimate literary genre) as an exclusive or single hermeneutic as over against using literal interpretation normally but spiritualizing at times. It is this latter approach that brings Ladd into conflict with Hoekema and Boettner in Rev 20:1-15 and with Hoyt in the Old Testament. One wonders on what basis the tested and tried control of literal interpretation is set aside. Ladd responds that a “millennial doctrine cannot be based on Old Testament prophecies but should be based on the New Testament alone”.

“Undoubtedly, many people will agree with Ladd, but Hoyt’s quotation of John Bright may cause others to reevaluate the legitimacy of building one’s doctrine of the millennium on the New

Testament alone. Bright writes: "For the concept of the Kingdom of God involves, in a real sense, the total message of the Bible. Not only does it loom large in the teachings of Jesus; it is to be found in one form or another, through the length and breadth of the Bible...Old Testament and New Testament thus stand together as the two acts of a single drama. Act I points to its conclusion in Act II, and without it the play is an incomplete, unsatisfying thing. But Act II must be read in the light of Act I, else its meaning will be missed. For the play is organically one. The Bible is one book. Had we to give that book a title, we might with justice call it 'The Book of the Coming Kingdom of God'."

Much ignorance and disagreement abounds in Christianity over the doctrine of prophecy. The problem is not caused by any vagueness in Scripture but is due totally to the method of interpretation used. If believers took the Bible at face value and stopped reading it through the perverted glasses of Augustine and his followers, eschatological confusion would be cleared up. The believer does not have to be premillennial to go to heaven or even to fellowship with other saints, but no one can consistently apply the literal, normal method of interpretation to Scripture and not be premillennial.

The purpose of prophecy is basically threefold:

To warn

To warn men against those sins that have brought judgment and sorrow upon Israel. "Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, and you stand only by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you" (Rom 11:20-21).

To guard

To guard against false doctrines and prophets (2Pe 2:1-22).

To strengthen

To strengthen our faith, and to comfort the believer that God will fulfill His promises of eternal redemption and the establishment of His kingdom (Isa 65:17-25; Isa 66:22; Rev 21:1-4).

The Bible is different.

The first and most important condition for the understanding of prophecy, and of Scripture in general, is to remember that the Bible differs from all other writings and literature known to man. Here God Himself speaks to man.

It is therefore essential that we approach the study of Scripture with reverence and humility, and with an ear attuned to the voice of God. Any other approach, be it ever so scholarly, will not reveal the deeper meaning of prophecy. Just as in order to understand music one must have an ear for the harmony, the beauty, and the message of music, and just as in order to understand any form of art one must have an eye which is capable of appreciating the form, the beauty, and the meaning of the work of art, so also it is essential that our inner ear and eye be adjusted to the prophetic message. Some people are physically blind; others suffer from color blindness. But there are multitudes who are afflicted with spiritual blindness. The psalmist prayed: "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law" (Psa 119:18). The knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, and

Aramaic, of archaeology, of history, and of the classics, while most useful, will never replace spiritual insight and comprehension. The Apostle Paul told us: "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1Co 2:14). The study of Scripture, to be fruitful, must be in a spirit of humility, not presuming to set ourselves up as judges of the Word of God, but rather as those who are willing to submit themselves to its judgment. The Apostle Peter wrote: "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1Pe 5:5).

The literal meaning

Before proceeding with the interpretation of prophecy, it is essential to determine the literal meaning of the prophet's message. One must ask himself the question, What did the prophet seek to convey to his listeners or to his readers? When we understand this, we have made the first step in understanding what the particular message means for us today.

Common sense

We need to respect the sound principle of interpretation as noted in the "Golden Rule of Interpretation":

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

Bible readers (and teachers) have been known to get lost in the attractive alleys and mazes of prophetic speculation, because they have disregarded the above common sense rule of interpretation.

Historical

The historical circumstances under which the prophet lived and labored are important factors which help us understand his message. Places, persons, nations, and events to which the prophet referred set the stage for his activities and anchored them in the history of the age.

No limitation

Although a specific historical situation usually was the occasion for the prophet's utterance or action, he was by no means limited to that particular incident or event but may have made it an occasion for a pronouncement concerning events which were yet to happen, either in the near or distant future.

Double reference

This leads us to the principle of double reference. A prophetic statement may refer to a currently existing situation and announce what God will do about it immediately. From there the prophetic may proceed to predict what God will eventually do in the distant future or even in the last days. Sometimes these prophecies blend into one vision, as when one scene in a film fades out and another is superimposed upon the first. The point of transition from one vision to another is not always clearly marked. For instance, in Isa 14:4-11, there is a taunting song against the king of

Babylon and his coming downfall and destruction. However, in Isa 14:12-17 the taunt takes on a cosmic character, describing the archenemy of God, Lucifer. "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations!" (Isa 14:12). A parallel situation is found in Eze 28:1-26 where in Eze 28:2-10 there is a prediction about the destruction of Tyre with all its pride and wisdom. From Eze 28:13-15 the oracle transcends any human being or earthly dominion and becomes a taunting song against Satan himself:

You were in Eden, the garden of God . . .

You were the anointed cherub . . .

You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, Until unrighteousness was found in you.

Predictive or didactic

Prophecy is either didactic or predictive and sometimes a mixture of both. Didactic prophecy (forthtelling) seeks to lay bare or correct the moral and spiritual shortcomings primarily of Israel. Jehovah is eternal and His character unchangeable; therefore, His judgment and His dealings with Israel are prophetic of His dealings with other nations consistent with His own righteousness and their knowledge of God. "'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised . . . for all the nations are circumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart'" (Jer 9:25-26). The Apostle Paul emphasized this fact when he wrote Rom 11:21.

Past or future

In dealing with predictive prophecy it is necessary to distinguish between the prophecies which have already been fulfilled, and those which still await their consummation.

Thus the predictions of the Egyptian bondage, the Assyrian invasion, the Babylonian captivity, and subsequent return to the Holy Land were fulfilled.

Other prophecies were fulfilled in part and await their final consummation in the future. To this second type of predictions belong many of the Messianic prophecies. When the prophets Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others first uttered them, these were still future events, later fulfilled with the coming of the Messiah Jesus. However, their complete fulfillment awaits the return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom.

In relation to Israel

We must bear in mind that the prophets were primarily God's messengers to Israel, to teach, to rebuke, to console, to foretell His future plans for Israel. Where the prophets spoke concerning other nations, it was generally with regard to their relationship to Israel. In general it can be said that the Old Testament deals with the Church composed of Jews and Gentiles who believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior (Eph 2:1-22). The Church is a super national spiritual entity. Israel is a national entity" With a spiritual goal. It is therefore a mistake to confuse the Church with Israel as so many have done.

Christ is central

The point of convergence of prophecies which were of a national character and those of a universal nature is the person of the Messiah of Israel who is alone the savior of all men. In His person the kingdom of God and His salvation embraces all mankind. Within physical and national Israel there is a spiritual remnant, which is the true Israel, the Israel of God (Gal 6:16). This is one of the central themes of Old Testament prophecy and is continued in the New Testament. Out of this faithful remnant of Israel came Christ, His apostles, and the New Testament Church, the ecclesia. To this Church belong both believing Jews and Gentiles (Mat 28:19; Mar 16:15; Luk 24:47; Joh 10:16; Act 1:8; Rom 9:24; Gal 3:28; Eph 2:1-22).

Israel and the Church are separate

Because the God of Israel is also the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His Church, there are many spiritual similarities and parallels between Israel and the Church. Nevertheless, historical "Israel" and "the Church" are two distinct entities which live separate and distinct lives and should never be confused. The spiritual core of Israel, the faithful remnant, is not the Church, but a part of it (Eph 2:19-22). Conversely, the Church is not Israel nor "the New Israel" as erroneously taught for centuries by the Church of Rome and by many contemporary Protestant theologians. The Church consists of believing Jews and Gentiles. The confusion of the Church with Israel has had baneful consequences for the Church and for Israel, and has caused grave misinterpretation of the Scriptures. For centuries it has colored Christian thinking about the Jews. It left the Jews with all the dire threats and predictions of judgment and desolation and exclusively misappropriated for the Church all the promises of divine redemption and mercy. There are enough distinctive and glorious promises given specifically to the Church of Christ without misapplying those which were given to Israel (Rom 9:4-5).

Preconceived interpretation of prophecy

In interpreting prophecy one must be aware of pitfalls. One of these is the forcing of historical events into the framework of our preconceived interpretation of prophecy. However, history often has a painful way of correcting our notions. When one reads biblical commentaries from the Napoleonic era, he may at times find Napoleon cast in the role of Antichrist. During World War II, a well-known Bible teacher in America taught that Mussolini was the Antichrist. Such examples could be multiplied ad infinitum.

Another dangerous pitfall is the setting of dates concerning the fulfillment of certain prophetic events, especially with regard to the second coming of Christ. This inclination has marred the reputation of some Bible teachers.

New dimension

In interpreting prophecy we must remember that the prophets were guided by the Holy Spirit to foretell events, the full import of which they were not always fully aware themselves (1Pe 1:10-11), neither when or under what circumstances their prophecies would come to pass. They were permitted to see the future on a flat, two-dimensional canvas, not realizing fully the broad valleys, the rivers, and the mountain ranges existing between one predicted event and another. God Himself, who is the Lord of history, has a way of bringing into view prophecy which was unclear in

former generations. It is easier for us, who look from the standpoint of the New Testament, to understand certain prophecies than it was in the times of the prophets. In the light of the New Testament, prophecy takes on for us a new dimension.

To Parables

The Problem (Zuck pp. 194-226, 198, 199, 200, 204-210)

Although many would try to confuse the issue of parables by using the allegorical method, the real problem is not literal vs. allegorical but to what extent should one go in making every aspect of a parable have interpretive value?

“How much of them is to be taken as significant?” Trench, p.31

“After all has been urged on the one side and on the other, it must be confessed that no absolute rule can be laid down beforehand to guide the expositor how far he shall proceed.” Trench, Interpretation of Parables, p.36 To help solve the problem, we must understand what parables are and why they are used in Scripture.

Definition

“The word parable is derived from the Greek verb *paraballo*, to throw or place by the side of, and carries the idea of placing one thing by the side of another for the purpose of comparison.” Terry, Principles, p. 276 Trench refers to them as “apples of gold in network of silver.” p.31

Parables should be distinguished from fables, myths, proverbs, allegories, etc. See Ramm, p. 276, Trench, pp. 1-10, Terry pp. 276, 277 (Zuck pp. 211-223)

Composition

“The parable is commonly assumed to have three parts (Zuck pp. 198, 205-208) The occasion and scope The similitude, in the form of a real narrative The moral and religious lessons.” Terry, p. 281 Ramm comes up with four parts - pp. 278-279

Purpose (Zuck p. 197)

Mat 13:10-17 gives the purpose.

- to reveal truth to believers - to conceal truth from unbelievers Those who want to know the truth will search it out but those who aren't saved will hear the story but give no thought to its significance.

The results (Zuck pp. 204, 208-209)

“Care should be taken in studying the parables to distinguish between interpretation and application. All the Bible is for us, but it is not all about us. Interpretation is limited by the original intent of the parable, and this intent is determined by occasion and circumstance; but application is not limited, for the way in which it can help us is its meaning for us. Interpretation is dispensational and prophetic. Application is moral and practical.” Scroggie, p. 552

“Much must be left to good sense, to spiritual tact, to that reverence for the Word of God, which will show itself sometimes in refusing curiosities of interpretation, no less than at other times in

demanding a distinct spiritual meaning for the words which are before it.” Trench, p. 37

“Parables do teach doctrine, and the claim that they may not be used at all in doctrinal writing is improper. But in gleaning our doctrine from the parables we must be strict in our interpretation; we must check our results with the plain, evident teaching of our Lord, and with the rest of the New Testament.” Ramm, p. 285

“Once more: the parables may not be made first sources and seats of doctrine. Doctrines otherwise and already established may be illustrated, or indeed further confirmed by them; but it is not allowable to constitute doctrine first by their aid...This rule, however, has been often forgotten, and controversialists, looking round for arguments with which to sustain some weak position, one for which they can find no other support in Scripture, often invent for themselves supports in these.” Trench, pp. 40-41

“...they came, not to learn its language, but to see if they could not compel it to speak theirs; with no desire to draw out of Scripture its meaning, but only to thrust into Scripture their own. When they fall thus to picking and choosing what in it they might best turn to their ends, the parables naturally invite them almost more than any other portions of Scripture.” Trench, p. 42

To Types (Text pp. 169-193)

The Problem

The problem in typology is to determine what is a type and how far one should go in making types out of things not clearly stated to be such in Scripture. The early church fathers had no “well-defined principles to guide them in their interpretations of Old Testament Scripture, which could either enable them to determine between the fanciful and the true in typical applications, or guard them against the worst excesses of allegorical license.” Fairbairn, Typology, p. 7 In finding fault with the literal method of interpretation, Allis uses the excesses of some dispensationalists as evidence. His main argument is invalid but his warning is valid, “There may be serious danger in attaching ‘typical’ importance to Old Testament events and institutions which cannot be proved to have any such meaning.” Allis, Pro. Church, p.22

Some attempt to solve the problem by restricting types to those stated to be types in Scripture. Others argue that the stated types give the basis for finding types not called such in Scripture.

Definition (person, event and thing) (Text pp. 172-175)

“A type is an illustration based on an Old Testament character, event, or institution which while having reality and purpose in Bible history, is also a divine foreshadowing of things to come.” Hauser, class notes See Ramm, pp. 227-228, also Terry, p. 336 and footnote p.337

Kinds

Terry lists person, institutions, offices, events and actions as kinds of types. pp.338-340. Ramm adds things, pp.231-232

The Principles

“The hermeneutical principles to be used in the interpretation of types are essentially the same as those used in the interpretation of parables and allegories.” Terry, p. 340

A type must be of divine origin

“There must be evidence that the type was designed and appointed by God to represent the thing typified.” Terry

It is “...a matter not to be left to the imagination of the expositor to discover, but resting on some solid proof from Scripture itself.” Terry, pp. 337-338 “The connection between type and antitype must not be accidental nor superficial but real and substantial.”

“A type is properly designated when either it is so stated to be one in the New Testament, or wherein the New Testament states a whole as typical (i.e., the Tabernacle, and the Wilderness Wanderings) and it is up to the exegetical ability of the interpreter to determine additional types in the parts of these wholes.” Ramm, p. 228

“The former must not only resemble the latter, but must have been designed to resemble the latter...in its original institution.” Angus, Green, p. 226

Observe the historical meaning

“The type is always something historical...” Terry, p.337

“The type may have its own place and meaning, independently of that which it prefigures...hence, it follows that the type may at the time have been unapprehended in its highest character.” Angus, p. 225

“...It is important to remember that the inspired writers never destroyed the historical sense of Scripture to establish the spiritual; nor did they find a hidden meaning in the words, but only in the facts of each passage; which meaning is easy, natural, and Scriptural;..Angus, p.227

There must be a resemblance between the type and antitype.

The antitype must be greater than the type.

“Great care must be taken to lift out of the Old Testament items precisely that which is typical and no more. There are points of pronounced similarity and equally so, points of pronounced dissimilarity between Christ and Aaron or Christ and Moses. The typical truth is at the point of similarity.” Ramm, pp. 228-229

Be careful in the doctrinal use of types.

Some use the typology of the tabernacle to teach the whole Christian life. “...We must proceed with care and check the play of our imagination.” Ramm, p. 231

“Compare the history or type with the general truth, which both the type and antitype embody; expect agreement in several particulars, but not in all; and let the interpretation of each part harmonize with the design of the whole, and with the clear revelation of Divine doctrine given in other parts of the sacred volume.” Angus, p. 227 (Text pp. 1790180 – types)

To Numbers

The Problem

Do numbers have a symbolic use in Scripture?

“Every observant reader of the Bible has had his attention arrested at times by what seemed a mystical or symbolical use of numbers.” Terry, p. 380

“Numerical symbolism, that is, the use of numbers not merely if at all, with their literal numerical value, or as round numbers, but with symbolic significance, sacred or otherwise, was widespread in the ancient East, especially in Babylonia and regions more or less influenced by Babylonian culture which included Canaan...the presence of this use of numbers in the Bible, and that on a large scale, cannot reasonably be doubted, although some writers have gone too far in their speculations on the subject. The numbers which are unmistakably used with more or less symbolic meaning are 7 and its multiples, and 3, 4, 10 and 12. By far the most prominent of these is the number 7...” ISBE, pp. 2159-2163

The Principles

“Biblical symbolism is, in many respects, one of the most difficult subjects with which one must deal in the science of hermeneutics...The first question which must be discussed regards the actual existence of symbolic numbers in the bible...there is by no means unanimous opinion concerning the reality of symbolic numbers...” Davis, Biblical Numerology, p. 103

“There are, however, varying degrees of opinion with regard to which numbers are used symbolically and when they are used.” Davis, p. 104

Those who find much symbolism in numbers are almost “totally subjective” in their reasoning. “Unfortunately this viewpoint is that generally accepted by pastors and popular Bible teachers without question.” Davis, p.104

“...popular prophetic teachers who have a flair for the spectacular. Apparently ‘allegorical arithmetic’ has an appeal to many people.” Davis, p. 110

“...the only number used symbolically in the Scripture to any degree with discernible significance, is the number 7. The number seven occurs in one way or another in nearly six hundred passages of the Bible.” Davis, p. 117

Concerning the number 7 - “In all cases it seems that the idea conveyed is that of ‘completeness’.” Davis, p.118

“It should be pointed out that nowhere in Scripture is any number given any specific theological or mystical meaning!” “Whatever has been deduced on this subject has been pure speculation and the result of the subjective reasoning.” Davis, p. 119

“It appears that there are almost as many different interpretations of the number as there are interpreters. What has been observed with regard to the interpretation of the number three can be observed with the rest of the numbers.” Davis, p.121

“It is rather interesting that not one New Testament writer ever pointed back to the significance of a symbolic number occurring in the Old Testament.” Davis, p. 122

Rev 13:18 has been often used to show gematria in the New Testament. A fascinating number of people have been made to fill the bill but a Biblical interpreter must do more than come up with religious comics! When the tribulation comes, the 666 of Rev 13:18 will be known. The symbolism of not only numbers but of colors and names should be approached very cautiously. There is more truth in the plain sense of scripture than the most diligent interpreter will ever dig out in a lifetime. So take your tools and dig the clearly exposed strata. The rich treasures of scripture are not found in the subjective extremities where unclean mixture is most likely, but in the center of the plain sense.

To Present Issues

The Problem

The problem is seen in the wide range of groups and doctrines that make up "Christendom" today.

Analyze the hermeneutics of the cults. Observe how hermeneutics plays a part in the doctrinal issues of the day. This is where an error starts.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Joh 1:1, Joh 8:58 cf. John 10:9, Col 1:15-17 Hell - rationalistic method

Christian Science

Note "hermeneutics" of 'science and Health"

Baker - She's subjective, but her followers take her literally.

Healing and 'seed-faith"- Oral Roberts

What system of hermeneutics does he use?

Php 4:19; Luk 6:38; Php 4:6; Heb 6:14

Roman Catholic

Hermeneutics involved purgatory (church over scripture)

Charismatic Movement

Correct hermeneutics should lead to correct emphasis. A huge structure built with little or no foundation and totally out of Biblical proportions is not Biblical. 1Co 12:13; 1Co 12:7, 1Co 12:11, 1Co 12:30 Note grammar, check Greek word "tongue" and addition of "unknown" 1Co 14:1-40.

Seventh Day Adventists

Dan 8:14 - "evenings and mornings"

What hermeneutical basis for changing days to years? Say there is no historical evidence it days but then try to say the evidence of Mat 24:1-51 has already been seen to support 1844!!

Daniel's 70th week fulfilled in 34 A.D. Christ was killed in the middle of the week. cf. Dan 9:25-27 Sabbath - Exo 31:13, Exo 31:16; Neh 9:13-14; Col 2:16-17 Law - Rom 6:14 law principle

06. General Principles for Interpretation

6. General Principles for Interpretation 6.1 The Bible is Authoritative 6.2 Scripture best interprets Scripture 6.3 Only the Holy Spirit can give us God's meaning 6.4 Interpret personal experience in light of Scripture not Scripture in light of experience 6.5 Biblical examples are authoritative when supported by a command 6.6 The primary purpose of the Bible is to change lives not increase knowledge 6.7 Each Christian must interpret the Bible for himself

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Scripture best interprets Scripture

Only the Holy Spirit can give us God's meaning

Interpret personal experience in light of Scripture not Scripture in light of experience

Biblical examples are authoritative when supported by a command

The primary purpose of the Bible is to change lives not increase knowledge

Each Christian must interpret the Bible for himself

07. Principles for Historical Interpretation

7. Principles for Historical Interpretation 7.1 Introduction 7.2 Although Church history is important it is not decisive for interpretation 7.3 Scripture should be interpreted in the light of Biblical history 7.4 Scripture is progressive 7.5 Historical facts or events become symbols of spiritual truth only if the Scriptures say so 7.6 Presuppositions 7.6.1 Historical background 7.6.2 The Bible is historical 7.6.3 Location, time, circumstances 7.6.4 The Word is Living 7.7 Know the author or speaker 7.7.1 Who was the author?

7.7.1.1 What was his habitual mode of thought? 7.7.1.2 What was his disposition? 7.7.1.3 What was his temperament? 7.7.1.4 What were the motives that controlled his life? 7.7.1.5 What was his character? 7.7.1.6 What was his profession? 7.7.1.7 What was his language? 7.7.1.8 What was his manner? 7.7.1.9 Was he different than his peers?

7.7.2 Who was the speaker?

7.8 Odd circumstances surrounding the writing 7.8.1 By whom did the author originally intend his work to be read or heard?

7.8.2 Why did the author write it?

7.8.3 Were there any special circumstances?

7.8.4 What frame of mind did the author have?

7.8.5 In what period of the author's life was the work written?

7.9 The social aspect 7.9.1 Geographical

7.9.1.1 Climate 7.9.1.2 Productions 7.9.1.3 The land

7.9.2 Religious 7.9.3 The political situation

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The Bible was written over a period of 1,500 years in three different languages--Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. It covers many different cultural settings and historical backgrounds. Moses lived 1,000 years before the most ancient Greek philosopher or mentor; and John, the last writer of Scripture, wrote his work on the island of Patmos 1,500 years after Moses.

We would expect that from this great span of time the world would not remain static but would go through changes, especially in languages, customs, expressions, habits, and people, and the land itself would take on a different face. In order to avoid making blunders, the interpreter should be careful in his research down the road of Bible times.

Historical backgrounds are helpful in interpreting figures. These figures are often drawn from the physical features of the land, the daily life and customs, the history of the Jews, or the religious institutions of Israel. The consequences of ignoring the historical aspect of interpretation has been pointed out quite eloquently by Donald K. Campbell of Dallas Theological Seminary: "If the teacher of Scriptures ignores the historical element, he is in allegorizing, that is, seeking a deeper sense in the text on the ground that the natural historical sense is unsatisfactory or inadequate" (Donald K. Campbell, "Interpretation and Its Use," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, CXII, No. 447 [July, 1955], p. 253).

There is a false teaching among liberal interpreters who use the Scripture in a historical method to discount the relevance of the Word of God for today. They do this by deducing that since literal interpreters insist on interpretation geared to the historical, the Bible is limited to its early readers and hearers. In his excellent book, *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, Tan commented: "By misunderstanding the concept of *Sitz im Leben* (life situation of the prophets), liberals eviscerate the practical relevance of the Scripture on the altar of the historical" (P. 97). This leaves us with the question, What is the proper concept of the historical in Bible interpretation? The answer must be that the Scriptures are to be viewed as having been written during given ages and cultures. With that in mind, we can draw applications which can be applied to our day and age. For example, the length of hair for men and women can only be interpreted from the historical and cultural setting of the New Testament times. The principles to be drawn are relevant for us today. Not only does the Bible deal with the historical situations of Bible times, but a great portion of the Word contains spiritual teachings as well as doctrinal concepts which are ageless or directly applicable in any age. Naturally we would not give as much credence to the historical and cultural if the passage in question were one of a doctrinal nature. A good rule of thumb in the interpretation of prophecy is to determine whether the prophet was talking about a specific historical and contemporary event or was predicting something in the future.

Although Church history is important it is not decisive for interpretation

Scripture should be interpreted in the light of Biblical history

Scripture is progressive

Historical facts or events become symbols of spiritual truth only if the Scriptures say so

Presuppositions

Historical background

One must see the historical background of the author before he can fully understand and interpret his words.

The Bible is historical

The Bible was written in history and in a historical way; therefore, it can only be fully understood in light of its history.

Location, time, circumstances

Location, time, circumstances, and the mindset of the world at the time of a writing will color the things written during that time period, and even sometimes into the future.

The Word is Living

The words must be considered living, to be correctly understood, and as having had their origin in the heart of the author.

Know the author or speaker

Who was the author?

What was his habitual mode of thought?

What was his disposition?

What was his temperament?

What were the motives that controlled his life?

What was his character?

What was his profession?

What was his language?

What was his manner?

Was he different than his peers?

Who was the speaker?

The same things apply to the speaker that apply to the author. It must be noted, as a general rule, that unless there is some evidence that the author has switched from his own voice to that of a speaker, we should assume that the author is speaking.

Odd circumstances surrounding the writing

By whom did the author originally intend his work to be read or heard?

Why did the author write it?

Were there any special circumstances?

What frame of mind did the author have?

In what period of the author's life was the work written?

The social aspect

Geographical

Climate

Seasons, Wind, Temperature

Productions

Trees, Shrubs, Fruits, Grains, Vegetables, Animals, Insects, Birds

The land

Mountains, Valleys, Lakes, Rivers, Cities, Roads, Deserts

Religious

The interpreter should be acquainted with the religious institutions and practices of Israel as regulated by the Mosaic Law. The special feasts should also have a place in our study of history.

The political situation

An important impression will be left in the literature of a country by the political influence of the time.

08. General Principles for Theological Interpretation

8. General Principles for Theological Interpretation 8.1 Scripture must be interpreted grammatically before theological 8.2 Doctrine is only Biblical when it sums up all that Scripture says about that doctrine 8.3 If two doctrines appear to contradict each other, assume that both are true 8.4 Implied teaching is only Biblical when related verses support the passage 8.5 The unity of Scripture 8.5.1 Both contain the same doctrine of redemption.

8.5.2 The true Israelite is one not of flesh but of faith.

8.5.3 Most of the differences between the people of God in the Old and New Testaments were privileges and duties in terms of relativity, not absolutes.

8.5.4 The New Testament is a commentary on the Old.

8.5.5 The Old Testament is the key to correct interpretation of the New.

8.5.6 Both the Old and New Testaments are important and neither one should be minimized.

8.6 The unifying principle of Scripture is God's glory, not redemption.

8.7 Clarity of Scripture 8.8 Make Christ central.

8.9 Revelation is accommodated.

8.10 Israel and the Church are separate distinct entities.

8.11 One must ask the question. Why is this here?

8.12 Dispensations 8.13 Scripture interprets Scripture.

8.14 The doctrine of progressive revelation 8.15 The analogy of faith 8.16 The unity of the meaning of Scripture 8.17 The rule of the simplest alternative 8.18 Interpretation and application

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Biblical hermeneutics is generally considered apart from theological discussions, but one can see how theological presuppositions and assumptions could influence and even determine one's hermeneutical models.

History cannot explain all that is in Scripture; some things are found only in God as the auctor primarius. Psychological factors and historical conditions cannot account for such things as (1) the Bible is the living Word of God come in the flesh; (2) the Bible must be considered as a whole and is therefore not just the sum of its parts; (3) the Old Testament and the New Testament are a part of each other; one explains the other.

"The name 'Theological Interpretation' deserves the preference, as expressive, at once, of the fact that its necessity follows from the divine authorship of the Bible, and of the equally important consideration that, in the last analysis, God is the proper Interpreter of His Word" (Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, 1950, p. 134).

Scripture must be interpreted grammatically before theological

Doctrine is only Biblical when it sums up all that Scripture says about that doctrine

If two doctrines appear to contradict each other, assume that both are true

Implied teaching is only Biblical when related verses support the passage

Theological Guidelines for Interpretation

The unity of Scripture

Both the Old and New Testaments form essential parts of God's special revelation. God is the author of both, and in both has the same purpose in mind. The following indicate this principle:

Both contain the same doctrine of redemption.

The true Israelite is one not of flesh but of faith.

Most of the differences between the people of God in the Old and New Testaments were privileges and duties, in terms of relativity, not absolutes.

The New Testament is a commentary on the Old.

The Old Testament is the key to correct interpretation of the New.

Both the Old and New Testaments are important and neither one should be minimized.

The unifying principle of Scripture is God's glory, not redemption.

Clarity of Scripture

The Scriptures can be understood normally.

"The internal clarity of Scripture is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart or mind of the believer, illuminating his mind to see the truth of Scripture as the truth of God" (Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 1970, p. 98).

Make Christ central.

Christ is the center and focus of all history--past, present, and future.

Revelation is accommodated.

The human mind can understand.

"Holy Scripture is the truth of God accommodated to the human mind so that the human mind can assimilate it" (Ramm, p. 99).

Israel and the Church are separate distinct entities.

One must ask the question, Why is this here?

Dispensations

A dispensation is a period of time in which man is tested in respect to some specific revelation of the will of God. A dispensation is a progressive and connected revelation of God's dealings with man, given sometimes to the whole race and at other times to a particular people, Israel. While the dealings of God are different under different dispensations and periods of time, the only basis for salvation has always been the death of Christ.

Scripture interprets Scripture.

Clear passages in Scripture will interpret obscure passages. "The entire Holy Scripture is the context and guide for understanding the particular passages of Scripture" (Ramm, p. 104).

The doctrine of progressive revelation

The complete revelation of God was revealed to man progressively and gradually, not all at once in a complete form, but in stages and periods of time.

The analogy of faith

"The principle of the analogy of faith demands that every interpretation be in harmony with the uniform teaching of Scripture. No interpretation is allowable which does not harmonize with the uniform teaching of the Bible on that given subject. Passages are to be explained, not on the basis of individual texts, but by the whole tenor of Scripture" (Paul Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, 1974, p. 110).

The unity of the meaning of Scripture

There is only one meaning to a given passage of Scripture: "one meaning, many applications."

The rule of the simplest alternative

"That meaning which most readily suggests itself to a reader or hearer is, in general, to be required as the meaning and that alone" (Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 1911, p. 103). To restate what Terry said, during the interpretation of Scripture, when alternative interpretations seem equally plausible and contain equally good sense, the general rule of thumb is to choose the one interpretation which imposes the least strain on credulity.

Interpretation and application

"The true purpose of Holy Scripture is to be God's immediate and earthly instrument for spirituality affecting mankind" (Ramm, p. 112). In other words, interpretation intends application.

09. The Problem and Solution of the Promise of His Return

9. The Problem and Solution of the Promise of His Return

9.1 The passage

9.2 The problem 9.3 The solution

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The passage

" Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Joh 14:1-3).

The problem

This is the passage in which Jesus promised to return to His disciples and to receive them to Himself. The Lord told them, it is usually understood, that He would go back to heaven for the preparation of heavenly "mansions" (AV) to which He would take the disciples at His return. From this the argument develops that Jesus must come to take believers to heaven before the tribulation, because at His posttribulational return, He will reign upon the earth rather than return to heaven.

The solution

Many notable weaknesses appear in the argument: Jesus did not promise that upon His return He would take believers to mansions in the Father's house. Instead, He promised, "Where I am, there you may be also." The pretribulation interpretation would require us to believe that the Church will occupy heavenly mansions for a short period of seven years, only to vacate them for a thousand years in order to reign with Christ "upon the earth" (Rev 5:10; Rev 20:4-6). A thousand

years' delay before habitation of the mansions poses no greater problem for posttribulationists than a thousand years' vacating them for the pretribulationists. In order to maintain pretribulationism we might avoid the difficulty by regarding the New Jerusalem (where the mansions are assumed to be) as a millennial as well as an eternal city. Then the Church would not have to leave her mansions during the millennium because they, too, will descend from heaven after the tribulation. But if this view were adopted, no difficulty would arise for posttribulationism either! For if the mansions in the New Jerusalem will descend at the beginning of the millennium, the Church will not need to return to heaven before the tribulation in order to dwell in them. In order to console His disciples concerning His going away, Jesus told them that His leaving would work to their advantage. He was going to prepare for them spiritual abodes within His own person. Dwelling in these abiding places they would belong to God's household. This He would accomplish by going to the cross and then ascending to the Father. But He would return to receive the disciples into His immediate presence forever. Thus, the rapture will not have the purpose of taking them to heaven. It rather follows from their being in Christ, in whom each believer already has an abode. The crucial point is that Jesus did not speak about a work of construction in the New Jerusalem. He rather spoke along a line which runs through the entire Upper Room Discourse, that of the position "In Christ" of believers. The word "place" (topos - topos) easily lends itself to the thought. The verb "prepare" (hetoimazo - etoimazw) often refers to a spiritual work. And the figure of a house (oikia - oikia), in its various nominal and verbal forms, appears frequently in the New Testament as a metaphor for the place of believers in the Father's domestic domain. The use of "mone" - monh and its associated verb confirms the above understanding. Unfortunately, the familiar term "mansion" does not project the correct connotation in contemporary English. The Greek word carries no thought of a stately house of imposing size and luxurious style. It means simply an abode or an abiding place (the meaning of "mansion" in early English). And the rest of the Upper Room Discourse indicates that monh and its verbal cognate (menw) have to do with a spiritual abode in Christ rather than a material structure in heaven. Monh appears only once elsewhere in the New Testament, and that, significantly, only a few verses after Joh 14:2. Referring to the Father and Himself, Jesus said, "We will come to him, and make Our abode [monh] with him" (Joh 14:23). The two appearances of movh denote a reciprocal relationship: as believers will have abiding places in Christ, so the Father and the Son will have abiding places in believers. The plurality of the term "abodes" in verse 3 emphasizes the individuality of each believer's place in Christ. In confirmation, "abiding," in a spiritual sense, forms a leading motif throughout the Upper Room Discourse: "the Father abiding in me" (John 14:10); "He [the comforter] abides with you, and will be in you" (John 14:17); "abide in Me, and I in you . . . abides in the vine . . . abides in Me" (John 15:4); "if anyone does not abide in Me (John 15:6); "if you abide in Me, and My words abide in you If "abide in My love" (John 15:9); "you will . . . (John 15:7); abide in My love; even as I abide in His love" (John 15:10). Jesus could hardly have made it more clear that the abode of a disciple in the Father's house will not be a mansion in the sky but a spiritual position in Christ. The larger context of Johannine literature bears out the same thought. See Joh 6:56; 1Jn 2:6, 1Jn 2:10, 1Jn 2:14, 1Jn 2:24, 1Jn 2:28, 1Jn 3:6, 1Jn 3:9, 1Jn 3:17, 1Jn 3:24, 1Jn 4:12-13, 1Jn 4:15-16.

10. Principles used in the Solution

10. Principles used in the Solution 10.1 Grammatical

10.1.1 Lexical 10.1.1.1 Etymology (in order of appearance) 10.1.1.2 Synonyms: no help 10.1.1.3 Current usage: The words were checked in 10.1.1.3.1 An interlinear lexicon, 10.1.1.3.2 Vine's Expository Dictionary, 10.1.1.3.3 A Manual Greek Lexicon (Abbott-Smith), 10.1.1.3.4 Word Studies by Vincent, 10.1.1.3.5 Word Pictures in the New Testament by Robertson, and 10.1.1.3.6 The Analytical Greek Lexicon.

10.1.2 Syntax 10.1.2.1 No special idioms; the word hetoimazo - etoimazo had 10.1.2.2 No unusual word order 10.1.2.3 Nothing out of the ordinary as far as clauses, sentences, cases, or prepositions 10.1.3 Usus Loquendi 10.1.3.1 No figurative language was used. 10.1.3.2 The words are all-common and have very traceable meanings in the same gospel. The words were used in a general sense. 10.1.3.3 The connection between the words were checked in the above mentioned manuals. 10.1.3.4 The writer defined his terms in the rest of the writings. 10.1.3.5 The immediate context was used.

10.1.4 No figurative language was used.

10.2 Historical 10.3 No special emphasis of social circumstances 10.4 Theological: nothing special 10.5 None of the special rules for the interpretation of prophecy apply.

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Grammatical

Lexical

Etymology (in order of appearance)

topos (noun) etoimazo (verb) oikia (noun) monh (noun) menw (verbal cognate)

Synonyms: no help

Current usage: The words were checked in

An interlinear lexicon,

Vine's Expository Dictionary,

A Manual Greek Lexicon (Abbott-Smith),

Word Studies by Vincent,

Word Pictures in the New Testament by Robertson, and

The Analytical Greek Lexicon.

Syntax

No special idioms; the word hetoimazo - etoimazo had a slight hint of metaphor.

No unusual word order

Nothing out of the ordinary as far as clauses, sentences, cases, or prepositions

Usus Loquendi

No figurative language was used.

The words are all-common and have very traceable meanings in the same gospel. The words were used in a general sense.

The connection between the words were checked in the above mentioned manuals.

The writer defined his terms in the rest of the writings.

The immediate context was used.

No figurative language was used.

Historical

The historical circumstances are recorded in John 13:1-38. The Lord had just celebrated the Passover (last) with the disciples and had predicted His betrayal and death. Is it too much to assume that the disciples would be troubled? The historical setting leads us to believe that Christ was trying to convey their position in Him and the Father.

No special emphasis of social circumstances

Theological: nothing special

None of the special rules for the interpretation of prophecy apply.

11. Conclusion

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Conclusion

These are challenging days for believers (1Ti 4:1; 2Ti 4:3-4) but also fascinating days (1Th 4:13-18). Much of so-called Christianity has turned from Biblical hermeneutics to a rationalistic, subjective pragmatic Arminianism. It appeals to many people and to the sinful nature of man but will produce a shallow, spiritually weak, inconsistent and compromising Christian and Christendom. If ever the cause of Christ needed students who will put into practice the literal, grammatical, historical and contextual method of interpretation, it is now. 2Ti 2:15

We can now easily understand why Jesus said, "I . . . will receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" instead of "I . . . will receive you to Myself; that I may take you to the heavenly mansions." Believers already dwell in Christ, their abiding place. Hence, all that is needed at their meeting with Him is to be kept in His immediate presence forevermore. We are not to deny a literal heaven, of course, but only to regard the context of Joh 14:1-3 as indicative of a spiritual relationship to the Father through union with Christ. The interpretation gains further substantiation from the depth of meaning it gives to John 14:6. In Christ, their abode, believers have the "way" into the Father's presence. In Christ, they have the "truth," revealing the Father's innermost character. And in Christ, they have the "life," infusing into them the Father's very nature. These are the present consequences of a position in Christ, just as reception into His immediate presence will be the future consequence.

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