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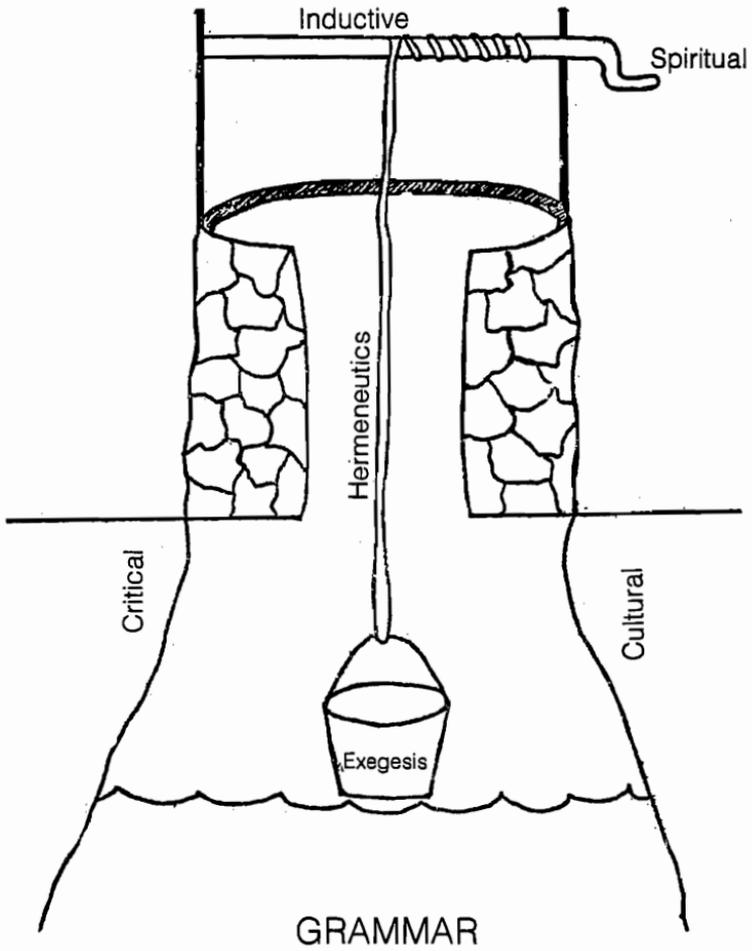
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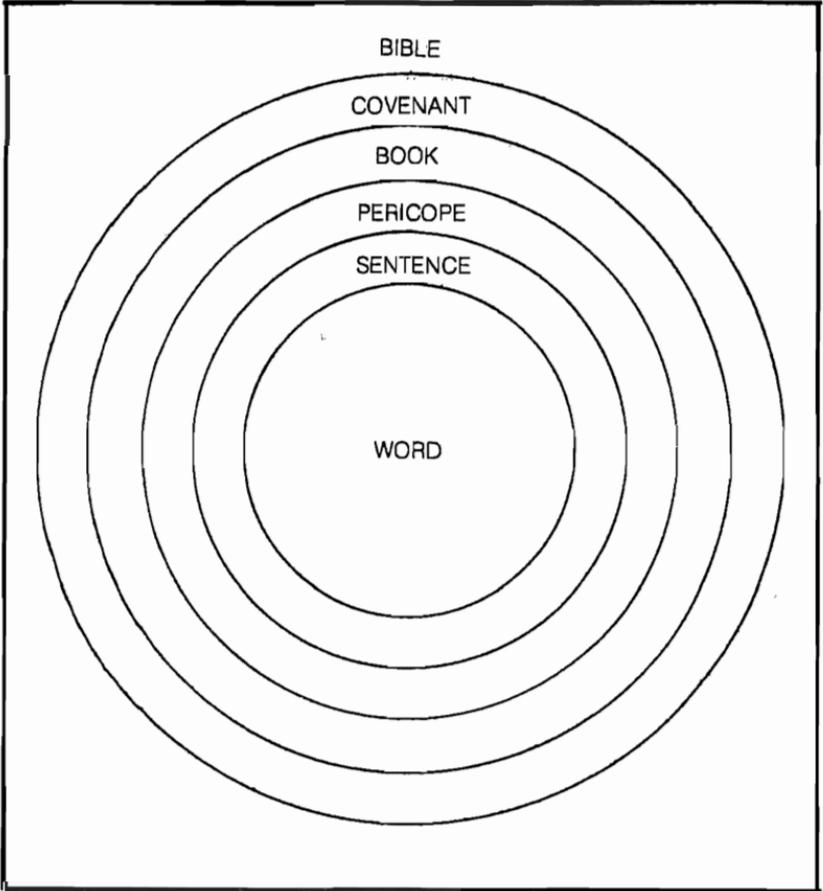
THE

BIBLE

GRAYSON HARTER ENSIGN



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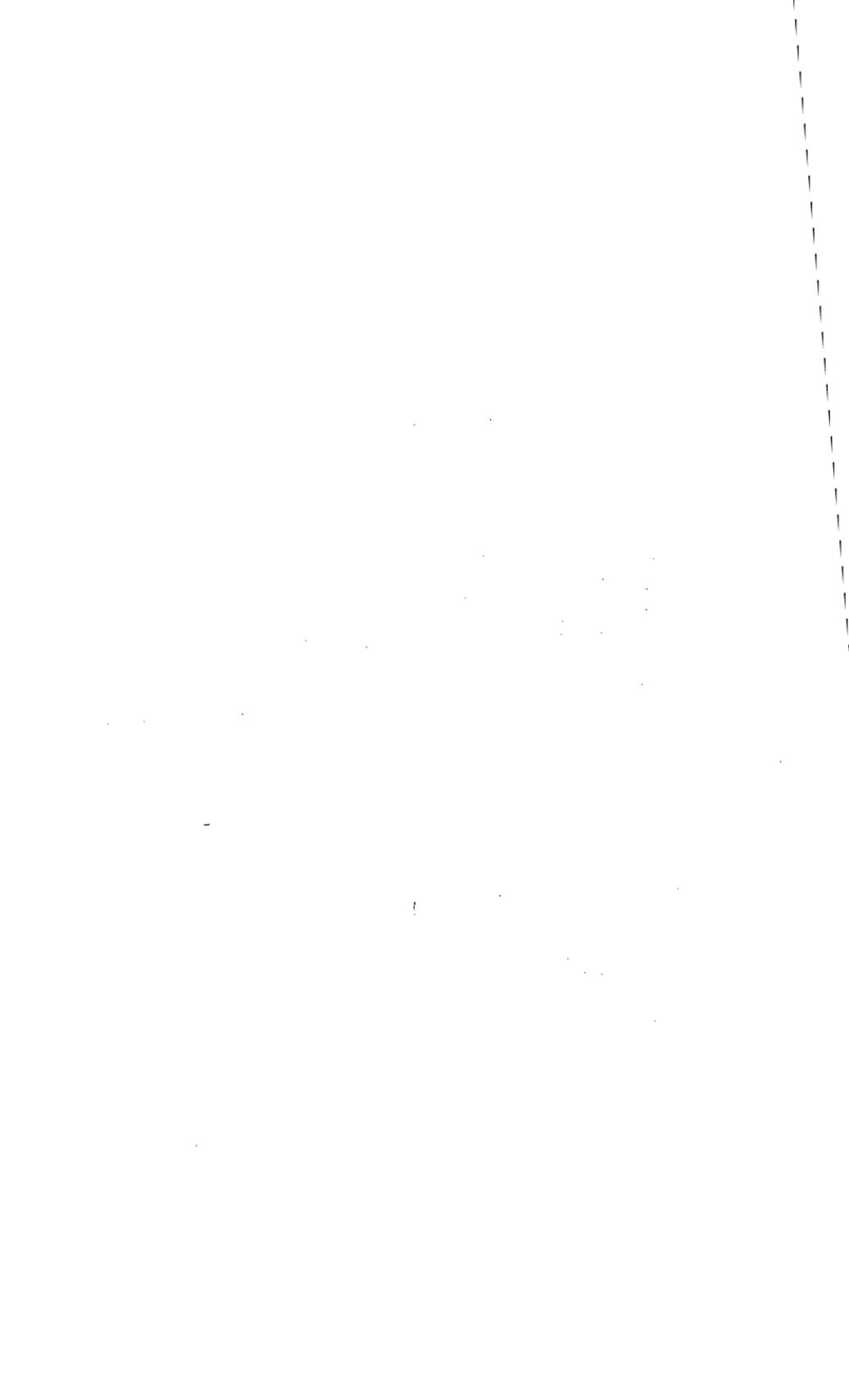
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BIBLE

THE CONTEXT(S)



You CAN
Understand
the Bible

A Study of the
Science of Interpretation

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DEDICATION

This labor of love is
thankfully dedicated to
my three "graces,"
the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
Grace Marguerite Sabin Ensign, my mother
Grayce Marie Steele Ensign, my wife

Preface

This book is written with the conviction expressed in the title, *You CAN Understand the Bible*. God gave us a revelation, not a closed book. God gave to all men, most of whom are of ordinary intelligence, a revelation which was to enlighten them. He did not produce a book of obscurity, enigma, and puzzlement. Of course, the scriptures are marked by profundity that is beyond the ability of man to comprehend and by a simplicity that even children find interesting and enlightening. Thus, any ordinary reader can understand most of the message of the Bible. Maybe we could say that with study and due application of effort most people can understand 80 percent of the scriptures.

Take heart, then, that the Bible is not a book for scholars, for professionals only, but that God gave it to you and expects you to use it to understand Him and His will for you. There is no difficulty in the Bible that could keep a person from going to heaven through his faith and obedience to Jesus Christ, Who saves by His grace (unmerited favor). The failure to go to heaven is going to be a personal fault, a sinfulness or error for which men are personally responsible. Man misses heaven *in spite* of God's total love and effort to bring man into final fellowship with Him.

This book is not written for scholars or advanced students in

interpretation but for ordinary people, the kind who heard Jesus gladly and who still are thrilled to read His word to them. Much of this material has been used over the years to teach a sophomore class in Biblical Interpretation; and it is hoped that it may reach both concerned Christians in local congregations while proving useful as a reading text in college courses. Some material of special interest to college students will be placed in footnotes or appendixes so as not to hamper the reading of the text by others.

No one is more aware than the author of the limitations of his knowledge in this field, for it is true that the older we get the less we know, or the more we know that we don't know everything. Yet the author feels led of the Lord to offer what help he can to conscientious and seeking students who want to learn how to be "... handling accurately the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15 NASB). The author has a vast appreciation for the subject and an intense interest in the subject because he has been helped by it both intellectually and spiritually. He has had the witness of many students to the fact that this study was one of the most valuable they ever encountered. It is hoped that you will find that equally true.

No writer is original in presenting the matter of interpretation, at least since Adam spoke to Eve. All men employ the principles of interpretation, rightly or wrongly, long before they are aware that they are using the principles or that there is a science of interpretation. No claim to originality or new discoveries is made. All writers on the subject are indebted to all of those who have gone before. The author has laid them under tribute in many things and trusts that his use would receive their approval.

The purpose of this book is to introduce the student to the correct method of interpretation along with the accepted principles and rules that it must employ. In as far as practical, examples and illustrations are given along with these rules with the hope that the reader will engage in interpretation as he progresses. Interpretation is an acquired skill when done properly, and this requires study and practice.

In all humility, this work is offered with the prayer that God Almighty will find it well-pleasing, that it will bring glory to Him, and that it will enable many to accurately interpret the Word of Truth and reach heaven.

Grayson H. Ensign

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Introduction

There is always a great need among Christians to study the science of interpreting the Bible, and today's world and culture make it more important than ever. The Christian, and especially the Christian teacher, who is not well grounded in the principles of sound interpretation is going to be poorly prepared to interpret effectively and apply the message of Christ to men today. Also, he will have little ability to expose the many misinterpretations which confuse believers and unbelievers alike.

Objectives

Certain objectives are to be sought through this study of the science of interpretation (for which the technical word is *hermeneutics*).

1. It should arouse an intense interest in the reader to study the scriptures diligently and accurately and to develop a love for searching the scriptures for the manifold wisdom of God.
2. Again, the reader should become aware of the real and continuing difficulties which beset human communication and convince him of the need for a careful study of sound principles of interpretation under the control of the correct method.

3. This work seeks to establish the fact that we can communicate intelligently and can understand correctly what others have written, even God's revelation through chosen men.
4. This study will survey the various systems of interpretation, point out the correct system, and then explain its principles and rules.
5. Finally, it is expected that the reader will undertake some research on various disputed passages or difficult problems of interpretation to develop his skill in getting the true meaning of a text. Incidentally, he will learn to appreciate the labors of scholars and commentators from whom he has drawn help.

Bible

It is the author's conviction that the Bible¹ called the "Holy Scriptures" and the "oracles of God" is in fact the word of God in truth.² This body of writings is uniquely inspired by God and is an authoritative unveiling of the Triune God — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Thus knowledge of God and His will for mankind is dependent upon the instruction contained in these words. Nothing is more critically needed than the adequate and accurate understanding of this revelation of God and its proclamation to each generation. Without this "faith once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) many people, Christians and sinners alike, will perish.

Someone has written this simple and moving statement of what the Bible contains and what it means to people:

This book reveals the mind of God, the state of man, the way to salvation, the doom of sinners. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true and its decisions immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, Heaven opened and the gates of Hell disclosed. Christ is its grand object, our good its design and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor, and condemns all who trifle with its holy contents.³

Necessity of Bible Knowledge

The study of the science of interpretation is of the greatest importance, for the word of God calls upon each person to “. . . be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15 NAS).⁴ Again Paul admonished all believers in these words to Timothy “. . . pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you” (1 Tim. 4:16). Surely these further forcible words of Paul to Timothy apply to all in regard to personal life and faith in proper use of the Bible:

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

With a touch of humor but with a wealth of insight, someone has penned a poem that challenges men to be good readers of the sacred oracles of God. It is entitled “How Readest Thou?”

It is one thing to read the Bible through,
Another thing to read to learn to do.
Some read it with design to learn to read,
But to the subject pay but little heed.
Some read it as their duty once a week.
But no instruction from the Bible seek;
While others read it with but little care,
With no regard to how they read, or where.
Some read to bring themselves into repute
By showing others how they can dispute;
While others read because their neighbors do,
To see how long 'twill take to read it through.
Some read it for the wonders that are there,
How David killed a lion and a bear;
While others read it with uncommon care,
Hoping to find some contradictions there.
Some read as if it did not speak to them
But to the people at Jerusalem.

One reads with father's specs upon his head
 And sees the things just as his father said.
 Some read to prove a preadopted creed,
 Hence understand but little that they read;
 For every passage in the book they bend
 To make it suit that all important end.
 Some people read, as I have often thought
 To teach the book instead of being taught.
 And some there are who read it out of spite.
 I fear there are but few who read it right.

But read it prayerfully, and you will see,
 Although men contradict, God's words agree.
 For what the early Bible prophets wrote,
 We find that Christ and His apostles quote.
 So trust no creed that trembles to recall
 What has been penned by One and verified by all.⁵

God grant that all readers of the Word of God will take care to read the scriptures honestly, sincerely, and with integrity. May it be the aim of every one who speaks the oracles of God to have "a voice unexperienced in falsehoods." May Paul be the model, "For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 2:17).

NOTES: INTRODUCTION

1. *ta biblia* — a plural form derived from the city in Phoenicia, Byblos, and later by happy circumstance interpreted as a singular, the Book, which indeed it is, a unique library of Divine authorship with beautiful symmetry and symphonic unity.

2. Read J.B. Phillips' *Ring of Truth* for interesting and contemporary support of this position.

3. Anonymous. Quoted by George W. DeHoff, *Why We Believe the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Wm. E. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1939), p. 107.

4. All quotations will be from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise indicated. This is one of the most accurate translations, faithful to the original text.

5. Anonymous. Source unknown.

QUESTIONS

1. List at least three objectives of a study of hermeneutics.
2. What is hermeneutics a technical word for?
3. What was it that Paul told Timothy was able to make him wise unto salvation?

4. T F The Bible is the oracles of God.
5. T F The Bible is only a part of the faith which is still being delivered to the saints.
6. T F Paul told Timothy that salvation was involved with hearing the teaching and persevering in it.
7. T F All scripture is inspired of God.
8. T F From Paul's letter to Timothy we see that the great point is to get people to read the Bible without any concern as to accuracy.
9. T F Paul was thankful that only a few people were peddling the word of God.

Part One
The Basic Preparation

CHAPTER I

The Vital Importance and Value of the Science of Interpretation

I. THE VITAL IMPORTANCE

Hermeneutics or the science of interpretation is a fundamental study for all serious students of the Bible, especially for those who want to be used of God as teachers or preachers. Hermeneutics is to the Christian as the hammer to the carpenter, the compass to the mariner, the anvil to the blacksmith, and the axe to the woodsman. The Bible student without a working knowledge of the correct method of interpretation is like a speaker who has lost his voice. Evangelists are called upon to "preach the word," but how can anyone do this without understanding the word? How can he understand the word apart from hermeneutics? Hermeneutics is the very tool that the intelligent reader must employ to get the correct meaning of the words he reads.

All human beings are teachers unofficially, for all are examples for others in addition to speaking words. Some are good teachers and teachers of good. Others are good teachers of evil and sin. Many are mediocre because their examples are confusing, their words contradictory, and their understandings limited. To be a good teacher of others one must understand the truth and do the truth. Everyone should aspire to be a good teacher of the right things — the true, the beautiful, and the good. Even to be able to teach one's immediate family is a great privilege and responsibility. Thus all thoughtful people are concerned to know what is right and true so as to teach it.

Teachers are the most important class of workers or leaders. "The order of teachers stands first among the cultivators of man's spiritual nature, and is superior in this regard to the legislative and artist classes."¹ The religious teacher is especially significant for mankind, and when that teacher uses the supreme revelation of God, he stands at the apex of human service. Crooks and Hurst expressed this in these words:

Teaching possesses the ability to excite the entire man to action. It arouses feeling — to create it is beyond *its* ability also — develops the understanding, and gives direction, although not ability to the will. It lifts man out of the undecided chaos of impressions into a harmoniously-developed rational life, and treats him as a free, self-determining nature. It is the "fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death" (Proverbs 13:14).²

II. REASONS FOR EMPLOYING HERMENEUTICS

Fulfill Commission

What an incentive, then, for all believers to study the word of God so as to be excellent teachers of others, to perform this highest and holiest of functions — teachers of the word of life. Christians are under necessity to be teachers; for Christ commissioned all to "teach (make disciples of) all nations," and after their baptism into Christ to continue "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." A promise is adjoining to the faithful fulfillment of this commission of teaching, "lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Every Christian is required to not only know the word of God but to be communicating it to others all the time. This is the central life and work of the Christian and of every congregation of Christians. G. Ernest Wright said,

Precisely because of the Church's claim about the meaning of the Bible, the problem of hermeneutics or interpretation has always been and will ever be the central problem of the Church, because it is concerned with nothing less than the meaning of the gospel in its original setting and the nature of the Christian witness to that gospel in the current age.³

Eliminate Difficulties

Another very important reason for learning to use the principles of interpretation is that it would help eliminate many of the difficulties, supposed or actual, which divide followers of Christ today. Through the employment of the correct method of interpretation, many doctrinal arguments could be settled or reduced considerably. Matters of opinion could be separated from matters of essential faith, and the better understanding of the Bible would enable Christians to work together with greater kindness and patience. Unity among Christians is not to be gained at the expense of truth; but unity is *in Christ*, above most disputes about doctrinal points. Men may be united in doctrine and not be "in Christ." Christian unity is possible only among those who are "in union with Christ." Of course, there is the teaching basis for faith in Christ and obedience to Him which is the gospel. Without the good news no one would be able to know Christ or how to "put on Christ."

A man can be in Christ and yet be very ignorant of much of the Bible. A man may be in Christ and at the same time be very wrong in much of his understanding of the Bible teaching. There is no perfect believer, no perfect teacher, no perfect interpreter. There are only imperfect and sinful men who in Christ and by the Holy Spirit strive to improve their understanding and application of the word of God, first to themselves and then to all.

To be in Christ requires a minimum knowledge of the revelation of God. Perhaps in most cases it begins by learning that "God is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6b). It then becomes clear that while God is pure, clean, and good, man is a sinner — dirty, unclean, and wicked. In growing alarm man seeks a bridge to God, a reconciler, a mediator; and he finds that God has provided His own Son as that Saviour and Mediator. In faith and helplessness, in hope and in fear, in belief and in unbelief man puts his trust in the Son of God. He reveals his belief and trust by an act of verbalizing the thought of his heart — confessing the character of his mediator (the Lord

Jesus Christ) — and by a further act he re-enacts the historical redemptive process — the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He voluntarily goes to a “death in the grave” of baptism and emerges in “resurrection-likeness” united with Christ, putting on Christ (Romans 6:3-5; Galatians 3:27). It is an act of faith, of conviction, of humility, or surrender, and of utter dependence on Christ. Many balk here because they do not really believe in Christ, do not really repent of their self-will and pride, and are unwilling to bow in humiliation of weakness before the Savior. Yet, those who do submit in faith are saved by the blood of Christ by the unmerited favor of God and are added by God to His congregation, the body of Christ.

Men in Christ can work out their differences in love. With love for Christ in their hearts they can have fellowship in the midst of vast disagreements and numerous errors. The method and principles of sound interpretation will assist them in working through their disagreements and coming to a clearer understanding of the meaning of the revelation of Christ.

An unregenerated heart, a sectarian spirit, and worldly motivation can cancel all hope of working out difficulties in interpretation even with the soundest principles of interpretation. Everyone has to admit some prejudice in approaching doctrinal questions. No one is perfectly open-hearted and willing to admit error or misunderstanding. Still there are those who are willing to be taught, and there are those who are not very teachable. Jesus discussed four different kinds of soil and indicated what happened to the word when it came upon those soils (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23). Those who want to can understand the essential teaching (necessary unto salvation) of the Bible and can agree upon a majority of its statements. This gives encouragement to the hope that by further study, greater love for God and truth, and through the example of God-fearing Christians, men will be drawn closer to Christ, to a truer understanding of His word, and to a greater appreciation of one another as members of the body of Christ.

The correct method of interpretation, honestly and fairly employed by intelligent and sincere people, will produce a remarkable agreement of understanding on most of the Bible. This is demonstrated by the widespread agreement which has existed for many years among Bible-believing scholars of many denominational groups over the actual meaning of the Bible teaching. Their practice has not always been consistent (so it

appears to others) with their understanding of the scripture, but most people are much afflicted by a failure to practice all that they preach. There is much more agreement among Bible-believing scholars about the actual meaning of the word of God than there is disagreement.

Eliminate Attacks

A third consideration for the study and employment of the science of interpretation is that it would eliminate many of the attacks upon the Bible by unbelievers both within and without the church. Many objections to the Bible have been objections to misinterpretations of the Bible. Even more of them have been objections to human theological opinion as expressed in the systems of fallible men. The removal of many of these stumblingblocks in the way of sincere seekers after the truth of God can be achieved through the application of the laws of interpretation.

Naturally, a science of interpretation of the highest sort cannot remove skepticism that is cherished in a human heart. Hermeneutics cannot remove sinful pride of "autonomous man" from whence comes most of the opposition to the revelation of God. Many of the charges hurled against the scriptures by unbelieving persons are silly or childish in expression. Often they betray great ignorance of the actual statements and the obvious meaning of the Bible. Frequently they can be answered or explained in the simplest examination of the evidence. Many of them have been answered years ago by competent critics and scholars. But like a child with a favorite toy or doll who clings to the tattered, dirty, and faded junk for sentimental reasons, so many unbelievers refuse every explanation and sentimentally croon their corny lullabies of doubt and darkness to tattered theories.

Christians should be careful not to misinterpret the Bible in any way so as to remove the slightest obstacle for any one stumbling over such a misunderstanding. In a very important sense the Bible can take care of itself when permitted to speak for itself to the sincere, open, human mind. The Bible is put under a handicap whenever men put confusing or contradictory meanings upon a passage which logic and principles of interpretation cannot allow. There are enough difficulties in the way of modern unbelievers without the Christian needlessly adding some unscriptural obstacles of his own.

Salvation

Finally, all should be faithful interpreters of the word of God for their own special need. Men want to live a life well-pleasing to God and go to that place which Christ has prepared for His people. Without a knowledge of God's revelation, no one would have any idea which way to go to find God. Men would have no guidance in being delivered out of sin into a right relationship with God. All must diligently search the scriptures "because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life" (John 5:39b-40).

Since man is out of fellowship with God, God has acted to restore man to Himself, to redeem man from sin. The means to this end are revealed in the scripture. It is not a matter of feeling, of subjective impulse, or of mystical experience. There is a definite plan of salvation in the Bible; and when obedience to this has taken place, a person has the assurance that pardon has been granted by God. This plan is composed of certain conditions which man can fulfill. He learns what these conditions are and what they mean by studying the scriptures. There is a two-fold witness of the Holy Spirit in the assurance of salvation. The Holy Spirit spoke through Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4); and the commands of repentance and baptism into the name of Christ were required for remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39). After obedience to Christ, then the Holy Spirit bears witness with (not to) our spirits that we have been acceptable to God (Romans 8:16). Thus, we receive the assurance of pardon by complying with the God-revealed conditions, which of themselves do not save us (have no merit), but which reveal the sincerity, love, and obedience of the child of God returning to the Father. Some confusion exists because religious men have not carefully interpreted the whole counsel of God on the subject of salvation before speaking. It is of first importance that we please God and go to heaven. Only a correct understanding of the meaning of Christ and His appointed means can set us in the right way.

It is well to remind ourselves that there is more to our salvation than just fulfilling the conditions to "put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27 ASV). The Bible is clear that there is to be perseverance unto the end. There is to be growth in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The patience to endure all things

is the most difficult of all conditions. To abide in Christ (John 15) is an imperative and constant duty of Christians. If we fail to abide, our state is worse than it was at first (2 Peter 2:20-22). Neglect of spiritual opportunities and duties will bring on spiritual depression, deadening of the mind, hardening of the heart, and may result in spiritual death.

More of the New Testament is written to Christians than to alien sinners in need of a Saviour. Indifference of Christians causes Christ to vomit them out (Revelation 3:14-22). How sad is the picture of the Lord standing at the heart-door of the Christian seeking admittance. How guilty are we of shutting Him out of our lives? It can become a tragic reality as the scriptures testify in 1 John 3:15; 4:20; 2:15; Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 6:1-8. How many Christians through a failure to interpret the scripture correctly and then practice it diligently are in danger of hell?

God has made a self-revelation to man! It is a complete and final revelation (Jude 3). It is adequate and sufficient for every spiritual need of man to be fulfilled (2 Timothy 3:14-17). By careful study of it man is expected to know God, love Him, and obey His will.

III. MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY

The glaring problem in interpretation is man himself. Man is weak in reasoning, conceited at times, and all because of sin. Man is often mistaken and frequently prejudiced against the truth. Even at his best the finite mind of mortal man would have great difficulty in fully grasping the infinite mind of God as expressed in written form. If men can misunderstand one another's language, how much more can they misunderstand God's communication because of sin.

God did not see fit to inspire all men as interpreters of the word. Regardless of the claims of some to infallibility, it is the teaching of scripture that only the apostles of Christ had the promise of inspiration, hence authoritative, teaching ability. John 16:13 cannot be appropriated by any person today. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was the promise of Christ fulfilled on the twelve apostles on the day of Pentecost which testified that Christ was seated with the Father on the throne in heaven. No one has the promise of the miraculous guidance of the Holy Spirit today. There is no unanimity among those who claim the miraculous gift of inspiration (or interpretation) now.

The use of human language as the vehicle for God's revelation may seem to have its drawbacks, but God in His all-wisdom must have believed that this was superior to any other method. Perhaps the only other means would have been to inspire every person directly and not to have had any recorded revelation. God's action needs no apologetic by man. God gave the word; and He gave man the intelligence to understand that word, to believe it, and to act upon it. Perhaps it is a needed test of our faith, our zeal, our determination to follow God which is produced by the recorded revelation which requires study on our part.

Men can understand the Bible and through it find God. Paul wrote to the Ephesians "that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:3-4). Likewise, the Israelites were directed to the word of God to learn His will as revealed. "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). Again, Ezra is a worthy example for he ". . . had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances" (Ezra 7:10). His opportunity came in Jerusalem when all the people were gathered together at the water gate, and Ezra stood upon a pulpit of wood and read the word of God to them all morning. Appointed men "explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place. And they read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading." (All of Nehemiah 8:1-8 is worth reading.) This is the first distinct mention of the work of interpretation in the Bible. The Psalmist honors the word as worthy of study and understanding. He says that the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul, making wise the simple (Psalm 19:7). The tremendous Psalm 119 is all about the word of God and what man can do with it.

Jesus taught that men who have the scriptures have adequate access to a knowledge of God that should lead to obedience. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, Jesus had Abraham respond to the rich man in Hades who requested the return of Lazarus from the dead to instruct his five brothers, "They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them. . . . If they will not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:29, 31).

The apostle Paul concurs in this conviction for he writes to Timothy:

... and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired of God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Surely this establishes the vital importance and the lasting value of understanding the word of God through the use of valid principles of interpretation.

NOTES: THE VITAL IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF THE SCIENCE OF INTERPRETATION

1. George R. Crooks, and John F. Hurst (eds.), *Theological Encyclopaedia and Methodology* (Vol. III of *Library of Biblical and Theological Literature*. New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1884), p. 18.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

3. G. Ernest Wright, "The Problem of Archaizing Ourselves," *Interpretation*, III (October, 1949), p. 452.

QUESTIONS

1. T F All human beings are teachers in some ways.
2. T F We teach more by words than we do by example.
3. T F All Christians are commissioned to teach others the gospel.
4. T F No human being is an infallible or perfect interpreter of the scriptures.
5. T F A person may be in Christ, a Christian, and yet be quite mistaken in his understanding of much of the Bible.
6. T F Among Bible-believing scholars there has been widespread agreement over the actual meaning of most of scripture.
7. T F All that is required to work out difficulties which divide believers today is simply the use of sound hermeneutics.
8. Which is the superior class of worker in influencing mankind — the teacher, the legislator, or the artist?
9. List four specific reasons why the Christian wants to know and use hermeneutics.
10. The most serious problem in interpretation is: a) language, b) time, c) textual, d) the interpreter himself.
11. How did Jesus teach that men have adequate access to the will of God through the scriptures?
12. A Christian worker without hermeneutics is like a carpenter without a _____, a _____ without an anvil, and a mariner without a _____.

The Meaning, the Necessity, and the Aim of the Science of Interpretation

I. THE MEANING OF HERMENEUTICS

It is basic for one's use of hermeneutics to have an understanding of the meaning of the subject, what it includes and what it excludes, and to appreciate the reasons why this science of interpretation exists. There are those who declare that the Bible can mean almost anything or that it is impossible for men to agree upon its meaning. This chapter seeks to refute these misunderstandings.

Definition

A thorough definition of hermeneutics states that hermeneutics is the science of interpretation composed of principles and rules which are founded on the laws of thought as

derived from the way people actually communicate. These principles and rules, validated* by their being systematically consistent, function within a correct method of operation and application. (The correct method is the grammatico-cultural, inductive, critical, and spiritual method.)

The word *hermeneutics* is a term derived from the Greek word *hermeneuo*, which most likely arose from the name of the Greek god, Hermes. Hermes was the spokesman for the gods, the god of speech. As a result, he was also the god of explanation or interpretation as he gave the meaning of the message. Thus the word *hermeneuo* means "to explain" or "to interpret." As Hermes was not always a good interpreter, faithfully giving the message received; even so men are sometimes faithful interpreters and, at other times, misleading or even false interpreters of God's message.

Nature

This body of principles and rules plus the correct method is the only means that people have for understanding the spoken or written thought of another person. Moses Stuart said that they are coeval with our nature and are practical in nature, not theoretical.¹ They were not thought up by profound scholars in schools of philosophy and handed down to the common people. The common people were using them long before there were schools of philosophy. The schoolmen only formulated and systematized the materials in common usage among men. People have been using the principles of interpretation without knowing the name of the science or without having read a textbook on hermeneutics because there could be no communication otherwise. Thus, like grammar, hermeneutics is *descriptive* of the way men communicate and understand as rational beings. The science, as a body of knowledge, is the adequate and careful arrangement of the practice of interpretation in the everyday world. Thus interpretation (exegesis) came before formal hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics, as a universal and inescapable part of daily communication, is not limited to the Bible alone or any special department of knowledge. The principles are applicable to everything people hear and read.² By the study of the science,

*These are validated for Christians even more by the practice of our Lord Jesus Christ who is Himself the Truth (John 14:6).

each person simply becomes more aware of the principles and rules of correct interpretation and becomes more competent in applying them. Perhaps the greatest gain of the study of the science is that it points out the correct *method* of interpretation. Method controls the use and application of the principles and rules. Thus method is of primary importance.

One Hermeneutics

The study in this work is centered almost entirely on the application of hermeneutics to the Bible, but the method and many of the principles apply to almost all books and studies. There are some principles which apply only to the word of God as a unique book. Christians rejoice in the fact that the word of God is read and understood by anyone who can read the newspaper and that no special powers or highly technical knowledge are required to understand God's revelation.

Science

Consider next the significance of the definition that hermeneutics is a "science." A "science" in this definition means a body of generally accepted knowledge, systematically arranged for the purpose of acquiring further knowledge through valid and objective principles. This takes the subject out of the subjectivism of believing what a person pleases and encourages each interpreter to seek accurate conclusions based on objective evidence. When the correct method and the accepted principles of hermeneutics are employed, the result will be interpretations that rise above personal prejudice and self-interest to judgments that will commend themselves to critical thinkers.

Exclusions

As a science, hermeneutics excludes what all scientific studies exclude — authoritative dogmatism and individualistic license. No chemist, physicist, or mathematician as a scientist ever proposes a proposition, theory, or formula as true solely on the basis of his position or prestige. Scientific conclusions do not stand by the power of a name, and scientifically established conclusions do not fall by virtue of a denial by someone in authority. Stalin backed the biological theory of Lensenko that genetics is entirely a matter of environmental control and acquired characteristics, but even the dictator's authority could

not make men of science outside of Russia believe the theory. As soon as the dictator was dead, even the Russian, communistic scientists repudiated the theory, because it was established on authoritative dogmatism and not on scientific facts acquired by scientific principles.

Even so in Biblical interpretation, there is no place for an authoritative interpreter who by force of personality or position declares what is the accurate meaning of the words. No interpretation of scripture is true or established because of the ecclesiastical status or number of academic degrees of the interpreter. No interpretation can be verified by weighing (literally or figuratively) the interpreters who hold a particular view.³ The undergraduate who faithfully applies the principles of the science of interpretation can (and sometimes has) overthrown the cherished interpretation of some venerable professor. Truth is not established by the authority of man nor by the vote of majorities.

It is an unfortunate tendency of sinful men to attach themselves to certain views and theological positions because of the authority of men. The various systems of men which have resulted in divisions among Christians or Bible-believers are usually labeled with the names of men — Augustinianism, Calvinism, Lutheranism, Wesleyanism, etc. God forgive us and purge us of the slavish following of the dogmatic assertions of men regardless of who they are or how right they may be on some things. Respect and admire men of God but never build your faith on their fallible, finite understanding of the revelation of God. If it was wrong for men in the first century to build their faith on the prestige or authority of an inspired apostle (1 Corinthians 1:12), how much worse it is to build faith on the word of *uninspired* men. Paul declares that he preached in the demonstration of the Spirit "that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). Thus the one authority that must be respected in interpreting the Bible is God and His will revealed. This is the final court of appeal. Martin Luther stated the position well when he stood before the Diet of Worms and was called upon to repudiate his writings:

Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason — I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other — my conscience is captive to the Word of

God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.⁴

Not only does the science of hermeneutics exclude and repudiate the use of authoritative dogmatism, it just as positively rules out license (lawless, subjective thought) in interpretation. Certainly the scriptures secure to all the freedom to examine the revelation of God for themselves and to individually interpret its meaning (Acts 17:2-4, 11-12). Christ condemned the religious leaders of His day because they did not know the scriptures even though they studied them diligently (Matthew 22:29). Most religious error today arises from the same source. Paul commends Timothy for his knowledge of the word of God and indicates that the man of God is completely equipped for every good work through the teaching of the scriptures which is inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:14-17). James admonishes Christians to receive the implanted word which is able to save your souls, to look intently at the perfect law of liberty and abide in it, to be a doer of the word; for such a man shall be blessed in what he does (James 1:21-25).

Freedom to interpret the scriptures does not mean liberty to think as personal whim or fancy may dictate. From the days of the apostles, there have been those who have intentionally or unintentionally twisted the scriptures into distortions of truth. Peter mentions such individuals in his day who misused the writings of Paul “. . . which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures,⁵ to their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16b). Such individuals are in the world and in the church today.

Freedom to interpret is actually freedom to apply the principles and proper method to the understanding of the scriptures. Freedom is always connected with law. It is controlled and directed. It may be fine for an ironsmith to advertise his skill — “all kinds of fancy twistings and turnings done here” — but it is highly inappropriate for the man of God.

As a science, hermeneutics excludes both authoritativeness and individualistic licentiousness. Interpretations reached by either route are not hermeneutical and cannot be accepted as valid, scientific conclusions.

II. THE NECESSITY OF HERMENEUTICS

By the common experience of all men there exists the possibility of misunderstanding in communication between men. No one lives very long before he realizes that there are misinterpretations of what other men have said or have written. These occur even between business partners, marriage partners, and brethren in the Lord. There are different ways of stating information, and many people are very poor listeners or readers.

Language is not an *infallible* means of communication because of the problems of grammar, ambiguous words, and idiomatic expressions. Consider the problems in contemporary language of the word *dinner* as used in various parts of the country. Ponder the misunderstanding over the word *evening* as used in various sections of the U.S.A. In Jamaica it was interesting to encounter the use of "afternoon" at 9 p.m. when some good brother would state, "Hasn't it been a wonderful afternoon!"

On one trip up the Rio Cobra valley in Jamaica a student and the author were confronted with the same truth expressed in opposite ways. As we drove up alongside the river, I remarked that "the river was up;" but the Jamaican said that it was "down." I replied that I thought the river was higher than I had seen it before; and he agreed, "Yes, the river is down." I replied that I didn't understand how he could say the river was higher and at the same time "down." He then explained to me that the river was higher because it was "down" in the river banks and not "up" in the mountains. So my measuring the height of the water within the banks as up did not agree with his location of the water as up in the mountains which would have meant a lower water level in the river bed.

Everyone has had some amusing or not so amusing experiences of the ambiguity of speech among human beings. Think of the much greater problem when men attempt to interpret what was written centuries ago, in other languages, in cultures quite different from the present. The difficulties are compounded and create the necessity for the science of interpretation. The basic assumption is that there are potential and actual areas of misunderstanding between communicators of thought. Peter remarked that in Paul's letters there "... are some things hard to understand . . ." (2 Peter 3:16). If this was true for the readers of Paul in that first century, how much truer is it for readers in

the present century! No one need be amazed that there are misinterpretations of the Bible when you realize that it was written over a period of 1400 years by about forty different men of different culture, social status, language, and historical milieu. Add the further fact that this is a spiritual book dealing with divine wisdom and the revelation of the invisible, heavenly, and intangible realm; and the possibility of misunderstanding multiplies. Add to this the fallibility of man, his sinful nature, his pride and self-will, his ignorance and dullness of mind; and the marvel is that men agree on the interpretation of so much of the Bible.

III. THE AIM OF HERMENEUTICS

Bridge Difficulties

The aim of hermeneutics is to provide the reader or interpreter with the best arrangement of the true principles and rules of interpretation, along with the superintending method of using these principles, so that he can eliminate the difficulties of misunderstanding and truly lay hold on the exact meaning of the writer. A textbook cannot do this. The science of interpretation in its best form cannot do this, but the interpreter is provided the finest tool possible for his use in eliminating confusion and error in his apprehension of what is being communicated. The better the interpreter knows the method and faithfully applies the principles the more completely and fairly will he understand the writer or speaker.

The simpler the language is, the fewer possibilities of misunderstanding. The greater the logic and clarity of expression of the writer, the less need there is for a hermeneutics to understand his language. In the study of mathematical books there is little need of hermeneutics because the materials are figures which are expressions of fixed quantities. But as soon as one is dealing with words which have flexible and changeable meanings in various contexts, the need for a careful and methodical use of hermeneutics is apparent.

Freedom to Exegete

The freedom and joy of interpreting the scriptures for oneself becomes the right of the person who is willing to develop his knowledge and skill in the use of sound hermeneutics. One does

not have to be especially chosen of God, inspired, or authorized to interpret the word of God. One should be

... an interpreter who shall know how to trace back to the original idea the letter which was first correctly apprehended through the mechanical process of grammar, and who shall thus restore the written or spoken word so that it becomes for the reader or hearer what it was to the writer or speaker from whom in the freshness of its originality it emanated.⁶

That God has fully accomplished His intention of revealing Himself and His will for His creatures made in His image is axiomatic to all who believe in Him. Scriptures stand before men as the embodiment of revealed truth which is self-authenticating. The perfection of God guarantees the perfection of His self-revelation to man even though He used imperfect men and language subject to misuse to inscribe His truth. It is the claim of the Bible and the conviction of the body of Christ through the ages that the Bible is the word of God, fully, sufficiently, and clearly revealing all that man needs to know about God to please God and go to heaven.

Grasp Fullness of Word

All that hermeneutics can do or aims to do is to place the faithful, open-minded seeker after God in a position where

... the light of divine truth is allowed to fall in all the fulness and clearness of its own teaching. Its testimony on any subject whether given in one place or in several, must be taken in its entirety without abridgement or modification, so that the Holy Scriptures may interpret themselves in the broad, clear light of their own divine teaching. And what we call the laws of interpretation are simply certain sensible directions to be followed as indispensable for bringing the learning mind of man into uninterrupted contact with the instructing mind of God.⁷

When such a person humbly allows God to instruct him, when he has critically and carefully applied hermeneutical principles in the investigation of the word of God, he will have a knowledge and appreciation of the truth in that passage. He may not be said to have perfect knowledge, for men have erring and fallible minds. Yet, if the interpretation has been arrived at by scientific principles scientifically applied, it is absurd to call that interpretation "just your interpretation" in a derogatory sense. There is such a thing as truth. There are still absolutes. All is not

relativism regardless of what irrationalists and relativistic philosophers say. Truth can be ascertained from the writings of men and even more from the writings of God. Without authoritative dogmatism students of the Bible through centuries of time have had essential agreement upon its major emphases and teachings. Men of different culture, education, and denominational background have reached surprising unanimity upon the meaning of most of the Bible. They were able to do so by carefully employing the method and principles of hermeneutics. There is a true interpretation of each verse of scripture. Men have been able to agree on this meaning through a scientific application of the laws of hermeneutics in the overwhelming majority of cases.

NOTES: THE MEANING, THE NECESSITY, AND THE AIM OF THE SCIENCE OF INTERPRETATION

1. Moses Stuart quoted by D.R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 51.

2. This general use of hermeneutics is illustrated by the article by James Kilpatrick, *Amarillo Daily News*, April 4, 1968, p. 48, in which he shows hermeneutics applied to the U.S.A. constitution.

The sharpest criticism of the U.S. Supreme Court does not come, as you might imagine, from lawyers, editors, or Southern members of the Congress. At best they deliver small-arms fire. The most telling assaults come from members of the court itself, thundering at each other in written dissents or on the scholarly stump.

Justice Hugo Black, dean of the court, rolled out the big guns a couple of weeks ago in three lectures before the Columbia University Law School. His chief target was the permissive school of jurisprudence in which such professors as Earl Warren, William Brennan and Abe Fortas are leading philosophers. On the same evening that Black was blazing away in New York, Fortas was returning some fire from Washington.

Their eminences do not attack each other by name, of course. The rhetoric of in-house denunciation is high-toned stuff. But no one could doubt whom Black had in mind when he spoke at Columbia of his views on constitutional interpretation in contrast to the views of those who shall be nameless.

For his own part, said Black, he believes that judges "should always try faithfully to follow the true meaning of the Constitution as actually written. The key rule in construction is the intention of the framers. Judges ought to place themselves 'as nearly as

possible' in the condition of the men who framed the Constitution and its several amendments. Judges ought to follow 'the literal meaning of word.' "

"Harumph," said Fortas, speaking in Washington. "The words of the Constitution are not 'static symbols.' They are 'subject to the changes wrought by the passage of time.' And who is to say what changes have been wrought? The courts are to say this — and more precisely, the high court."

"Not so," said Black in New York. "The courts are given power to interpret the Constitution and other laws, which means to explain and expound, not to alter, amend or remake. Judges take an oath to support the Constitution as it is, not as they think it should be. I cannot subscribe to the doctrine that consistent with that oath a judge can arrogate to himself a power 'to adapt the Constitution to new times.' "

Black's three lectures ought to be required reading not only for judges but also for members of the Congress. They too are sworn to support the Constitution "as it is."

"I strongly believe," said Black, "that the basic purpose and plan of the Constitution is that the federal government should have no powers except those that are expressly or impliedly granted, and that no department of government — executive, legislative or judicial — has authority to add to or take from the powers granted it or the powers denied it by the Constitution.

"Our written Constitution means to me that where a power is not in terms granted, or not necessary and proper to exercise a power that is granted, no such power exists in any branch of the government. . . ."

This is what Southern conservatives for generations have termed "the sound doctrine." It is the doctrine of strict construction — the rule of the Tenth Amendment. It is not enough, Black declares, that judges or legislators should regard a particular end as desirable, or reasonable, or socially attractive. The first question that has to be asked is simply, "Is it constitutional?" Does the power exist?

If the people wish to change their Constitution, said Black, let them change it by the amendatory process. But let us be on guard against "the rewriting of the Constitution by judges under the guise of interpretation." The warning is as old as Washington, as old as Jefferson; it ought to be carved in stone at the high court itself; and it ought to be pounded into the heads of our life-appointed judges.

3. This does not deny that scholars should not be consulted or respectfully considered. The mind-set of any scholar is important to know — what are his presuppositions and philosophic world view. These

are basic to the consideration of his interpretation. Yet the final position must be taken by the individual himself in the light of the principles of logic and hermeneutics.

4. Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), p. 185.

5. Note this interesting testimony (2 Peter 3:16) of a Holy Spirit-inspired apostle to the fact that Paul's writings were counted by him as a part of the "scriptures" (a technical word for the sacred writings such as the Old Testament to the Jews). Canonicity is determined by the inspiration of the writer and not by the acts of men or councils.

6. George R. Crooks and John F. Hurst (eds.) *Theological Encyclopedia and Methodology* (Vol. III of *Library of Biblical and Theological Literature*, New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1884), pp. 228-229.

7. F.B. Grubbs, "Class Notes," (unpublished).

QUESTIONS

1. T F Any method will do if you know the principles.
2. T F The English word hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word *hermeneuo* which means to make a good study.
3. T F Our Lord used the principles of hermeneutics in teaching his disciples.
4. T F People are using many of the principles of hermeneutics long before they know there is such a subject.
5. T F Hermeneutics is valuable for Bible interpretation but does not apply to other books.
6. T F The aim of hermeneutics is to equip the sincere seeker after truth with the finest tool to overcome difficulties and lay hold on the exact meaning of the author.
7. T F Only a few are chosen and authorized by God to interpret His word.
8. T F The intention of God to reveal Himself to man was accomplished in His self-disclosure in Christ and the Bible.
9. As the *science* of interpretation, hermeneutics clearly and sharply excludes both _____ and _____.
10. From the definition, we learned that the principles and rules are based on the _____ of _____ as seen in the way people actually _____.
11. State two reasons why it is necessary to use hermeneutics in studying ancient books especially.
12. Hermeneutics brings the learning mind of _____ into uninterrupted contact with the _____ of God.
13. Which book would require the application of more hermeneutics to understand it, a book on mathematics or a work on philosophy?
14. Explain your answer to No. 13.

The Task and the Qualifications of the Interpreter

I. THE TASK

Exegesis

A good interpreter is always one who practices exegesis. This word from the Greek language means “to lead or to draw out.” It is the result or end product of the application of hermeneutics to any passage. Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation, and exegesis is the actual practice. Schliermacher called hermeneutics an art-doctrine because of its two sides, the theory and the technique using that theory for practical purposes. The interpreter must know the science, but he must have skill in applying the science to derive correct interpretation. The interpreter (or exegete) must always draw out what is in the words, neither more nor less than the author intended. Far too many men have become *eisegetes* (*eis* from the Greek meaning

“into”) and have read *into* the scriptures what they wanted to find there.

Law of Reproduction

The task of the interpreter has been defined as the Law of Reproduction. I.B. Grubbs states this fundamental law as follows:

It is the business of the interpreter to find out the author's real meaning. His task is successfully accomplished when he gets before the mind . . . just what the author intended to say. For the character of his author's thought he is not responsible. It may be important or unimportant; it may be true or false. His office is discovery and exposition. It may be summarized as follows: first, the discovery of the author's meaning; second, the communication of this meaning to others. . . .¹

G.H. Schodde declared,

The first and foremost principle in the interpretation of the scriptures, which obtains equally in secular literature, is that it is the interpreter's business to reproduce with perfect exactness and correctness the sense of the author, that is, the thoughts which the author of a passage or passages had in mind when this passage or these passages were penned. Thus, e.g., the passage in Romans 1:17, “The just shall live by faith” is only then correctly understood when the thought, which was in the author's mind and heart, has, through the words in which this thought has been clothed, been correctly reproduced and photographed in the mind and heart of the reader or student. This original thought of the author is the sense of the passage which is being interpreted. The moment the interpreter finds more in a passage than the author has put into it, or finds something different from this, he is engaging not in exegesis, but in eisegesis, not in interpretation, but in misinterpretation. The work of an interpreter is thus very modest and humble; it is confined to reproduction and does not permit the production of new thought. In this most important sense the exegete does not attempt originality. . . .²

It should be clear to all that neglect of this basic law has given rise to the “confusion of tongues” that exists in regard to some parts of biblical teaching. The usual procedure for many Bible students is to accept a tradition or assume a viewpoint and then go to the Bible to prove it. Everyone comes to the Bible with some prejudgment, some prepossession of thought, and with considerable ignorance. No one is absolutely unbiased, but everyone must recognize this and zealously and constantly guard against prejudice of every sort.

Correct text. With watchfulness against human bias, and with the principles of hermeneutics well in mind, the student takes up his particular text. It would not matter if the text is of Homer, Julius Caesar, Milton, or Moses. It is a fixed or established text. In the case of ancient writings, the work of textual critics is of great importance in restoring the original text of the author. These experts study all the manuscripts and copies of the work available and through critical apparatus verify the actual words of the author. This science is highly developed and has succeeded in giving students today the text of the Bible which enjoys a degree of integrity (purity of text, i.e., the exact words used by the author) that is remarkable. In today's Greek New Testament 999 words out of a thousand are most certainly the original words, and the one word of doubtful integrity is never one that involves a matter of doctrine or of material fact.³

The interpreter remembers that this is not his writing, not his thought, but the thought of someone else whom he is honor bound to treat as he would be treated. He may violently disagree with the author's statements, but the faithful interpreter gives the exact meaning of the author in translation, paraphrase or commentary. He tries to write from within the mind and heart of the author, with great sympathy and understanding of the conditioning, the feeling, and the logical connection of his thought. As an interpreter he is not to "correct" the thought of the author or "improve" the author's own expression. He must not find more than the author thought, and he must not find any less than he thought.

Apparent exception. One apparent exception to the use of the Law of Reproduction is to be noted in regard to the Bible. Since it is a revelation of God through men, it is sometimes possible and even necessary to go beyond the thoughts which the human penman had in mind when he wrote. Sometimes the interpreter with the full revelation of God before him may know more about the meaning of a statement than the author who wrote it. Peter declares that the Old Testament prophets "... made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1 Peter 1:10,11). By further revelation, God may clear up what was obscure to the earlier writer.

An illustration of this exception to the Law of Reproduction is seen in Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him,

and called my son out of Egypt.” To Hosea this had an historical basis in the Exodus; but it had a future significance that was known only after Matthew by inspiration wrote that Joseph took Jesus into Egypt “and was there until the death of Herod; that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son” (2:15). The interpreter knows the thought of God — the Author back of Hosea — as expressed in these words with more certainty than was possible to Hosea.

An opposite situation is true about the statement of Hosea,

Come, let us return to the Lord. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him (6:1-2).

While this sounds very much like a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus after His death on the cross, it is never cited by a New Testament author as fulfilled in the resurrection. The possibility that God was referring to the resurrection is there, but no one can dogmatically affirm that this is the exact meaning of the words since an inspired interpretation is not given.

Only the thought of the author. So the great and only task of the interpreter is to discover the true, actual meaning of the words as they represented to the author the thought that he had in mind when he wrote. Then from within that thought, he presents it to those for whom he interprets with clarity, exactness, and simplicity. He explains by unfolding the thought contained in each word; and if that is not enough to make the meaning clear, he interprets the word-meaning by thorough, careful, and clear explanation.

The house of the interpreter. In John Bunyan’s great work, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, he vividly describes the work of the interpreter. As Christian set out on his journey, he was directed to the house of the Interpreter where he would be shown “excellent things.”

Then he went on till he came at the house of the Interpreter where he knocked over and over; at last one came to the door, and asked who was there?

CHRISTIAN. Sir, here is a traveller, who was bid by an acquaintance of the good man of this house to call here for my profit: I would therefore speak with the master of the house. So he called for the master of the house, who after a little time came to Christian, and asked him what he would have?

CHRISTIAN. Sir, said Christian, I am a man that am come from the City of Destruction, and am going to the Mount Zion; and I was told by the man that stands at the gate, at the head of this way, that if I called here, you would shew me excellent things, such as would be a help to me in my journey.

INTERPRETER. Then said the Interpreter, Come in, I will shew thee that which will be profitable to thee. So he commanded his man to light the candle, and bid Christian follow him: so he had him into a private room, and bid his man open a door; the which when he had done, Christian saw the picture of a very grave person hang up against the wall; and this was the fashion of it. It had eyes lifted up to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, the Law of Truth was written upon his lips, the world was behind his back. It stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over his head. [This is a picture, then, of the faithful Christian who helps others to know the Lord, not merely the officers of a congregation but every Christian instructed in the Lord and doing the work of God, the good Interpreter.]

CHRISTIAN. Then said, Christian, What means this?

INTERPRETER. The man whose picture this is, is one of a thousand; he can beget children, travel in birth with children, and nurse them himself when they are born. And whereas thou seest him with his eyes lift up to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, and the Law of Truth writ on his lips, it is to shew thee that his work is to know and unfold dark things to sinners; even as also thou seest him stand as if he pleaded with men; and whereas thou seest the world as cast behind him, and that a crown hangs over his head, that is to shew thee that slighting and despising the things that are present, for the love that he hath to his master's service, he is sure in the world that comes next to have glory for his reward. Now, said the Interpreter, I have shewed thee this picture first, because the man whose picture this is, is the only man whom the Lord of the place whither thou art going, hath authorized to be thy guide in all difficult places thou mayest meet with in the way; wherefore take good heed to what I have shewed thee, and bear well in thy mind what thou hast seen, lest in thy journey thou meet with some that pretend to lead thee right, but their way goes down to death.⁴

After a number of dramatic experiences had been given Christian by the Interpreter, he said to Christian,

Hast thou considered all these things?

CHRISTIAN. Yes, and they put me in hope and fear.

INTERPRETER. Well, keep all things so in thy mind that they may be as a goad in thy sides, to prick thee forward in the way thou must go. Then Christian began to gird up his loins, and to address

himself to his journey. Then said the Interpreter, The Comforter be always with thee, good Christian, to guide thee in the way that leads to the city. So Christian went on his way, saying,

Here I have seen things rare and profitable;
 Things pleasant, dreadful, things to make me stable
 In what I have begun to take in hand;
 Then let me think on them, and understand
 Wherefore they shew'd me was, and let me be
 Thankful, O good Interpreter, to thee.⁵

II. THE QUALIFICATIONS

To accomplish his all-important task and to meet his responsibility as a faithful interpreter of an author's words, the interpreter must have qualifications. The better qualified he is, the more capable he will be of discovering the meaning of the text and explaining it. Every intelligent and literate person can interpret the Bible and should do so. Interpretation, as noted above, is not for a select few or a special class. Everyone is an interpreter, or he would understand nothing in his world. Yet, all acknowledge that careful study and diligent preparation along with native ability will enable a person to become much more skillful in avoiding errors in interpretation while bringing out the finest reproduction of the author's thoughts. Some of these qualifications need to be studied. Some are God-given, and some are acquired. They may be studied conveniently under three headings: intellectual, educational, and spiritual.

Intellectual

A good critical mind. The superior interpreter of God's word is endowed with superior mental qualities. He will be blessed with good common sense in its best meaning. Philosophers often decry "common sense" as that which is popular and uncritical. This is not the meaning here. Rather, it indicates that a man is able to readily detect the differences between opposites and the agreement of similar things. He sees harmony where it actually exists and is not taken in by superficial likenesses. Perhaps this trait can be called a good mind, a critical faculty to discriminate factors, weigh reasons, and come to sound judgments on the basis of evidence. Certainly this is a most helpful quality for the interpreter of the scriptures as it helps to keep him from excesses of fancy and impractical speculations.

Analytical mind. Besides common sense, the interpreter should

have a sharp, penetrating mind which is able to investigate thoroughly, to analyze accurately, and to judge critically the thought of the author. This capacity will enable the interpreter to seek the logical sequence of thought in the words and to see the individual parts of a discourse as well as the whole plan of the author. He is sensitive to the force of the words and the object of the author in using them. Such a penetrating mind is acute, discerning, and quick. An interpreter is handicapped if he is dull of understanding, slow to follow the course of an argument, and defective in judging evidence.

Open-mindedness. A third quality, much to be desired, is that of open-mindedness. The interpreter needs to be aware of his own weaknesses, his own dogmatic bias, and his limitations of knowledge and experience. All dislike to have to admit to provincialism and partisanship, but all have suffered from these failings. They can be overcome, and they must be overcome if sound interpretation is to result from study. The interpreter must be a sincere seeker after the truth of God. He must want the truth at any price. Like the noble-minded Bereans, he must receive the word with all readiness of mind and then critically test that message by the perfect standard of God's revelation. The supreme interest of the superior interpreter is to know God and His truth even though this is almost certain to require drastic reformation, even revolution in the life of that person. There must be a heart such as described by Jesus, "an honest and good heart" (Luke 8:15), to allow the full impact of the word to strike home in the heart. The word of God always penetrates; for it is living, active, and sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). But it can have opposing results. On the day of Pentecost and after the message of Stephen, men were cut to their hearts by the truth; but they reacted differently. The condition of the "heart" was the cause of the difference in the reaction. Jesus put the responsibility on a man, "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself" (John 7:17). Very few people ever believe or understand what they do not want to believe.

Disciplined imagination. A fourth intellectual qualification is a disciplined imagination. Since the interpreter must put himself into the life and thought of his author and since biblical authors lived in a different age, culture, country, and historical situation; it is vital that he can place himself in that context by controlled imagination. This does not mean wild speculations or unthinking

fancies but rather a lively and instructed imagination that creates empathy with the author's world. Such understanding will assist greatly the appreciation of the thought of the author.

Logical ability. A fifth qualification which helps interpretation is a logical mind. This is the ability to reason, to fairly argue a case, to test probabilities, and to reach conclusions with caution, care, and criticalness. Much of the most important teaching of the Bible is presented in a reasoned and logical presentation. For example, in the teaching of Jesus, He reasoned with them (Mark 12:28) throughout the gospels. His teaching was logical. The disciples followed their Master's example in teaching and logically reasoning (Stephen, Acts 6:9-10; 7; Acts 17:17ff; 19:8) about the Christ and His reign. So the interpreter needs to be a good thinker and able to reason.

The Bible definitely appeals to our reason, for it claims to be the revelation of the Supreme Mind, the Infinite Intelligence. Nowhere in the Bible are men encouraged to be credulous or to deny their reason.⁶ Instead men are expected to use their God-given reason and all their logical powers to investigate, understand, and apply the truth of God's revelation. Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Human reason is not superior to divine revelation. The deification of human reason leads to the serious error of rationalism. (This will be examined in detail under "The Wrong Methods of Interpretation.") Yet, the human reason is able to judge the evidence as to the origin of the revelation and to verify its claim to be of God. Once reason competently does this, reason becomes the servant of revelation, not the master. The judicious use of reason is both necessary and enjoined. Reason is to check its own premises, guard against its own errors, and logically proceed from valid evidence to conclusions. Reason will rule against hasty conclusions reached on insufficient evidence. Unfortunately, it is true that the only mental exercise that many people get is jumping to conclusions.

M.S. Terry commends the right use of reason as

... seen in the cautious procedure, the sound principles adopted, the valid and conclusive argumentation, the sober sense displayed, and the honest integrity and self-consistency everywhere maintained. Such exercise of reason will always commend itself to the godly conscience and the pure heart.⁷

Aesthetic quality. A sixth qualification of a good interpreter will be an aesthetic sense, an appreciation of the beautiful, that which is noble and rejoices in the pure and excellent things of God's creation and His revelation. A sense of that which is lovely, elevating, and moving is a big help in explaining the Bible; for it is full of such wonderful, beautiful, and profound qualities.

Able to teach. Finally, it is almost to be expected that an interpreter for others is one who can communicate well with others, a teacher. As the overseer in Christ's church is to be "able to teach," so any interpreter must be able to teach what he has learned by example and by word. The better the life of the Christian and the better the enthusiastic presentation of a clear grasp of biblical truth, the greater is the effectiveness of the interpreter.

Educational

Bible first. Next to natural endowments of the mind come the qualifications of sound, extensive, and thorough education. Here many natural abilities are brought out and polished to a high proficiency. Through education the intellect is given resources of information and knowledge which develop into wisdom over the years of experience. Education in the word of God is the first and greatest need of man. Indeed, without a knowledge of God, a submission to Him, and the use of His word as the measure of all other information, there will be no benefit from whatever education is received. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge; but the foolish despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7). The secular education given in Germany, Russia, China, etc. has spawned the greatest terrors of human history and has wrought more anguish to mankind than any other factor. In the U.S.A. increasing problems and mounting conflict can be related to the departure from moral and spiritual education in the schools of the country during the past fifty years.

Education (or academic learning) is not necessarily destructive of faith or morals, but increasingly the education in the world has broken away from its ancient foundation in God and His truth to go its own way. Most modern educational theories and subject matter are grounded in a humanistic philosophy which is not even neutral about God. Prevailing education is secular, which is better translated "idolatrous" as the biblical term meaning "unrelated to God." Both the Christian home and the

congregation of the Lord must do a much better work in the future in teaching youth the truth of God.

The Christian interpreter must know much more than the Bible itself if he is to be really competent in explaining a sizable portion of the scriptures. Again, this is not ruling out the simplest believer as an interpreter of much of the scriptures — all that he needs to know to become a child of God and to get to heaven by the grace of God. What is apparent is that to be a better or superior interpreter of the word of life for others requires broad and varied educational background. Almost any knowledge or information can be of some service to the interpreter of the Bible. Some subjects are of greater importance than others.

History and science. A knowledge of ancient history, geography, and archaeology are very useful to the interpreter in getting him into a sympathetic position with the life and times of those whose writings he will interpret. The subjects of chronology, anthropology, sociology, and civilizations will provide almost indispensable information. A study of law and politics can provide valuable insights into some aspects of biblical teaching. Natural sciences, especially geology, biology, and astronomy, are useful in illustrating or explaining statements in the Bible. The whole realm of philosophy is useful as man's thoughts are often contrasted with God's truth, man's speculations about things and God's revelation of ultimate realities. Of course, the Bible deals with man's personality, mind, and spirit; so psychology has something to contribute to the biblical interpreter even though it has been observed that much of modern psychology lost its soul (psyche); then it lost its mind; and now it is about to lose its meaning.

Literature. In the area of literature all the great classics of all nations should be put under tribute by the biblical interpreter. The study of comparative religions and the reading of the sacred books of these religions is of value in considering the merits of the oracles of God.

Languages. The superior interpreter of the Bible must know the languages used in the original writings — Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Perhaps even more important, he ought to really know English. Most Bible students work with English translations, English commentaries, etc.; and it is tragically true that many Americans cannot read or interpret English. No interpreter can excel without a working knowledge of the biblical languages as well as many of the languages related to these. Comparative

philology (the science of language origin and development) is profitable. For the non-specialist, significant knowledge of the actual text and its meaning can be gained through available resources (see Chapter IV. "Factors Which Help One Interpret Correctly").

Logic. Perhaps the study of logic is one of the most seriously neglected studies in schools today. Logic helps a student know "how to think straight," and few things seem any more necessary than such an ability.

All experience. Education in life itself, while not formal or academic, is most useful to the interpreter who will find that human nature has not changed since the time of the Bible writers. Experience in life is indispensable to the faithful interpretation of the scriptures.

All aspects of education can be used by the interpreter either from a positive or a negative aspect. All experience will provide maturity and understanding of one's self and hence a better prepared person to understand those people and experiences in the Bible. Everyone meets up with "Bible characters" every day.

Spiritual

The most significant of all the qualifications of the interpreter are those denoted as "spiritual." Intellectual qualities are needed (and the greater in quality the better they are), but they do not provide the highest need of an interpreter. "If I have . . . all knowledge; . . . but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2 RSV). Mere academic scholarship, educational degrees, and a brilliant mind do not add up automatically to the greatest interpreter of the Bible.

A Christian. The best interpreter in terms of spiritual qualifications is the child of God, the regenerated believer in Christ who has been born of water and Spirit. Such a person is living in harmony with the Author of the Bible and will be interpreting from within the new spiritual life imparted by Christ. This does not make the Christian a perfect interpreter, but it does offer him the help of the Holy Spirit in seeking the meaning of the word of the Spirit. James says, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and upbraids not; and it shall be given him" (1:5). Thus the Christian is dependent upon the Holy Spirit's guidance which will not be miraculous but spiritual, not revelation of new truth, but insight into the truth "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). The

Holy Spirit will bless the serious, careful student of the scriptures. The words in 1 Corinthians 2:7-11 apply to the apostles who were "carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21) as they wrote the revelation of God:

For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words (1 Corinthians 2:10-13).

The spiritual-minded person is in touch with God's thinking as revealed in the word. He can rely upon prayer, even such a prayer as Paul prayed for the Ephesians,

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe (Ephesians 1:17-19a).

Purity. In the second place, the Christian will have a purity of mind that will be sympathetic toward the purity of the teaching of God. The Christian has been cleansed from the defilement of sin and has a new disposition, a new moral appreciation of the world as the creation of God, all creatures as belonging to God, and the word of God as directed to the most intimate and personal conditions of man. Instead of a distorted view of life, of the relationships of people to each other, the child of God will see the harmony, beauty, and fitness of these inter-relationships.

The worldly-minded person, the evil-minded person with corrupted thoughts and feelings will often be repulsed by the word of a holy God and find it dull and hard to understand. This is established by Paul's statement:

But the natural [unspiritual] 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. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man (1 Corinthians 2:14).

(This natural man will be studied in a later chapter.) Obviously, the person led by the Holy Spirit is in a far better position to understand the spiritual truth than the person filled with the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. Certainly the word of God has a message and a value to such people; but it is very difficult for them to face it squarely, to understand it as pointing to their sinful condition before God.

Jesus Christ said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). The Holy Spirit wrote through Paul, "To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled" (Titus 1:15). Again, it is written,

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things (Philippians 4:8).

Love of truth. Another spiritual qualification is an eagerness to know the truth of God and to do whatever it requires. A good interpreter is one who wants to lay hold upon truth. It is a precious commodity with him. He recalls the words of Jesus, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself" (John 7:17). Every student of the word must be diligent in searching out the truth both for himself and for others. There must be a readiness to practice the truth when it is ascertained. The interpreter is deeply involved in his labor. It is a labor of love and means something personal and permanent to him. Such a profound study of the word of truth results in changes, even drastic changes, in the life of the interpreter. Jesus declared:

And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God (John 3:19-21).

There must be good and honest hearts open to receive the meaning of the truth revealed by God or little comprehension of the scriptures will result. The student of the word must lay aside prejudice and self-interest as he examines and investigates each

teaching of the Bible. He is willing to work hard to thoroughly grasp the meaning of the message, because he is driven by a passion to understand God through His self-revelation so that he may please God in all his life and thought.

Zeal for word. A fourth qualification in the spiritual realm is a zeal and hearty enthusiasm for the Bible as the revelation of God. The superior interpreter will be one who loves the contents of God's revelation, who "intently stares into the word" (James 1:25), and counts it his joy to "meditate upon the law of Jehovah day and night" (Psalm 1:2). The student of the word must desire the sincere milk of the word (1 Peter 2:2) and rejoice as he begins to consume the "meat of the word" (1 Corinthians 3:1-2; Hebrews 5:12-14). There should be a hungering and thirsting after the knowledge of God through His word, for this is the life of the Christian.

Hard work. Similar to this qualification of zest for studying the word to know God and His will is the qualification of diligent labor and earnest work that is willing to expend all needed energy in securing the treasures of the word of God. Timothy must have learned to diligently examine the scriptures from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, for "from childhood you have known the sacred writings," Paul wrote (2 Timothy 3:15). Yet Paul goes on to exhort Timothy further in giving diligence to grow up as a Christian, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). The mature Christian is dependent to a large extent upon his growing knowledge of the word of truth. Again, Paul wrote,

Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you (1 Timothy 4:15-16).

The lazy and haphazard student of the word will gain little understanding of the meaning of the scriptures.

God exalted over man. Still another qualification of good interpreters of the Bible is a high view of God with a modest and humble view of man (Romans 11:33-36). A devout reverence for God, a respect for His holiness and His all-embracing knowledge, will properly position the interpreter for God's truth to become plain. There is profound truth in the statement of Proverbs 1:7,

“The fear (reverent awe) of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge (wisdom).” The conceited humanist will have difficulty in understanding or accepting the truth spoken by God. The smart person who is ready to instruct God rather than to receive instruction will be blundering in much of his interpretation. Paul asks a penetrating question of such people, “For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him?” (1 Corinthians 2:16). Jesus indicated the right attitude for anyone approaching God when He said, “God is Spirit; and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). The interpreter must be like Samuel who said, “Speak, Lord, for your servant hears (is listening)” (1 Samuel 3:10).

Such an attitude marked all the great men of God through Bible history. It was the attitude of the Son of God Himself; for He both taught and practiced the highest, reverent submission to God: “I can do nothing on My own initiative, as I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just; because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 5:30). The Psalmist prayed, “Teach me to do your will; for you are my God” (Psalm 143:10).

Great respect for authority of word. Coupled with this reverence and respect for God will be thoroughgoing respect for the actual revelation of God in the words written. The interpreter believes God, and he believes what God has testified about His word-revelation. Thus the faithful interpreter of the Bible will accept the testimony of the Bible about itself as the inspired revelation of God.⁸ The person who rejects this high view of the scriptures is going to have far less interest in studying the “obsolete and antique viewpoints of an obscure, insignificant clan of people who lived in Palestine.” The one who rejects the biblical claim to be “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16) can gain considerable knowledge about the life, times, and thought of the Jews; but he will care little for the teachings which “falsely purport to be self-disclosures of God to mere men.” The exalted claims to unique revelation, the tremendous assertions of the Bible about ultimate realities, about God, creation, sin, the nature of man, the meaning of history, and the end of man in heaven or hell will not only displease the unbeliever but will cause him to lose respect for the Bible as worthy of much serious study.

The Bible is *not* a good and acceptable book for serious study *if* it was written by *men who lied* about their relationship to God and the origin of their knowledge of Him. The Bible is either the word of God through men “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter

1:21); or it is the word of men who either sincerely or insincerely, intentionally or unintentionally deceived themselves and others that they were spokesmen for God. The minute that a person is convinced that the document he is studying is a fraud and its fundamental premise is false, his enthusiasm for that writing will turn from distrust to disgust to repudiation. There is no comfortable, intellectually honest middle-ground between accepting the scriptures as the uniquely inspired, hence infallible, revelation of Almighty God to His creature man and looking upon it as the fallible work of men who did their best in fumbling around for some philosophic belief upon which to stand. The modern-day, mediating position of some scholars is to see errors throughout the Bible yet cling to the ethics of the Bible or at least to "Jesus". This is the desperate expedience of men who are sliding into the abyss of skepticism but, frightened by the fearful darkness, are clinging for a time to some dwarfed tree half-way down the cliff. How foolish of men to think that they can destroy the root of Christianity and yet have Christianity and its rich fruits anyway.⁹

Dean Alford is quoted by Ramm as saying, "Approach the Holy Gospel from the side of trust and love, and not from that of distrust and unchristian doubt. . . . Depend upon it, FAITH is the great primary requisite for the right use of the Gospels."¹⁰ B.P. Bowne has pointed out that it is possible to doubt everything, to be skeptical, but that this is a barren path.¹¹ It is a "method of rigor and vigor" but is really useful only in mathematics. Living persons assume that things are such as represented until given reasons for assuming otherwise. Thus the wise person will carefully approach the study of the Bible with every consideration for its sacred character and its divine origin. He earnestly will consider its claims and teaching before concluding that it is only the work of men. Such fair and honorable treatment will not automatically insure that the investigator will have faith in God or in the inspiration of the scriptures, but it makes it highly probable. At least this has been the remarkable effect of the scriptures upon men through the centuries.

J.W. McGarvey stated the self-authenticating nature of the scriptures in these words:

Finally, we mention the inherent power of the New Testament to convince the reader of its own divine origin, and to move him to holy living. That it has such power in a most remarkable degree is the testimony from experience of every believer. As to its

self-evidencing power, it is the testimony of a vast multitude that it has been the chief cause of turning men from unbelief to belief; and its power to move in the direction of holy living is attested by the whole host of the good and pure in every Christian age and country. This was the expectation of the writers, one of whom expressly declares that his purpose in writing was that his readers might believe, and that believing they might obtain eternal life; and it was also the expectation of Him who promised them the Holy Spirit for he said: "When he is come, he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." Now it is not of the nature of error or of falsehood to effect such beneficent changes in human character: these are the product of truth alone; and herein is a final and conclusive evidence that the writers of the New Testament books wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.¹²

With these three kinds of qualifications — intellectual, educational, and spiritual — in fruitful growth in the life of the interpreter, he will increasingly find the scripture becoming meaningful and understandable in his life. With these qualifications present, the task of the interpreter will become easier and a greater joy.

NOTES: THE TASK AND THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INTERPRETER

1. I.B. Grubbs, "Class Notes," (unpublished).
2. G.H. Schodde, *Outlines of Biblical Hermeneutics* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1917), pp. 137-138.
3. Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort (eds.), *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), pp. 564-565.
4. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), pp. 35-36.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.
6. Grayson H. Ensign, "Faith and Reason," (Christian Faith Equals Apprehension of Evidences Plus Experience) *Christian Standard* (March 1, 1952), pp. 11-12.

There has been a revival in our day indicative of retrogression rather than of progress, a revival fraught with danger for Christianity. It is the old spirit of anti-intellectualism in religious thinking — subjective experience in antithesis to objective examination of evidences, empirical experience in life in antithesis to moral certainty engendered by logical reasoning. At various times in the past, some religious leaders have revolted against reason, always to the detriment of Christianity, the most reasonable of all world religions. Today this unfortunate trend

influences some Christians only, e.g., witness the following statements.

Certainty is of the heart, not of the head. . . . Experience yields a surer testimony than the voice of reason. . . . A great Christian has declared that if every scientific and rational evidence of the truth of God's word were destroyed . . . even if all such evidences were arrayed *against* him . . . he would still believe the word. . . . Who are these who call themselves Christians, creeping forward with unsteady gait; never quite daring to trust their whole weight on the thing they believe? Fearfully, they must probe and test every inch of their footing. Is it any wonder that real progress is a stranger to their lives and their labors? These are they who travel the road of reason.¹

It is a temptation to criticize these statements individually and others like them, but they all bespeak a fundamental revolt against objectivity and the use of the mind in religion with an explicit assumption that faith and mentally acquired knowledge stand in antithesis to each other.

The author of this article will attempt to show that such an antithesis is false and that the revolt against reason is contrary to the teaching of the revelation of God. The thesis here advocated is that of Christian rationality — the belief that God is the Absolute Intelligent Being who created an intelligible world and who gave a knowable, verbal revelation (the Holy Scriptures) that reasoning men might know Him and glorify Him in all His works. Thus the human reason is not exalted above or divorced from the revelation of the Creator, but the revelation is nullified if there is no reasoning mind to apprehend the truth of God revealed.

THE PLACE OF REASON IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY

A sweet reasonableness permeates the scriptures. Isaiah (1:18) records this: "Come now and let us reason together, saith Jehovah. . . ." Peter exhorts us, "but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). This is in itself a sufficient justification for apologetics and the use of the intellect to the glory of God in the defense of the Christian system. Paul affirms that he is "set for the defense of the gospel" (Philippians 1:16).

The teaching of Christ was frequently in the apologetic strain. He presented strong, logical, rational arguments in the defense of Himself, His mission, and His disciples. The early apostolic preaching was apologetic in tone, a thoughtful presentation of an intelligible gospel of Jesus Christ. Never did those early preachers appeal *first* to the will or the emotion of men. It was always to their

minds. They preached facts to be believed and when they were believed, then there must be action. There is not a single statement in the whole New Testament like this: "It is faith's heroic leap into the dark that gets us safe in the arms of God." Instead of darkness read how the inspired preachers brought light to men by reasoning with them — Acts 17:2; 18:4; 18:19; 24:25. What a reasonable, true, and appealing message the gospel was to men of every condition, from the slaves of Corinth to the philosophers of Athens. Not once do we witness a disparagement of reason. Not once do we have an irrationalism proposed as an argument for Christianity. Truly, Christianity puts no premium on ignorance or credulity. Christianity teaches that man is rational. Christianity is an appeal to man. Therefore, Christianity must be rationally presented in logical consistency. No treatise could be more logical and appealing to the reason than the Epistles to the Hebrews, the Romans, and the Galatians. Thus, the New Testament Christian who grounds his belief in God, Christ, and eternal salvation on a mental apprehension of the revealed truth and acts in harmony with this apprehension is standing on solid, scriptural ground. Carl F.H. Henry summarizes the early approach:

Rationality permeated the whole revelational view; at the beginning was "the Word," and at its center, "the Word became flesh." So Christian apologetics fearlessly solicited the reason. . . . Hence the most representative Christian thinkers, through the whole sweep of church history, were profoundly convinced of the intrinsic rationality of the Christian theistic world-life outlook.²

THE MEANING OF FAITH IN CHRISTIANITY

Definitions of *belief*, *faith*, and *knowledge* are very difficult to formulate because of the complexity of the terms and their close relationship. These words shade into each other. *Webster's New International Dictionary* uses *belief* to define *faith* and *faith* to define *belief*. It does attempt this more definite distinction:

Synonym. — Belief, faith, persuasion, conviction agree in the idea of assent. Belief and faith, in modern usage, differ chiefly in that belief, as a rule, suggests little more than intellectual assent; faith implies in addition the element of trust or confidence. . . .³

Take note of the words "in modern usage" and "as a rule." B.P. Bowne in his book on epistemology states that there is ". . . no fixed frontier between knowledge and belief."⁴

If we search the scriptures, we find that in the New Testament the word *belief* is used but once (II Thessalonians 2:13) and the word in the Greek is *pistis* which is uniformly translated faith. When we compare the verb *believe*, and the noun *faith*, we find that

they both come from the same root, *peithe*. Thus etymologically, the scriptures do not mean to make a sharp distinction between belief (involving intellect) and faith. The scripture indeed declares that faith comes only through hearing the testimony and evidence of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:17).

Further illumination on this subject is given by some recent writers who sense the danger to Christianity in irrationalism. DeWolf makes this comment, "*Pistis* rightly understood is *gnosis*; rightly understood the act of faith is also an act of knowledge."⁵ After speaking of the modernistic attack on theology in the interest of non-doctrinal religion, Machen remarks:

But another contrast has an equally baneful effect upon the life of the present day. It is the contrast between knowledge and faith; and the consideration of that contrast takes us into the heart of our present subject. That contrast, as we shall see, ignores an essential element in faith; and what is called faith after the subtraction of that element is not faith at all. As a matter of fact all true faith involves an intellectual element; all faith involves knowledge and issues in knowledge.⁶

Hodge affirms that

. . . faith is limited by knowledge. We can believe only when we know, i.e., what we intelligently apprehend. If a proposition be announced to us in an unknown language, we can affirm nothing about it. We can neither believe nor disbelieve it.⁷

"The Christian religion," states Carnell, "is indeed based upon the act of faith, but faith that is not grounded in knowledge is but respectable (?) superstition."⁸ Chester Tulga declares,

Man can never be satisfied with non-rational faith alone. However unreservedly he may believe in God, he is forced by his reason to account for his belief. It is not enough to have faith — one must understand what he believes.⁹

The meaning of *faith* for Christianity is adequately summed up in two expressions used by Carnell, "Faith is but a whole-soul trust in God's word as true" because "of the sufficiency of the evidence."¹⁰

THE ALTERNATIVES TO RATIONAL FAITH

When Christian rationality is rejected, there are only two alternatives to the religious person who seeks for knowledge — authority or mysticism. Authority is the way of Roman Catholicism and dictatorship. Debate is out of order when the pope has spoken. Yet, truth is not established by authority in itself. The authority must win acceptance as an authority on the basis of rational evidence or be reduced to irrationalism. Therefore, the way of authority is not the way to true knowledge or an escape from the necessary use of reason.

Mysticism is the other alternative to rational faith. It is the way of the heart, subjective intuition, direct, immediate contact with God and His truth. This is the way of neo-orthodoxy, modernism, and religious liberalism. It is the way of the Holiness sects and cults who know that they are right, saved, sanctified because "they have that feeling inside." Yet this alternative is no better than authoritative decree as a basis of Christian knowledge. Mysticism and subjectivism ultimately render the object of faith meaningless, present an unknowable God, involve polytheism, destroy theology as a science, end in irrational actions and in the destruction of meaning.¹¹

SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE COMES THROUGH APPLICATION OF THE MIND OF THE BELIEVER TO THE REVELATION OF GOD

Both of the alternatives to Christian rationality fail to be adequate means of obtaining truth and must be rejected. We are shut up to the use of God-given reason for our investigation of the divine revelation, the evidences for its truthfulness, and the rational apprehension of its truth under the control of the laws of logic, language, and hermeneutics.

Faith and reason are not in antithesis, and spiritual knowledge comes through the faithful application of the mind of the believer to the revelation of God. With the mental apprehension of the truth imparted through the Word, conviction is brought into the experience of the sinner. He is a sinner! Christ alone can save him from sin! He then acts in accord with this knowledge. No man ever had an experience of Christ until he had apprehended the fact that Christ is the Savior of all men.

The only possible alternatives utterly fail to satisfy the requirements. Christian faith is in antithesis to credulity and ignorance. Faith is first knowledge, and knowledge rationally acquired through the examination of the historical facts supporting Christianity. Christianity is acceptable because it is a reasonable system of thought based upon objective, historical facts in a verifiable, propositional revelation. Brother Isaac Errett concludes the case by saying, "The Christian life must be accepted from a rational conviction that it is the truest and worthiest life that can be lived — the only life, indeed, that is certainly safe and unquestionably promotive of our best interests."¹²

FOOTNOTES ON "FAITH AND REASON"

1. Orvel C. Crowder, "Evidence of the Preservation of God's Word," *Christian Standard*, LXXXVI (April 15, 1950), p. 13.

2. Carl F.H. Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946), p. 224.

3. *Webster's New International Dictionary* (Springfield: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1934), p. 248.

4. Borden P. Bowne, *Theory of Thought and Knowledge* (New York: American Book Company, 1925), p. 368.

5. L. Harold DeWolf, *The Religious Revolt Against Reason* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1949), p. 23. (I understand by the word "knowledge" not empirical or exhaustive knowledge, but mental apprehension.)

6. J.G. Machen, *What is Faith?* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), pp. 39-40.

7. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: C. Scribner and Company, 1872-73), III, 84.

8. Edward J. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), p. 65.

9. Chester Tulga, *The Case Against Neo-orthodoxy* (Chicago: Conservative Baptist Association of America, 1951), pp. 24-25.

10. Carnell, *op. cit.*, pp. 66, 69.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-81.

12. Isaac Errett, *Letters to a Young Christian* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1877), p. 105.

7. M.S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1890), p. 26.

8. J.W. McGarvey, *Evidences of Christianity* (Louisville: Guide Printing and Publishing Company, 1891), Part IV, p. 171ff. See also Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), pp. 93-95.

9. The importance of the inquiry into the scriptures is shown by J.W. McGarvey in his work, *Evidences of Christianity* Louisville: Guide Printing and Publishing Company, 1891), Part I, pp. 1-2.

10. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), p. 13, citing Dean Alford, *How to Study the New Testament*, p. 13.

11. B.P. Bowne, *Theism* (New York: American Book Company, 1902), pp. 16-23.

12. J.W. McGarvey, *op. cit.*, Part IV, p. 222.

QUESTIONS

1. What does Grubbs declare is the "business of the interpreter?"

2. Schodde declares that the business of the interpreter is "to reproduce" what?

3. What are the three major areas of qualifications which a superior interpreter needs to have?

4. What did McGarvey mean by the "self-authenticating nature of the scriptures?"

5. The text of the New Testament writings has been restored to a remarkable exactness to the original text with only one word out of: a) 100, b) 500, c) 1000, d) 1500, e) 2000 in doubt.

6. T F Since God is the ultimate author of the scriptures, the Law of Reproduction of the author's thought is not violated when later writers go beyond the human author's thought.
7. T F The word "exegesis" means to "fill up with meaning, to elaborate."
8. T F Exegesis is the result of the application of sound hermeneutics.
9. T F The human reason is not superior to divine revelation.
10. T F Everyone comes to the Bible with some prejudgment.
11. T F Our lack of unbiased judgment means that we cannot get the truth of the author's message.
12. T F The best interpreter is one who is not attempting originality in regard to the words.
13. T F The Bible is not a good and acceptable book if it was written by men who lied about their relationship to God and the origin of their knowledge of Him.
14. Tell why you agree or disagree with Schliermacher's description of hermeneutics as an "art-doctrine."
15. What does the word *eisegesis* mean, and why should we refuse to practice it?
16. How much of a likeness to yourself do you detect in the picture of the man of God as presented to Christian by Interpreter (p. 33)? What characteristics of this wise guide (Interpreter) do you need to work on?
17. What does common sense mean in a popular and bad way, and what meaning does it have in a good way?
18. Under educational qualifications, what book must the interpreter spend the most time on and know the most about?
19. Of the three areas of qualifications — intellectual, educational, and spiritual — which one is the most significant?
20. What tremendous help does the Christian have available to him that the non-Christian does not have? (Consider the meaning of the word *Paraclete*.)

Factors Which Help One Interpret Correctly

I. BASIC EQUIPMENT

It is well to understand that the task of the interpreter is a difficult and demanding work, but it is quite important to recognize that it is not impossible nor beyond achievement by the average Christian. The work of interpretation is a privilege and joy when approached with the positive assurance that God expects His people to know His will through their own study of the revelation He has given. As one's understanding of the scriptures increases, so does the thrill of further discoveries increase. Each person needs to make the most of the helps and equipment that is available for understanding more and more of the Bible.

Confidence

The first factor to have is the confidence that God has given men an unfolding or unveiling of Himself for the specific purpose of enabling men to know Him. Thus, the interpreter of the Bible can begin with the expectation that he is endowed with

enough intelligence to understand the Bible, that it is not a closed book of dark enigmas and obscure ideas. As expressed in the title of this work, *You CAN Understand the Bible*. It is not necessarily easy, but neither is it so hard that the ordinary person is ruled out and must turn to a professional clergy or "expert interpreters." Through earnest study of the basic elements of interpretation and the use of God-given intelligence, much of the Bible becomes meaningful and understandable to men. Start the study of the word of God with the positive view that God expects you to understand His word and that you can understand it with honest study, diligent effort, and His gracious help (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Accurate Translation

The second most important help to correct Bible knowledge is an outstanding translation (or several translations) of the text. All are aware that the Bible was written by the authors in the language which they used whether Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. Ramm points out that "... all exegesis must be done in the original language if it is to be competent and trustworthy exegesis."¹ No one can deny that the superior interpreter of the Bible must be competent in the use of these original languages. Certainly it is true that in debate and profound research into the most complete meaning of the scriptures the interpreter must establish every argument, premise, and teaching upon the text in the original language. The scholarly investigation of biblical truth for the construction of theological systems or teachings must rest upon the language of the author in its original form.

At the same time and for the majority of students of the word of God, the Bible is remarkably open to investigation by those who know only English. A minority of exegetes are "authorities" in their own rights in the original languages. There are some highly competent scholars who know much about the original languages and can argue the impact and the value of older and higher authorities. There are a considerable number of those who have a passing acquaintance with one or more of the original languages and can follow the exposition of the Greek by others with the help of lexicons (dictionaries) and other helps.

Moreover, it is right to observe that the greatest scholars in original languages are still only men who are subject to mistakes. A great knowledge of the original language does not guarantee that one is immediately a superior interpreter. A great scholar of

language may not be outstanding as an interpreter as he may lack other qualifications and important areas of knowledge. Gesenius was one of the greatest scholars of Hebrew; but he did not believe in the deity of Christ, which seems to be plainly enough taught in scriptures that common people have believed it as the truth revealed.

Thus, on the one hand, it must be strongly asserted that the profound interpreters and expositors of the word of God have been and will be those with great achievement in the original languages; and on the other hand, it must be stressed that the largest part of biblical revelation is open to all people who can only make use of translations in their own language. Almost any translation in use today is adequate (though not equally accurate) to inform a man about Almighty God, who in love provided the good news of salvation through His Son. It will be found sufficient to enable a person to become a Christian, live to the glory of God, and at the end go home to eternal glory.

Misunderstandings. Many people have misunderstandings about translations of the Bible. Some feel that the *King James Version* (called *Authorized Version* because King James authorized the translation for use in the Church of England) is *really* the Bible or *the correct* translation.² A moment's reflection on historical data shows that the so-called *Authorized Version* was made in 1611 and was partly dependent upon older translations such as Wycliff's (1382), Tyndale's (1525), the *Great Bible* (1539), the *Geneva Bible* (1560), and the *Bishops' Bible* (1568). Neil Lightfoot states that the *King James Version* was not a new translation but a revision of the *Bishops' Bible*.³

It is a surprise to some people to learn that there were many critics of the *King James Version*, which they take for granted as "the really correct translation." The outcry against the "new version" was as great as that which greeted Alexander Campbell's outstanding translation of the New Testament in 1826. Each new translation has had its critics who have at times had considerable evidence that the new translation was no improvement on the older ones and maybe even failed to be faithful to the original language text.⁴

Value of new translations. Not a few Christians have questioned the need or the propriety of having different translations. Of course freedom permits anyone to make a translation and offer it for the consideration of others. There seems little question that within a short period of time the original Greek manuscripts of

the writings of the New Covenant of Jesus Christ were translated into other languages. There is nothing inherently wrong in a fresh translation. New materials and continuing research often enable a translator to give a more penetrating insight into some scriptural terms.

For those who would like to examine the reasoning of translators in producing new translations, you will find in some King James Bible a preface essay entitled "The Translators to the Reader," setting forth the argument for the new translation. (This is not the dedication preface to the king.) Alexander Campbell wrote nine pages in a preface entitled "An Apology for a New Translation" at the beginning of his translation, *The Living Oracles*. Likewise C.S. Lewis wrote a preface introducing the new work, *Letters to Young Churches: A Translation of the New Testament Epistles* by J.B. Phillips.⁵ These men make an excellent case, yes, an imperative case for retranslation from time to time.

Evaluation of some new ones. Today the public is flooded with a large number of new translations or revisions of older works. These vary in quality, accuracy, and style. A number are made by one scholar, which makes such translations much less reliable than those composed by a committee of scholars who have weighed and evaluated any translation first. Most of the contemporary translations have ceased to italicize words in the original. J.B. Phillips' translation is free with the words of the text and becomes an interpretative translation. Such translations need to be read with care, checking them against a more exact translation such as the *American Standard Version* or the *New American Standard Bible*. Students of the original languages naturally would check the best text in the original.

It is surprising to find a general acceptance on the part of evangelical believers in the Bible and Christians of a very free-wheeling paraphrase of the Bible – *The Living Bible Paraphrased*.⁶ Some of these same people made a great outcry against the *Revised Standard Version* when it appeared in 1946. Yet, if one had to decide between these two translations, the RSV would be much the better translation even with its flaws. *The Living Bible Paraphrased* is really a translation influenced by a Calvinistic theology which provides "proof texts" for a great deal of opinionated theology.⁷ The careful student of the word of God will not want to do his study with this subjectively colored translation.

The American Bible Society, in an effort to reach a great mass

of contemporary readers, has produced the *Today's English Version*, commonly entitled *Good News for Modern Man*. This is a modern American translation especially designed to reach the young people and the lost. It has aroused some very hostile criticism, some calling it "The Devil's Masterpiece." The very serious charges have been rather thoroughly examined by Dean Seth Wilson. Dean Wilson defends the TEV in most of its translations and gives this judicious advice:

Unfounded attacks and willful misrepresentations against new translations have caused unnecessary disputes, even divided feelings in churches. They have made some people doubt the soundness of faith in others who use the version under attack.

Concerning any translation, one may think it is not the best translation of the Scriptures. And he may be right. But he should not cast doubt on the faith of those who use it, just because HE does not prefer it. And he above all should not knowingly misrepresent the message it bears. Nor should he ever be guilty of making an untrue accusation! God makes us responsible for what we say.⁸

The present day interpreter is blessed in having several translations to work with, and it is well to have a number to cross examine as none is perfect. The Zondervan Publishing Company has published *The New Testament from 26 Translations*, and this is a good tool for the English Bible reader who really wants to get closer to the meaning of the original text. The general editor and his staff thoroughly considered the significant differences of wording in twenty-five translations from the *King James Version* and have given these various translations under each phrase or clause in the New Testament. In effect, it enables the English reader to have the fruits of the labors of the most noted biblical interpreters in translation in one handy volume. In most cases it makes plain the meaning of the text so that it is readily understood. Sometimes there are noticeable differences in wording and thought so that the student is stimulated to further investigation of the passage.

There seems to be no compelling reason for using a translation of a particular set of men which is over 360 years old in our day. For most people the so-called *Authorized Version* (*King James Version*) makes it more difficult to understand the word of God than is necessary. There are several much better translations available today. The *American Standard Version* of 1901 is a splendid translation which is a very literal (word for word) rendering of the original into English. It is generally considered the most accurate translation.

Some feel that all the careful scholarship of the ASV has been preserved plus an improvement in readability in contemporary American language in the *New American Standard Bible*. This publication of the Lockman Foundation is a fine study Bible in the edition with the marginal notes and readings. The Foreword indicates that the translators were guided by correct presuppositions so as to give an accurate and careful translation:

The New American Standard Bible has been produced with the conviction that the words of Scripture as originally penned in the Hebrew and Greek were inspired by God. Since they are the eternal Word of God, the Holy Scriptures speak with fresh power to each generation, to give wisdom that leads to salvation, that men may serve God to the glory of Christ.

The Editorial Board had a two-fold purpose in making this translation to adhere as closely as possible to the original language of the Holy Scriptures. To make the translation in a fluent and readable style according to current English usage. (This translation follows the principles used in the American Standard Version 1901 known as the Rock of Biblical Honesty.)¹⁰

Even the ASV and the NASB are both less adequate translations in a number of instances than *The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ, commonly Styled The New Testament* translated from the Original Greek by Doctors George Campbell, James MacKnight, and Philip Doddridge with Prefaces, Various Emendations, and An Appendix by Alexander Campbell. Campbell brought this work out in 1826, and it was known as *The Living Oracles*.¹¹ This translation anticipated many of the now approved translations of more recent scholars. In some terms he was more honest and faithful to the original than any modern version. Campbell plainly and accurately translated the Greek word *baptizo* by the English word *immerse*, which is its exact lexical meaning (though this is still denied by some). Another major improvement was dropping the ecclesiastical word *church* as an inadequate or ambiguous translation of the Greek word *ecclesia* in favor of the more accurate designation, *congregation*. Correct translation is a tremendous help to getting people to understand the will of God.

II. FURTHER EQUIPMENT

There is a great storehouse of material to assist the maturing interpreter. Probably the only limitation on the student is the lack of money to buy everything he would like to have. Ramm lists different areas of resource materials and gives references to

other helpful lists in acquiring essential tools for interpretation.¹² These are helpful especially for the person who is able to give much of his time to the work of interpretation and exposition.

Concordance

For the average person in the congregation the following books are valuable and almost essential resources. An exhaustive and analytical concordance to the Bible, such as *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*,¹³ is thorough and gives even the English reader helpful insights into the original language terms as they are variously translated into English. A careful student with such a concordance can gain considerable knowledge of the actual meaning of the text and the various shades of meaning in synonyms. It is worth the extra money to get an analytical concordance.

Dictionary of Words

W.E. Vine's *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*¹⁴ is a notable help to the interpreter as he examines every word in the New Testament in its original meaning as well as its particular meaning in the various contexts in which it is used. It will guide the student into more accurate understanding of the words of the New Testament, enabling him to check mistakes in translations. Of course, it must be remembered that all these helps are composed by fallible men who are subject themselves to error. Here the old adage that there is safety in numbers is true, and the diligent interpreter will have access to several scholarly works in interpretation of the scriptures.

Encyclopedia

The next important item which the student will want to acquire is a dictionary of the Bible. One of the best (though dated in some places) is *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.¹⁵ This is available (sometimes in used condition at a cheaper price) and is well worth the price. It is a rich mine of material on everything in the scriptures. Another volume of more recent date and quite adequate for many purposes is the one volume *The New Bible Dictionary*.¹⁶ There are others of good quality which can be secured if a student prefers them over these mentioned.

Commentaries

Then the interpreter will want to have at hand at least one set of

commentaries on the Bible. One volume works are available (*The New Bible Commentary: Revised*¹⁷ is recent and valuable), but they are of limited value because of the limitations of space. For many students of the Bible, *Barnes Notes on the Old and New Testament*¹⁸ is a reliable, useful, and economical commentary. *The Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*¹⁹ by J.P. Lange is a continuing source of thoughtful interpretation, as is the *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*²⁰ by various authors. Alexander Maclaren's famous *Expositions of Holy Scripture*²¹ are rewarding studies. *The Commentary on the New Testament*²² by R.C.H. Lenski and the *New International Commentary on the New Testament*²³ are multiple volume series of merit. In the Old Testament the volumes by C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch²⁴ are of continuing value for the advanced student, while those by H.C. Leupold²⁵ are more recent and quite readable.

Still another area of help may be derived from *Word Pictures in the New Testament*²⁶ by A.T. Robertson. In these word studies there is much illumination of the text for the English reader.²⁷ There are also some word study books which can provide helpful insights into the terms used in the Bible such as William Barclay's *New Testament Words*²⁸ and *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*.²⁹

Atlas

Another useful help in biblical interpretation is an atlas or an historical geography text with maps and materials about the physical background of biblical events. *The Oxford Bible Atlas* (second edition)³⁰ is considered the most accurate and thorough resource book. *The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands*³¹ by Pfeiffer and Vos is useful, and there are other volumes available.

While this list is far from complete, a student of the word of God can with these resources acquire a good, working knowledge of the meaning of the scriptures.

III. THE PLACE OF SUCH RESOURCES

Sometimes people are found who feel that it is unnecessary for them to study the writings of men in such books as mentioned above. Some may claim that the Bible alone is their only source book. Others look with great suspicion upon all commentaries and other aids. It is interesting to note that in some cases these very persons are carrying a *Scotfield Reference Bible* (which is one of the most overriding, doctrinaire types of commentaries on the market) or some other annotated Bible. Such "Bibles" are the

most dangerous types of *commentaries* because people can believe they are studying "the Bible," while all the time they are studying a human commentary imposed upon the biblical text. Such people may turn out to be tied to *one* commentary instead of many, but they are not consistent in saying they reject *all* commentaries.

Such a negative attitude does not commend itself to intelligent students of the Bible. The subject matter is so vast and the areas of knowledge so extensive that most people are aware they need all the helpful insight into the contexts of the grammar, history, geography, and culture that they can get. It is actually an indication of immaturity and ignorance for any person to reject the investigations of devout men who have spent years, possibly a lifetime, in the detailed study of some area of biblical learning. A wise person is humble enough to receive help from anyone that is qualified to help. The beginning student in art, music, literature, etc.; almost always is sent to study the works of the masters in those fields. The interpreter, no less than the artist or the musician, who rejects the wisdom and learning of others who have gone before him, is usually going to make it clear in his work that he has not studied the competent scholars.

There is a danger of following the teachings and opinions of men, even notable scholars, to the neglect of or downgrading of the word of God. This is wrong and is to be guarded against. No human writing has the authority that the word of God has. The Bible is the *judge* of the writings of man, not vice versa. No intelligent interpreter will be dogmatically controlled in his investigation of the scripture by any one theological system or any one commentator. The final court of appeal is the scriptures, but there is much profit in the study of the writings of inspired men as illuminated by the research of uninspired men.

Thomas Horne points out the advantages of the right use of commentaries (paraphrased by Ramm):

The advantages of good commentaries are: (i) they present us with good models for our interpretation; (ii) they give us help with difficult passages. But he also warns us that: (i) they are not to take the place of Bible study itself; (ii) we are not to slavishly bind ourselves to them as to authorities; (iii) we are to use only the best ones; (iv) where their interpretations are conjectures they are to be used with utmost care; and (v) we should use original commentaries rather than those that are mere compilations of previous works.³²

IV. TEXTBOOKS ON HERMENEUTICS

Naturally the serious student of interpretation will want to be involved in a study of formal texts on the subject of Biblical interpretation. However, the most recent books in this area are often written by theologians with rationalistic presuppositions and an existential approach to Biblical interpretation which seriously affects the validity of their writings for those who hold a Christian worldview and that the Bible is the written revelation of God. One must therefore exercise considerable discernment in regard to the authorship of some of these more recent books. They are so often enamored with the so-called historical-critical method of interpretation that anyone following their method will end up with a subjective understanding of the scripture and a definite bias toward accepting the scripture as objective truth revealed by the Holy Spirit and penned by inspired men.

Fortunately there are some worthwhile and adequate books on interpreting the Bible from the philological approach such as described in this text as the correct method. An interesting and helpful background book for the study of hermeneutics is Mortimer J. Adler's book, *How to Read a Book*. This is sort of a primer introducing the matter of interpretation and stressing the task of the interpreter to find out the author's real meaning. Adler notes that most people cannot read with understanding and clarity, and that he as a teacher had come to realize that reading was a very complicated activity that took skill, energy, and patience. It is a good starting point for any learning activity to realize that you do not know how to effectively perform the task but that you are eager to learn. Adler declares that books should be read three times or at least in three different ways. First comes the analytical reading in which the reader seeks to classify the book according to its kind and subject matter, to be able to state what the whole book is about. The second step is an interpretive reading in which one seeks to grasp the author's words, leading propositions, and arguments. The final reading of a book will be a critical approach in which the reader will express his agreement or disagreement with the author as to his conclusions.

Perhaps one of the most useful texts for the serious interpreter of the scripture is *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* by Bernard Ramm. This book in a revised edition was published by the Baker Book House in 1970. It is a substantial work by a Bible-believing scholar and one who presents the grammatical-cultural method

as the only proper method of interpreting the scripture. Dr. Ramm has contributed much to the author's appreciation of the science of interpretation as can be noted by the acknowledgment in the footnotes of this text. Ramm has covered many of the most basic matters in hermeneutics in a very competent manner. The student who wants to develop his understanding of the science is advised to secure Ramm's book and read it, especially after having completed this text.

Many conservative scholars who have written in the field of hermeneutics in this century have been indebted to M.S. Terry, whose notable work in hermeneutics has stood the test of time. *Biblical Hermeneutics* is available in a revised edition and is highly recommended to the advanced student. Anyone can gain valuable help from reading Terry's material. Throughout this text the author has used the first edition (published in 1883) because it contains more material on hermeneutics and various aspects of its development than the revised edition. Also, it is true that Terry departed from some of his earlier conservative convictions when he published the second volume. Terry is especially helpful in the examples of exegesis which he gives though occasionally one may dissent from his conclusions.

It is a distinct loss that today J.S. Lamar's book, *The Organon of Scripture*, is out of print and obtainable only through secondhand sources. This book published in 1859 by the J.B. Lippincott Company was a notable pioneering text in defining the correct method particularly in its process using the inductive method. There are many excellent passages in Lamar's book on developing a sound hermeneutical approach to the scripture. A number of his most significant points have been included in some form in this text. The interpreter who will spend the time to find Lamar's text will be rewarded with some interesting thoughts about the inductive approach to the scripture and why it should be used.

For the more advanced student the book, *Interpreting the Bible*, by A. Berkley Mickelsen is recommended. Mickelsen writes more on the level of the graduate seminary student, but his material is well presented and quite useful in filling out one's understanding of the various parts of the correct method and its functioning. This book can be read with profit by the student who wants to deepen his understanding of the science of interpretation.

Louis Berkhof has written a text on hermeneutics entitled *Principles of Interpretation*. This work does not have too much to

offer since it is a rather slim volume and most of the material presented can be found in the other texts that have been recommended. Of course, there is always profit in reading some other scholar in the field of interpretation and frequently examples of exegesis are cited and argued which enable the interpreter to appreciate the way to arrive at a sound exegetical conclusion.

From time to time other books on hermeneutics are published and may provide the diligent student of the scripture with fresh restatement of the old principles of the correct method. Keep in mind that some of these more recent texts may be deficient or defective in their approach to the scripture if they are written by those with a rationalistic or modernistic foundation. The serious interpreter will continue to spend time in serious study of hermeneutical books to upgrade his ability to interpret the word of God more accurately.

CONCLUSION

Though the task of the interpreter is a most demanding one, yet the sincere interpreter of scripture has adequate resources to enable him to get the correct meaning of the Bible. He approaches the Bible with the expectation of being able to understand God's revelation. Because God is good, He has willed to communicate His truth to man in an understandable way; and man is intelligent enough to grasp it. With every desire to understand God's word, the interpreter asks the blessing of God upon his study (James 1:5; Psalm 119:18, 33-38).

The interpreter, then, picks up the most accurate text (original or translation) that he is capable of using and begins to read the words. He will check other translations and surround himself with the best human aids he can afford. He will be thankful for the scholarly help of other students of the scripture, but he will seek to be independent and critical in his own serious reading of the text itself. The admonition of Paul will be a guiding star for him:

If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. . . . Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you; with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your heart to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of

the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father (Colossians 3:1-2, 16-17).

NOTES: FACTORS WHICH HELP ONE INTERPRET CORRECTLY

1. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), p. 116.

2. Cf. C.S. Lewis' interesting study, *The Literary Impact of the Authorized Version* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963). Lewis shows that the supposed influence of the *King James Version* on literature is something of a myth.

3. Neil R. Lightfoot, *How We Got the Bible* (Austin, Texas: R.B. Sweet Company, Inc., 1962), p. 68.

4. Cf. pamphlets by R.C. Foster, *The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament: An Appraisal* (Pittsburgh: The Evangelical Fellowship, Inc., 1946). This is a condensed reprint of a series of four articles published in February and March in the *Christian Standard*, 1946.

Also see R.C. Foster, *The Revised Standard Version, A Reply to Dr. Clarence T. Craig* (Pittsburgh: The Evangelical Fellowship, Inc., 1947).

Cf. R.C. Foster, "The Battle of the Versions," *Christian Standard*, January 10, 1953-March 14, 1953.

Cf. Carl McIntire, *The New Bible: Revised Standard Version. Why Christians Should Not Accept It* (Collingswood, New Jersey: Christian Beacon, n.d.).

Dr. Oswald T. Allis commented on the RSV in *Christianity Today*:

We believe, and we think we have proved, that Revised Standard Version represents a radical departure from the high standard of accuracy in translation which was set by Authorized Version more than 300 years ago and which English Revised Version and American Revised Version felt called upon to maintain. . . . The freedom with which RSV treats the text of Scripture indicates the low conception of its inspiration entertained by the revisers. It is this more than anything else which makes the RSV "important." It represents a type of translation which, certainly in the case of a "standard revision" of the AV, would have aroused a storm of protest fifty years ago. Should RSV attain to anything like the popularity which its publishers anticipate, this will be indeed an important event. It will be a signal triumph for Modern Liberalism.

Also see the in-depth study by O.T. Allis, *Revised Version or Revised Bible? A Critique of the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1953).

It is interesting to see what twenty years may have done to the thinking of some evangelicals in contradiction to Allis' prediction, for the same *Christianity Today* reports a survey by Austin Chapman of 46 well-known Bible scholars, etc. In a comparison of the *American Standard Version*, the

Revised Standard Version, the New English Bible, and the King James Version, he found:

Out of the ten categories the RSV snagged seven first places and three seconds. The ASV took first in "most accurate," but the RSV got first in "scholarship" and "best whole Bible." The KJV came in last in nine out of ten categories, including accuracy and scholarship. Quoted in "they are saying," *Christian Standard*, September 24, 1972, p. 6.

5. J.B. Phillips, *Letters to Young Churches: A Translation of the New Testament Epistles* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), pp. vii-x. Also found in C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 229-233.

6. Kenneth Taylor, *The Living Bible Paraphrased* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1971). Youth edition is called *The Way*, and a children's edition is entitled *The Children's Living Bible*.

7. Cf. J. Noel Merideth, "The Living Bible Paraphrased," *Gospel Advocate*, CXIV:37 (September 14, 1972), pp. 577, 583.

8. Seth Wilson, *Good News or Bad? Should Christians Use or Recommend the New Today's English Version of the Scriptures?* (Privately published, Distributed by Ozark Bible College Bookstore; Joplin, Missouri), p. 19.

9. Curtis Vaughan, ed., *The New Testament from 26 Translations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967).

10. The Lockman Foundation, *New American Standard Bible* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Creation House, Inc., 1971), p. iii.

11. Cf. some interesting articles on Campbell's translation by R.D. Ice, "The Living Oracles," *Christian Standard*, February 4, 1973, pp. 13-14; "Opposition to Campbell's Version," *Christian Standard*, February 18, 1973, pp. 11-12; "Campbell and the King James Version," *Christian Standard*, May 20, 1973, pp. 9-10.

12. Ramm, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-22. Advanced students will want to consult *Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study* by F.W. Danker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1970).

13. Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1955).

14. William E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1966).

15. James Orr, (ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915).

16. James D. Douglas, (ed.), *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962).

17. D. Guthrie and J.A. Motyer, (eds.), *The New Bible Commentary, Revised* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970).

18. Albert Barnes, (ed.), *Barnes Notes on the Old and New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1962).

19. John P. Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.). Reprint

20. *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895-19—). The more recent edition is not recommended as it is generally influenced by liberal positions.

21. Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scriptures* (New York: Hoddes and Stoughton, 1906).

22. Richard C.H. Lenski, *The Commentary on the New Testament* (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, n.d.).

23. *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954).

24. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950).

25. Herbert C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1942). He also has expositions on other Old Testament books.

26. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1943).

27. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromily (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964).

28. William Barclay, *New Testament Words* (London: Student Christian Movement Press Ltd., 1964).

29. Everett F. Harrison, (ed.), *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960).

30. Herbert G. May (ed.), *The Oxford Bible Atlas* (second edition; London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

31. Charles Pfeiffer and Howard Vos, *Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1956).

32. Ramm, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19, citing Thomas Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1849), I:353-54.

33. M.J. Adler, *How to Read a Book* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940). This has been revised by Adler and Charles Van Doren, 1972.

34. Cf. Dorothy L. Sayers' strong confirmation of this point as well as the failure of educational systems to teach people how to read:

What is of great and disastrous importance is the proved inability of supposedly educated persons to read. . . . The education that we have so far succeeded in giving to the bulk of our citizens has produced a generation of mental slatterns. . . . And particularly in the matter of Christian doctrine, a great part of the nation subsists in an ignorance more barbarous than that of the dark ages, owing to this slatternly habit of illiterate reading. *The Mind of the Maker* (second edition; London: Methuen and Company Ltd., 1941), pp. vii-ix.

35. Adler, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-68. In the revised edition these rules are found on pp. 163-64.

QUESTIONS:

1. T F It is a blessing that the interpreter has so many tools and resources for correctly interpreting the scriptures.
2. T F The ordinary, earnest reader of the English Bible will miss most of the meaning of the writers.
3. T F God expects men to understand His word enough to obey Him and go to heaven.
4. T F The more a student of the Bible knows of the original language the more readily he will understand the thought of the author.
5. T F There is no reason for nor value in the new translations which have flooded the market today.
6. T F God's truth is so great and sure that a sincere person can use almost any translation of the Bible and find out how to be saved, to please God, and go to heaven.
7. T F The fact that the *King James Version* is called the authorized version means that it is the best translation we have.
8. T F There is no perfect translation of the Bible.
9. T F It is good to select one translation and ignore others.
10. T F These resource books and tools can be used with complete assurance and safety.
11. T F A Bible with a built-in commentary (headings, notes, etc.) can be one of the most dangerous types of commentaries.
12. List five (5) types of books beside the Bible which are recommended for the serious student to own.
13. What are the three (3) ways Adler teaches us to read a book to really understand it?
14. Paul's admonition (Col. 3:1-2, 16-17) teaches the interpreter to keep seeking _____, to set your mind on _____, and let the word _____.

Factors Which Obstruct Correct Interpretation

There is considerable sadness in writing about the factors which obstruct correct interpretation for their name is "Legion." Indeed, it would require much more space than is available to list the manifold blunders and failings of those who have sought to interpret the word of God. It is a tragic rehearsal which began in the third chapter of Genesis when man determined to listen to himself and the enemy of God rather than to the merciful and faithful Creator. *Sin* is the root of all the obstacles to correct interpretation. As long as man is sinful there is the possibility of misunderstanding God's truth. Yet, if the student is aware of his own weaknesses and the pitfalls that lie along his path to sound interpretation, he can take measures to overcome these dangers. The more diligent and thorough he is in attacking these subtle and fatal factors, the more successful he will be at getting the real meaning of the word revealed.

I. OBJECTIVE FACTORS

Grubbs said that difficulties may be divided into two major

kinds of obstructions for the interpreter.¹ Sources of error may be objective or subjective according to their origin in the text (writing) itself or from the weaknesses and faults of the interpreter himself. The objective difficulties may be those relating to the exact or correct text. Textual criticism has gone far to remove most of these problems though new resources like the Dead Sea Scrolls continue to provide helpful checking of some biblical texts.

Even with the correct text before him, the interpreter will find an area of difficulty in defining the meaning of all the words of that text. Also, he will find the larger and more important problem of relating the meaning of the words and sentences into a harmony of thought which will present the truth revealed in immaculate light. Yet, this has been done with considerable success by men from the time of the apostles to the present hour. It can be done by the exacting student of the word in an enlightening and happy degree to salvation and all the blessings of God both for himself and for others. Face the difficulties and with God's help plus the lesser help of men who have been masterful interpreters learn what is imparted for every man.

II. SUBJECTIVE FACTORS

Natural incapacity. Grubbs listed seven main subjective weaknesses for the interpreter to guard against.² Little can be done about the first — natural incapacity — for there are those who simply do not have the mental ability or driving passion to learn the truth. Some people are always content to let others do the work and to be led around by their proverbial noses. The number of mental incompetents is small; but unfortunately the number of lazy, indifferent, and apathetic people is large. Such need to hear the word of their Master through Peter as he commands, "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

Moral unfitness. The second danger lies in the area of moral unfitness. Man is a sinful being and must realize that there lurks in his heart an enmity toward God. It may be active, externalized, and obvious; but it is equally dangerous to the Christian in his living the new life in Christ or in studying His revelation. The person outside of Christ will often resist and even resent the teaching of the scriptures. Much of it may well disturb his own

view, and certainly it demands a complete "about-face," a change of heart, mind and will that leads to a transformed life. Some are like Ahab who, when confronted by Elijah, said, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" There was little difficulty in Ahab's understanding the message of Elijah, but there were great barriers to his accepting the message. Elijah replied that he had not troubled Israel but that Ahab and his father's family had troubled Israel through their idolatrous practices in forsaking the commandments of Jehovah (1 Kings 18:1-18).

The Jewish Council had little difficulty in understanding Stephen's message, but they rejected that message and destroyed the messenger. When the scriptures dare to expose "my sin," then it becomes very hard for anyone to see that the scripture actually says what it does. There is so much pride and deceit within the heart, even the regenerated heart, that the interpreter must constantly humble himself toward God and examine his attitude toward God.

The teaching of the Holy Spirit through Paul has been neglected in this matter and has suffered distortion in its meaning. Paul writing to the Christians at Corinth was led to declare, "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him, and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1 Corinthians 2:14a KJV). This translation has given rise to two erroneous interpretations. First, the "natural" man is the sinner who cannot understand the gospel or the revelation of God until he has been miraculously regenerated (born again) by the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit. This vestige of Calvinism still finds its advocates by the thousands. Conversion is a "miracle of God's grace" wholly apart from man. Thus the sinner neither seeks salvation nor has any understanding of the will of God. Indeed, he does not know that he is a sinner until, like a bolt out of the blue, God wills to act upon his heart in divine arbitrariness (by supposed eternal decrees).³ Thus the elect are saved by no responsibility or condition on their part, and hell is populated by people without responsibility or moral choice upon their part. Lots of thinking people have lost their appetite for this type of dogma and are relieved to find that it is not the only interpretation (nor the most likely interpretation) of the word of God. Yet, this view seems to be supported by the above passage concerning the "natural man" as the unconverted, unregenerate man.

The second view of the "natural man" is the man in a state of nature, not having the revelation of God before him. He cannot understand the word because he does not possess it. This seems to merely state a truism that if you don't have the word of God to read, you can't understand it. Paul is probably saying much more than this trite and rather obvious truth.

D.R. Dungan gives the student a good demonstration of interpretation as he examines this passage and these popular interpretations noted above.

(a) Paul was not speaking *to*, nor *of*, men in a state of nature having never received revelation, or to whom it had never been offered.

(b) He was not speaking *to*, nor *of*, unconverted men, in antithesis to converted men.

(c) The spiritual judgment is the antithesis, and the carnal judgment is that which naturally opposes it. Hence the conclusion is, that the word rendered "natural" would be better rendered carnal.

(d) The reason that this natural man did not receive them, was not because he had never heard of them, but because they were foolishness to him. They could not be foolishness to a man who never heard of them.

(e) The word *psuchikos*, here rendered natural, is better rendered carnal. It occurs five times in the New Testament: I Corinthians 2:14; 15:44, 46; James 3:15; Jude 19. In the Corinthian letter, it is rendered in the Common Version by the word *natural*, but in the other occurrences, by the word *sensual*. The latter is its meaning in all of the occurrences, as will be seen by the opposing thought being that of spiritual purity.

(f) Paul was writing to church members, whom he denominated saints — those who had been set apart to the service of the Lord. Hence neither of the old interpretations can possibly be true.

(g) He was condemning them for their carnality.⁴

Thus, by an appeal to the basic meaning of the word and then to the context, Dungan shows the correct interpretation which now appears in a number of the more recent translations. The *American Standard* and the *New American Standard* versions render 1 Corinthians 2:14 as the *King James Version* but give in the margin the word "unspiritual." *The Berkley Version in Modern English* offers this translation, "But the worldly minded person does not accept things of the divine Spirit; to him they are folly and he cannot understand them, because they are estimated from a spiritual

standpoint." C.B. Williams and J.B. Phillips use the word "unspiritual" as do *The Jerusalem Bible* and *The New English Bible*.

By simply reading on past the chapter division (which should always be disregarded in a consideration of the context) the interpretation of Dungan is borne out.

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, [not same as 2:14 *psuchikos*, here *sarkikois*]⁵ as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

Prejudice. Another aspect of man's fallible and sinful nature is the presence of prejudice and selfish interest which work against honest interpretation. No one is free of prejudice. It must be faced, admitted, and then fought against day and night. Prejudice is a prejudgment of a case or a belief without the thorough examination of all the evidence available beforehand. It is coming to the interpretation of a passage with a preconceived judgment of what it must mean. Many forced interpretations find their origin in the selfish (self-serving) desire of interpreters.

Pride dictates that a person must maintain his ego "at all cost." One must not admit that he is mistaken! It is so easy to believe what one wants to believe, to make the scriptures speak as we speak. One man tried to justify himself for exporting drugs and medicines which were condemned and banned in the U.S.A. by the Pure Food and Drug Administration by quoting Deuteronomy 14:21, "You shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself: you may give it to the sojourner that is within your gates, that he may eat it: or you may sell it to a foreigner . . ."

Lord Bacon distinguished four varieties of prejudice in his work *Novem Organum*.⁶ These prejudices he called idols or false notions which have "already preoccupied the human understanding and are deeply rooted in it"⁷ to the extent that truth has difficulty in getting into the mind or in taking possession of it. The first of these idols is the "idols of the tribe" which is "inherent in human nature and the very tribe or race of man; for man's sense is falsely asserted to be the standard of things . . ."⁸ These idols, Bacon says, spring from man's mind which ". . . resembles those uneven mirrors which impart their own properties to different objects, from which rays are emitted and distort and disfigure them."⁹ It is assuming too much that

needs to be proved, jumping prematurely to conclusions about questions, and accepting all that supports a favored position or judgment while rejecting all that is opposed to it.

The human understanding, when any proposition has been once laid down (either from general admission and belief, or from the pleasure it affords), forces everything else to add fresh support and confirmation; and although most cogent and abundant instances may exist to the contrary, yet either does not observe or despises them, or gets rid of and rejects them by some distinction, with violent and injurious prejudice, rather than sacrifice the authority of its first conclusions.¹⁰

Also, "the human understanding resembles not a dry light, but admits a tincture of the will and passions, which generate their own system accordingly; for man always believes more readily that which he prefers."¹¹ The interpreter, then, must be on guard against his own human nature and its inherent weaknesses.

The next prejudices are called "idols of the den," those of each individual; for everybody

... has his own individual den or cavern, which intercepts and corrupts the light of nature, either from his own peculiar and singular disposition, or from his education and intercourse with others, or from his reading, and the authority acquired by those whom he reverences and admires, or from the different impressions produced on the mind, as it happens to be preoccupied and predisposed ...¹²

This prejudice turns up in those who constantly ride certain teachings (like a child riding a favorite mechanical toy), who interpret everything in the light of their obsession, and who are sometimes called people of "one-track minds." For example, there are those who are bound to the past and reject the modern while there are others who do just the reverse. It is so easy to get entangled in the prejudices developed by one's own education and interests to the exclusion of so much that is available and relevant. This leads to provincialism — supposing that our little world is all the world there is.

The third classification of idols is denoted "idols of the market (forum)" which is "formed by the reciprocal intercourse and society of man with man . . . from the commerce and association of men with each other . . ."¹³ These prejudices arise from the misuse of words, especially the popular but inexact meaning given to words. Bacon said that these were the most troublesome

of all because “. . . men imagine that their reason governs words, whilst, in fact, words react upon the understanding . . . Words are generally formed in a popular sense, and define things by those broad lines which are most obvious to the vulgar mind . . .”¹⁴ When there is an attempt to define more precisely and accurately the real nature of the object, the popular usage opposes such change. Thus men have carelessly talked about the “Christian Sabbath,” a term not found in the scriptures and quite inaccurate. Others have forgotten about the priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:5,9) and have talked about “clergy” and “laity.”

Unthinking usage of the word “sanctuary” to describe a room in a building which is used for certain gatherings and activities on the first day of the week has obscured the rich spiritual meaning in the New Testament where *sanctuary* (temple) is used of the believer’s body (1 Corinthians 6:19) and where the “house of God” (sacred entity) is composed of Christians — “living stones built up a spiritual house . . .” (1 Peter 2:5). Christians alone are God’s sanctuaries today; and when they are gathered together in Christ’s name in any one place, they sanctify such a place.

The beautiful word fellowship (*koinonia* in the Greek) is steadily being degraded from a spiritual meaning to a carnal meaning. Every effort seems bent on equating it with food and drink as though the stomach was of lasting importance. Every church building simply must have a “fellowship hall” where food is consumed often by overweight individuals, who for their own benefit might well be admonished by the Lord to feed the poor. While food may be present during a fellowship, food is not a necessary part of fellowship. The greatest fellowship man can enjoy is to gather around the Lord’s table and in faith partake of (fellowship) the body and the blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). Giving to others in Christ’s name is fellowship (Romans 12:13; Galatians 6:6; Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 9:13; Hebrews 13:16); but this is in nowise connected with a hall or building, nor does it involve the consumption of food by Christians themselves.

The fourth class of idols is defined by Bacon as “idols of the theatre which have crept into men’s minds from the various dogmas of peculiar systems of philosophy . . .”¹⁵ These become controlling systems of thought of the individual and often interfere with the open investigation of any interpretation which is counter to the accepted theory, creed, or dogma. All denominational systems fall under this classification because they

often become straitjackets and blinders to the person who accepts them. Nothing can be admitted as sound interpretation unless it agrees with the preconceived dogma. Thus Calvinism, Roman Catholicism, etc., all have a way of getting between the interpreter and the word of God. Traditionalism is a hindrance because it is the unthinking, uncritical acceptance of a judgment solely on the basis of some supposed authority in the past.

Striving for novelty. The next obstruction in Grubbs' list of difficulties in the interpreter is a striving for novelty or the ambition to make a name for oneself as an interpreter. There is a false thirst for originality which has hatched through the years a miserable brood of crippled hybrids which have proved to be sterile interpretations. Imagination is a fine qualification for the good interpreter, but it must be controlled at all times.

Lack of preparation. Another problem area for the interpreter is the lack of general and thorough preparation for the work of interpretation. Without adequate development of all the faculties that God has given him, the interpreter is going to encounter more than his share of difficulties. This difficulty is inexcusable because anyone can develop his abilities to a remarkable degree, limited usually only by laziness.

Carelessness. Often the interpreter will make an error in interpretation through incomplete, careless study of the passage of scripture before him. Patient and thorough research into all the aspects of a passage through the principles and rules of hermeneutics is required if one is to be satisfied that he has reached a valid conclusion. There is no place for snap judgments in the mind of the serious student of the word of God.

False methods. Finally, Grubbs points out that the interpreter will be seriously hindered from sound interpretation if he is following an inadequate method of interpretation. Method involves presuppositions. It is bad enough when the interpreter uses improperly the principles of exegesis, but it is destructive of any hope of valid conclusions when the wrong method is used. (A later chapter will be devoted to this urgent problem.)

III. OTHER FACTORS THAT ENDANGER SOUND INTERPRETATION

Desire for Popularity

The interpreter has to guard against the desire to be popular or pleasing to a certain audience. Any interpreter can allow outside

pressure or influence to cause him to distort the meaning of a passage. It is wrong to please men by twisting or obscuring the scriptures. Paul declares, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). It is far more important to be faithful to Christ and to speak with plainness the word of God than to be honored and appreciated by men for tickling their ears with what they want to hear. One good brother often prayed ". . . and help the preacher to preach those things which will be pleasing to us." Though he did not mean the words as they sounded, no doubt many members would heartily concur in his prayer.

The man-pleaser seeks the applause, not the welfare, of his hearers. He is going to shun many passages of scripture which speak too bluntly of human errors and will often see things just like the "establishment" sees them. This is like a doctor who refuses to reveal any unpleasant findings of an examination even though the patient's life may be in jeopardy.

At the same time the faithful Christian will strive to be pleasing to others in the *right* way. Again, Paul is the proper example as he followed the highest example — Jesus Christ.

Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:32-11:1).

There is no requirement that the faithful interpreter be crude, rude, or offensive in his presentation of the meaning. People will not readily receive even the truth when it is presented in an unkind, arrogant way. Many more would be helped to a more accurate understanding of the will of God if interpreters acted like Paul, "But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children" (1 Thessalonians 2:7). Or follow the exhortation to Timothy, "And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition . . ." (2 Timothy 2:24-25).

Clerical Authority

Christians need to be on their guard against the tendency for the clergy or professionals to assume a possessive attitude toward the Bible. It may have begun in the Roman Catholic church, but it

has certainly spread through all the churches including those with a restoration passion. Millard J. Erickson has written specifically about this problem:

Since the Bible is thought to be properly understood only by those possessing these special skills and tools, a new priesthood arises . . . a new type of Gnosticism . . .

A number of voices have arisen suggesting that this approach has gone too far. Robert Blaikie, noting that the Reformation insisted that Jesus was the only mediator between God and man, says:

Today, therefore, when exalted claims are made for the critically trained academic clergy as the essential mediators of the truth of God to men, then talk about the need for a New Reformation seems extremely apt. . . . The Church today, if it is faithful to the principles of the Reformation and the guidance of the Living God, the Holy Spirit, will not continue to tolerate or approve a self-exalting hierarchy of would-be essential mediators-to-men of the truth of God [*"Secular Christianity" and God Who Acts*, Eerdmans, 1970, p. 27].

James Barr, also, has suggested that although those who have a good grasp of the original languages will always have a more accurate understanding of the biblical text than those who do not, "it is unlikely that in more than a few special cases this knowledge will lead to a recognition of some Biblical conception which is vital to the understanding of the Bible, but which is invisible to the reader of the English Bible" (*Biblical Words For Time*, 1962, p. 162).¹⁶

In some cases the Bible has been withheld from the people for fear that they might learn too much. In other cases, the ordinary Christian has been given the idea that if one has not been through a period of specialized theological training, he can't understand the scriptures properly. People who are good Bible students may raise explosive or embarrassing questions for the clergy. The rule of authoritative leaders is jeopardized by alert readers of the Bible.

While there is some slight danger of abuse or extremism on the part of shallow-minded thinkers and poorly prepared students of the word, there is far more to be gained by the widest freedom of study and discussion of the scriptures. The Bible itself will correct and remove improper views or unbalanced teachings. Men, created in the image of God, are capable of understanding the revelation of the Father and of being disciplined by the word.

Many problems within congregations today go back to a lack of knowledge of the word of God. When people are filled with the word of God, their lives improve, their outlook changes, and they become teachers of others. There is too much of a monopoly of Bible knowledge in the church today. Christians are often at fault in being too lazy or indifferent to get into the joy and reward of studying the Bible for themselves.

The idea of a special professional class endowed with the almost exclusive ability to interpret the Bible is not true to biblical Christianity but is widely accepted or assumed today. The priesthood of all believers opens the door to the right and responsibility of every Christian to be a keen student of the word of God. Faithful preachers of the word will rejoice to rear up a number of faithful expositors of the Bible and thus work themselves out of a "job" at *that particular* congregation. This ideal has seldom been realized because it has been seldom sought, taught, and encouraged. Thus the church is often a clerical-controlled institution instead of a dynamic fellowship of God's people; and the congregation fails to evangelize because the saints are ignorant, while the preacher is committed to nursemaiding the infantile Christians.

There is connected with this clergy possessiveness of the scriptures, a related error of setting up certain men — church fathers, editors, professors, authors, etc., — as final authorities on all interpretation. Everything has to be checked and approved by the one accepted standard. This is not logical and is not scripturally approved. Only the Bible rightly interpreted is the final court of appeal in matters of teaching and practice.

Human Creeds

The use of humanly prepared creeds or confessions of faith has worked a great deal of harm in this same direction by the gradual elevation of these fallible writings to a position equal to or superior to the infallible word of God. The authority of the Bible has been undercut by the imposing but false authority of denominational creeds. The Jews of Jesus' day so vividly demonstrated this tragic blunder that the lesson should have been learned by everyone. The Lord Christ said,

... Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the

precepts of men. Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men. He was also saying to them, You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition (Mark 7:6-9).

Still it happens in this day that many are held to a certain belief through a reverence for a human document, (often antiquated in its origin and unrealistic as far as contemporary problems are concerned) and cling to it even when the word of God ignores or condemns the position. This is wrong, injures the harmony of brethren, and prevents the healing of divisions. The dead hand of the traditionalism should be rejected in favor of the living word of the Head of the church. Of course, there should be respect and consideration given to able thinkers and interpreters from the past; but there can be no slavish submission to their word as equal to the statements of God's revelation.

False Harmonizing with Science

Finally, attention must be given to the serious and complex hindrance of clear understanding of the Bible that has come about through *dogmatic* efforts to harmonize the Bible with current scientific theories and (what has happened more in the past) efforts to force scientific theories to conform to someone's interpretation of the Bible.

It is wrong to demand agreement where two different areas of knowledge are involved or to demand agreement at the cost of twisting the meaning of the data. There are many speculations and philosophic positions taken by *men* of science that are not thereby guaranteed *scientific* status. When a scientist leaves his laboratory and his empirical experiments to offer his opinions in other fields, he becomes no more of an expert or a scholar to be listened to than his own training and knowledge in *that* field gives him respectability. A good scientist may be a very poor philosopher as a philosopher. Just as a good theologian may be a very poor scientist, so a scholarly scientist may be a very inadequate theologian.

Much of the conflict that makes headlines and has in the past given rise to heated debate has come about because of misinterpretations of scripture by either theologians or scientists, or by both; and on the other hand, by the misinterpretations of natural scientific data by either theologians or scientists or both.¹⁷ Certainly there have been some remarkable changes in the

positions or interpretations of both scientific data and scripture by both scientists and theologians during the past four hundred years especially.

Better understanding of the Bible's meaning and appreciation for the data of science have helped to clarify some issues that were controversial in the past. Competent and careful students have been able to suggest possible interpretation of scientific facts which are in harmony with sound biblical interpretation. Other scholars with Christian faith and scientific training have offered helpful suggestions as to interpretation of scripture which is hermeneutical and in accord with sound scientific views.

Yet, there remain areas of conflict. Some things in scripture appear to be obviously in contradiction with scientific views now held. It is difficult to see reconciliations of certain statements of science and the scripture. Some things are going to have to await further evidence and data before judgments can be drawn. All need to suspend judgment on these areas and not dogmatize where inadequate information is in hand.

It is clear that there will always be sharp and irreconcilable conflict between the views of some scientists and the teachings of the Bible when such scientists reject God and all supernatural phenomena. Biblical truth is presented as revelation from God and assumes the supernaturalism of God's will and activity. The person who is a naturalist in his world view or mind-set is not going to interpret nature as does the supernaturalist. There will be an opposition and antithesis always between these positions, for world views are fundamentally mutually exclusive and destructive of one another. The supernaturalist does not have to be abashed or ashamed of his world view because it appears to many to have clear advantages over the naturalistic view. The naturalist accepts his world view as much by faith as does the supernaturalist. The scientist is not by necessity a naturalist. Many great scientists have been supernaturalists.

God is the author of the Bible and of nature. All truth is of God, and truth is one and indivisible. There can be no final contradiction between the truth of the scriptural revelation and the truth discovered by man in God's creation. Yet, this does not mean that there are not a good many points of difference and friction between these two areas of knowledge at the present time in the minds of men. These need to be admitted by the Christian interpreter with every effort made to understand scientific data

correctly and fairly so as to reduce conflicts through misinterpretation.

Bernard Ramm has been helpful, it seems to the author, in studying both science and the scriptures in their interrelationship and interpretation. He has offered some valuable insights into the possible reconciling of differing interpretations and in proposing a possible Christian philosophy of nature. In his writings are found some very useful principles to keep in mind in this matter of interpreting the Bible with integrity to revelational data and scientific data. He says that the student must keep in mind that the language in which the Bible is written is popular, non-scientific, and according to appearances. It is not anti-scientific, but it is written for ordinary people of all ages. There is nothing wrong with speaking in popular terms as natural things appear to mankind. Indeed, this is most suitable for the mass of men. It is not false or inaccurate when one accepts the fact that this is the usage employed.

Again, the biblical writers, says Ramm, did not theorize about nature or the scientific explanation of natural things. They are concerned to show that all nature has been created by God for His purpose and is under His control. It is beyond the purpose and interest of the biblical writers to present explanations of natural processes.

Moreover, the interpreter must realize that the *language* (though not the truth) of the Bible is the language of the times and cultures when the writers lived. Ramm writes,

The language of the Bible employs the culture of the times in which it was written as the medium of revelation. . . . At this point two positions are wrong. (i) The position of the radical critic or modernist is wrong who imagines that the Bible is filled with errors and mistakes of these ancient cultures, and so scientifically the Bible must be considered as filled with blunders. (ii) The hyperorthodox is wrong who expects the Bible to contain modern science. . . . It will be admitted by all that the Bible came to us in human languages written by human beings and employing familiar human concepts and symbols. If God spoke through Hebrew-speaking prophets and Greek-speaking Jews, what He had to say – was to a degree limited by the nature of the Hebrew and Greek languages.¹⁸

Of course, the fact of inspiration prevented these writers from writing anything that was false, absurd, or mythological such as is so largely found in the writings of their uninspired

contemporaries. God gave the word, but He gave it in the language of the men He inspired to write it for permanent record.

As would be expected, the terms for time, psychological concepts, medical descriptions, measurements, geographical reports, etc., are in the ancient cultural context and usage. Yet, God is able to use these to present the truth about Himself, His world, and His dealings with man in a meaningful form which can be understood by all kinds of men through all time.¹⁹ Men everywhere understand that the sun rises and sets in *appearance* and that this is accurate descriptive language. When Jesus stated that the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds, he was speaking within the context of the Jewish knowledge and usage, not from a botanist's modern understanding of a greater number of seeds. The mustard seed was quite adequate to the immediate purpose of Jesus in using it to teach a spiritual lesson.

Ramm quotes A.J. Maas on the difficult and oft misunderstood interaction of science and interpretation:

It would be wrong to make Scripture the criterion of science, to decide our modern scientific questions from our Biblical data. . . . It is well, therefore, to temper our conservatism with prudence; prescinding from 'matters of faith and morals' in which there can be no change, we should be ready to accommodate our exegesis to the progress of historians and scientists in their respective fields, showing at the same time that such harmonizing expositions of Scripture represent only a progressive state in Bible study which will be perfected with the progress of profane learning.²⁰

It may be well to caution the interpreter not to seek to find modern scientific theories or inventions in the Bible. Much harm is done by interpreters trying to force, by fanciful imagination, the words of scripture to "predict" the automobile, the airplane, atomic theory in Hebrews 11:3 or atomic energy in 2 Peter 3.

The scripture continues to draw the admiration and praise of multitudes of sincere people who are willing to allow it to speak to them as the revelation of a good and merciful God who could and did use the language of men to express His love and wisdom to all mankind. There seems to be no need of a conflict between men of science who believe in God and His revelation and theologians who accurately interpret the scriptures with respect for the findings of science. Science needs the foundation and information afforded it by the revelation of God, while the interpreter of the revelation needs the insight and facts of

science. Scientists like Anthony Standen have much to contribute to correct interpretation removing the conflict that has existed between scientists and the Bible believers when he declares, "The first purpose of science is to learn about God and admire Him through His handiwork."²¹ Theologians like Ramm help a great deal when they have this approach:

If we believe that the God of creation is the God of redemption, and that the God of redemption is the God of creation then we are committed to some very positive theory of harmonization between science and evangelicalism. God cannot contradict his speech in Nature by his speech in Scripture. If the Author of Nature and Scripture are the same God, then the two books of God must eventually recite the same story. Therefore, in place of resentment or suspicion or villification toward science and scientists, we must have a spirit of respect and gratitude. In place of a narrow hyper-dogmatic attitude toward science we are to be careful, reserved, openminded.²²

The interpreter of scripture will do everyone a greater service if he is aware of these principles and so conducts his investigation of the meaning of the text of the word of God. Every consideration should be given to interpretations of scripture which are in harmony with the entire revelation and honor God, even when these interpretations do not seem to be preferred by everyone. There are some matters about which there is so much lack of data or ignorance that it is prudent for the interpreter to avoid dogmatism and to allow for divergent opinions.

NOTES: FACTORS WHICH OBSTRUCT CORRECT INTERPRETATION

1. I.B. Grubbs, "Class Notes," (unpublished).
2. *Ibid.*
3. For a clear refutation of this view read Robert Shank's book, *Elect in the Son* (Springfield, Missouri: Westcott Publishers, 1970).
4. David R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1888), pp. 22, 23.
5. For a useful and clarifying discussion of these terms along with the Greek words *sarx* (flesh), *soma* (body), *psyche* (soul), and *pneuma* (spirit), the student should consult Franz Delitzsch, *A System of Biblical Psychology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966) reprint, and the essay by M.B. Riddle in the *Commentary on Romans* by J.P. Lange and F.R. Fay (New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Company, 1872), pp. 232-36.
6. Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum* (Vol. 30 of *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins. 54 vols.; Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), pp. 109-16.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 110. It is not only in religion that such prejudice occurs by any means. A remarkable example from the world of medicine and science has been recorded from the 19th century:

Instead of persisting for decades after the discovery of anesthesia, the causes of deadly pyemia and wound fever should have been recognized and overcome within a few years. But the man who at that time sensed the way out of the inferno of fever and death, and desperately preached his gospel, was scorned and derided — as Wells had been . . .

. . . I received a letter from a friend in Germany who mentioned a young Viennese doctor named Iganx Semmelweis. "Dr. Semmelweis," the letter said, "puts forth the bizarre thesis that childbed fever is caused by the transmission, during examination, of so-called infectious substances from the hands of doctors and students who have previously performed autopsies. Semmelweis asserts that rigorous cleaning of the hands with chlorinated water is essential to expel puerperal fever from our hospitals."

I laid the letter aside . . . I did not grasp the significance of Semmelweis's discovery of "contact infection." No more intelligent were the famous professors of medicine in Europe who were then mocking young Semmelweis; nor the American doctors who had bitterly abused Oliver Wendell Holmes of Harvard when he had written of the contagious nature of childbed fever a decade earlier.

Today that may seem incomprehensible. But it demonstrates the extent to which most of us are slaves of established notions, and how difficult it is for us to accept anything new. Jurgen Thorwald, *The Century of the Surgeon* (Vol. 4 of *Reader's Digest Condensed Books*. Pleasantville, New York: Reader's Digest Association, 1957), pp. 101, 102.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

16. Millard J. Erickson, "The Church and Stable Motion," *Christianity Today*, SVIII (October 12, 1973), p. 5.

17. The story about Galileo's persecution by the Roman Catholic denomination has been and continues to be a great talking point against biblical Christianity, which is in itself illogical and *non sequiter* since the actions of a denominational group in the 17th century cannot be equated with biblical Christianity. However, this myth dies hard because it is so

handy for naturalists to use to undermine respect for the church and/or biblical Christianity. The scholarly position and honorable activity in the academic community certainly is besmirched when "scholars" continue to repeat falsehoods in the name of scientific or objective presentations. The student may read with profit *Galileo, Science and the Church* by Jerome J. Langford (New York: Desclee Company, 1966). James W. Sire (editor of Inter-Varsity Press) commented in a review of this book in *Journal of The American Scientific Affiliation*, December, 1968, pp. 127, 128:

Galileo, like Darwin much later, has become a symbol of the heroic courage of science valiantly combating the ignorant dogmatism of the church. . . . But the less fortunate Galileo, so the story goes, suffered the Inquisition's torture, agonizing in its dungeons, and finally recanting only to say later, "Yet it [the earth] does move!"

The Galileo legend is, of course, a gross distortion of history. Scholars have known this for a long time, and recently popularizers (such as Arthur Koestler, in *The Sleepwalkers*) have tried to erase the myth from minds of general readers. It is true, of course, that Galileo was not particularly courageous nor his antagonists particularly ignorant. Galileo had friends as well as enemies in Rome, and some of these Catholic scholars defended him openly. Galileo was, perhaps, threatened with torture, but he was never shown the instruments and never clapped in a dungeon. He never stood up to his inquirers at the trial, but (apparently despite the facts) claimed he had not taught the Copernican system. Nonetheless, forced to abjure Copernicanism, he submitted, never saying, as the myth has it, "Yet it does move!" He was under house arrest before the trial, but afterwards his prison sentence was commuted and his daughter, a Carmelite nun, was allowed to say for him the seven penitential psalms that he was required to repeat once a week for three years. Galileo was released and forbidden to write further on the Copernican system, but he was free to work on his new physics and therein made a considerable contribution. Thus the truth of this episode, as unfortunate as it was, has no force in showing the invalidity of the biblical revelation about anything. The Roman Catholic scholars and church authorities made a *misinterpretation* of the Scriptures and repudiated a true scientific theory.

One of the interesting and seldom considered factors in the action against Galileo is brought out by Langford and confirmed by C.S. Lewis. Langford states:

As long as the Copernican theory was treated hypothetically, it would need no opposition from the Church. If actual proof resulted from scientific research, then the Church would gladly adopt it. Galileo was asked, in effect, not to teach the

heliocentric theory as a fact until he could prove it to be one. . . . Bellarmine had given him an opening, however narrow it might seem to us, "Prove your theory and we will change our exegesis, otherwise teach it as a hypothesis which saves the appearances." Even today scientific honesty requires a distinction between hypothesis and fact. . . . Obviously it is not entirely accurate to picture Galileo as an innocent victim of the world's prejudice and ignorance. Part of the blame for the events which follow must be traced to Galileo himself. He refused to compromise, then entered the debate without sufficient proof and on the theologians' home grounds (*op. cit.*, pp. 68, 69).

C.S. Lewis says,

The real reason why Copernicus raised no ripple and Galileo raised a storm, may well be that whereas the one offered a new supposal about celestial motions, the other insisted on treating this supposal as fact. If so, the real revolution consisted not in a new theory of the heavens but in "a new theory of the nature of theory." *The Discarded Image* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 16.

18. Bernard Ramm, *Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), pp. 70, 71.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-80.

20. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), p. 212. Quoted from "Hermeneutics," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VII, p. 275.

21. Anthony Standen, *Science is a Sacred Cow* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1950), p. 200.

22. Bernard Ramm, *Christian View of Science and Scripture*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the one great objective obstruction to interpretation?
2. List the seven major subjective weaknesses given by Grubbs.
3. What false prejudgment is described by the idols of the market (forum)?
4. What false prejudgment is described by the idols of the theatre?
5. The Bible's statements about nature and science are a) sometimes true, sometimes false, b) anti-scientific, c) scientifically stated, d) non-scientific and popular.
6. T F Sin is the root of all the obstacles to correct interpretation.
7. T F An evil heart of unbelief has little effect upon one's comprehension of the scriptures.
8. T F Paul's "natural man" (1 Cor. 2:14 KJV) is any person in or out of Christ with an unspiritual, immoral standpoint.
9. T F Lord Bacon's "idols" are descriptions of different kinds of prejudice which men often blindly obey.
10. T F Perhaps the most serious obstruction in the way of misinterpretation is following a false method.

11. T F There is no way in which faithful Christians are to seek to please others.
12. T F To keep down errors and heresies, it is best for the professionally trained leaders to dominate Bible teaching and interpretation.
13. T F The Bible rightly divided is the alone and all sufficient creed for the church today.
14. T F It is right and appropriate to seek a harmonization of scientific data and biblical data.
15. T F Since scientists are always objective and logical, their statements in regard to non-scientific matters should be accepted without question.
16. T F God, being the Author of both nature and the Bible, is a strong assurance that both will be in agreement.
17. T F Men can intellectually grasp the meaning of a message sooner than they can willingly submit to that message morally.
18. T F The faithful interpreter of scripture will have to be blunt and offensive in his presentation of the truth if he is to be a teacher like the Apostle Paul.
19. T F The inherent right and personal responsibility of all Christians to "search the scriptures" required that pastors, evangelists and teachers must be undogmatic in their presentation of Bible truth and open to the insights of others.

20. How much trouble do you find in yourself in interpretation which springs from prejudgment (prejudice)? Which of Bacon's idols are most troublesome to you?

21. Do you take seriously the right and obligation to be a Bible student on your own with the help of others?

22. Do you agree that many of the problems within congregations today go back to a lack of knowledge of the teaching in God's Word? If not, what is a greater cause?

23. The final court of appeal in matters of teaching and practice for Christians is only the _____.

24. The authority of the Bible has been undercut by the imposing but false authority of _____.

25. Much of the conflict between science and the Bible has its origin either in the _____ of natural phenomena or in the _____ of men in regard to the actual teaching of the Word of God.

26. The "bottom line" of the conflict between scientific positions and Biblical teaching is a conflict between _____, naturalism versus supernaturalism.

General Laws Which Govern the Interpreter

There are certain foundational principles which are so often employed in good interpretation as to be called general principles or governing principles. These are so important that all correct interpretation conforms to them.

I. THE LAW OF HARMONY

Definition

The first is referred to as the Law of Harmony or, by some, as the law of the analogy of faith. Grubbs stated that this "... presupposing the unity of truth, requires such interpretation and application of a given passage as is consistent with other undoubted Scripture teaching."¹ Horne defined it as:

... the constant and perpetual harmony of Scripture in the fundamental points of faith and practice deduced from those passages in which they were discussed by the inspired penmen either directly or expressly, and in clear, plain, and intelligible language.²

It is the idea that the Bible is to be interpreted in the light of its full revelation. The Bible is looked upon as a complete and unified revelation of the will of God and that all parts are to be interpreted in reference to the whole. As there is *one* teaching presented in the revelation of God, no passage should receive an interpretation that contradicts other definite statements of scripture.

Examples

Christ Himself gave a clear example of the proper use of the Law of Harmony at the time of His temptation by Satan. When the devil saw that Christ had used the word of God to refute his temptation, Satan used a passage of scripture to support his second temptation:

If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down from here; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning you to guard you, and on their hands they shall bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone (Luke 4:9-11).

Jesus employed the Law of Harmony when he replied, "It is said, You shall not force a test on the Lord your God" (Luke 4:12). Thus, the first passage must be interpreted in the light of the second. Again, when the Pharisees came with their question about divorce, they said that Moses had commanded a bill of divorcement to be given. Jesus, in turn, pointed to the scripture in Genesis which declared that God had created male and female for a monogamous union — one flesh. This, Jesus said, was the will of God from the beginning; and the later scripture was only an accommodation of God to the situation created by hardened and rebellious men (Matthew 19:3-8). By the Lord's own use of these scriptures, He gave authorization to the use of the Law of Harmony by all interpreters.

The Apostle Paul uses the Law of Harmony in Romans 9:12-15 to meet the objection or the misunderstanding of the passage in Genesis 25:21,23:

It was said to her, The older will serve the younger. Just as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated, What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

Paul further reinforces his teaching by another quotation of scripture,

So it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth. So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires (Romans 9:16-18).

I.B. Grubbs employs the Law of Harmony in a practical way in his consideration of the meaning of Paul's statement in Romans 9:18:

Does the statement "he will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens" mean that God, by the mere exercise of his sovereign power, elects some men and rejects others without reference to character and conditionality? This meaning is impossible for, (1) It would contradict the fundamental thesis (1:16-17), and the whole tenor of the Epistle, by overthrowing the doctrine of universal grace which his whole argument aims to establish; and it would establish the very theory of exclusiveness against which the whole argument is leveled (1:16-17; 2:6-11; 3:21-24; 4:9-16). (2) It would be utterly inconsistent with the context. . . . (3) It would falsify the Apostle's own explanation of the cause of the rejection of the Jews and the acceptance of the Gentiles (9:30-33). (4) It would render meaningless the whole of the next chapter in which the universality of Grace is again most clearly asserted, established and illustrated (10:11-13). (5) Finally, it would contradict a multitude of clear declarations in both testaments touching the dealings of God with men, as well as the teaching of the Scriptures as to the character of God.³

It is instructive to see the actual use of the Law of Harmony by an expert like Grubbs. With it he was not afraid to attack the "assured positions" of interpreters of renown or of traditional interpretations which he felt violated the laws of hermeneutics. Another example from his writings will provide an encouragement to all interpreters to searchingly examine "handed-down" interpretations. In regard to Romans 14:1-12 Grubbs declares,

The weak brother is not the one who has the wrong view of this eating. He is the one who doubts the propriety of eating "all things." It is his subjective active believing; his faith in regard to eating meats is weak . . . this passage is wholly unconcerned with all differences between ignorance and enlightenment, and is absolutely independent of such a difference. So prevalent, indeed, is the misconception of Paul's real meaning here that it seems almost impossible to dispossess the minds of men of the false idea

that the strong believer here mentioned is a man of broad, liberal views, having a clear insight into the true liberty of the gospel; while the weak believer is, per antithesis, a narrow-minded ignoramus, hampered by needless doubts and fears, and swayed too often by prejudice and bigotry. . . . The demonstration alluded to proceeds on the basis of the most fundamental law of Hermeneutics — the need of holding, in all interpretations, to the unity of truth; gathering the fragments of teaching on any given topic, and discerning clearly the thread of meaning by which these are all bound up into one harmonious whole. If, as the result of any exposition, Paul, or any other inspired author, stands before us as an inconsistent writer, the Law of Harmony at once fixes the seal of condemnation upon that interpretation.⁴

He goes on to establish by a careful induction of the relevant passages the fact that the weakness Paul refers to is that of conscience, for the brother does not have moral courage to carry out his own convictions but weakly yields to the pressure of others. There is no necessary connection between this moral weakness and a person's ignorance of important truth. As Grubbs reminds all,

Erasmus, Beringer, and a host of others, were superior to their age in enlightenment, but had little moral strength to stand by their convictions, while multitudes, who were but babes in Christ, suffered martyrdom rather than deviate in the least degree from their duty.⁵

Unique Use in Bible

Since the Bible is *sui generis* (in a class by itself) by virtue of its inspiration by God, the Law of Harmony can be employed in biblical study in a unique way. There is no contradiction or disharmony in the statements of the Bible. If an interpretation results in a conflict with other scriptural teaching, the interpreter must realize that he has caused this conflict by misinterpretation.

It has been well stated by someone, "Taken as a whole and allowed to speak for itself the Bible will be found to be its own best interpreter." Illustrations of this may be found in a study of such passages as:

1. Daniel 2:31f where the interpretation of the image is given plus Daniel 8:20-21 which supplements the meaning.
2. Hosea 11:1 is interpreted by reference to Matthew 2:15.
3. 2 Samuel 7:14 finds its deepest meaning in the application in Hebrews 1:5b.
4. Genesis 16:15f takes on a deeper meaning as Paul reveals an

allegorical (or typological) significance in the historical events in Galatians 4:24f.

5. Matthew 5:34 must be interpreted in the light of Matthew 26:63; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Romans 9:1; and Hebrews 6:16.
6. Malachi 4:5 is infallibly interpreted by Christ in Matthew 11:10-14; 17:10-11.
7. Joel 2:28-32 began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, 30 A.D. according to Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:16.
8. Amos 9:11 is quoted by James, Acts 15:14-18, as having received its fulfillment in the fact that the Gentiles were then entering into the church, becoming the people of God.

II. THE LAW OF FRAME OF REFERENCE

Definition

The second fundamental principle governing all interpretation is known as the Law of Frame of Reference. This is sometimes called the Law of Opposition (Negation) and might well be denoted as the Law of Context. It has to do with the frame of reference of a speaker or writer so that his statements are given the proper construction within the boundary of his meaning. Grubbs stated it like this:

In all cases a writer or speaker is likely to suffer injustice, if his statements were interpreted without any reference to the contrast before his own mind. What an author would regard as the precise opposite of any important assertion of truth made by him is always, by way of negation, the exact measure of the length and breadth of the signification of that assertion. Hence, any interpreter who would take the assertion out of this relation of opposition and place it in a contrast of his own construction would of necessity do the author injustice. Here is the underlying source of nearly all incorrect interpretation.⁶

Clinton Lockhart offers another view of the Law:

A proposition purporting to set forth a truth must not be supposed to exclude everything as false that it does not contain; but it must exclude everything that is in opposition to it. For example, when Jesus says, "The truth shall make you free" (John 8:32), he does not exclude his own statement, "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (verse 36). The latter does not oppose the former. The truth and the Son are not mutually exclusive.⁷

This writer would state it like this: The words of the author must be interpreted from within his own frame of reference as derived from the context. What he would regard as the precise opposite of his assertion of truth establishes the exact limits of the meaning he intended.

Examples

Some examples will prove to be helpful in grasping the essential operation and application of the Law of Frame of Reference. It was reported that a mother of Siamese twins had refused to allow surgery to separate the children because the Bible said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mark 10:9 KJV). It is quite clear from the context that the frame of reference has nothing to do with the matter of children united physically but the matter of divorce and marriage.

John R.W. Stott appeals to the Law of Frame of Reference in refuting the misuse by the situational ethicists of Paul's statement that Christians are "not under law":

It is true that he uses this expression several times, but never as a suspended negative. He always supplies (or at least implies) a contrast. Indeed, you can never understand the meaning of a negative unless you know with what it is being contrasted. . . . I remember once, on my return from a trip to America and Australia, that I shocked my friends by saying, "I haven't had a bath for seven weeks." Before they had time to take me to task for my unhygienic habits, however, I was able to add, "But I've had a shower every day!" Thus, every negative is misleading unless it is read in the light of the positive with which it is being contrasted.⁸

In Acts 23:6, the Apostle Paul made the following statement in the presence of the Sanhedrin, whom he recognized to be composed of both Pharisees and Sadducees, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead." Obviously, Paul was referring to one primary issue between the parties of the Pharisees and the Sadducees — "For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, nor an angel, or a spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all" (Acts 23:8). In that doctrinal issue, Paul sided with the Pharisees. Thus, the frame of reference before Paul's mind limits his words to the statement, "In the dispute between the Pharisees and the Sadducees *about the resurrection*, I agree with the Pharisees."

Certainly it would be very wrong for anyone to take this

statement by Paul to mean that everything the Pharisees were and everything they taught was approved by Paul. Paul opposed the legalism and self-righteousness of the Pharisees as much as did his Lord Jesus Christ. Paul would have rejected much of the Pharisees' teaching, but they were correct about the resurrection.

In the interpretation of Romans 8:39 by a number of commentators, a neglect of the Law of Frame of Reference can be noted. Ordinarily this passage may be cited as a proof text of eternal security of anyone who is a believer. It is supposed to prove that nothing can separate Christians from the love of God and, therefore, that saints can never be lost once they have been saved. Yet, as Grubbs notes in his *Commentary on Romans*, "The context shows, by the law of Opposition and Negation [Frame of Reference], that it has no reference to what you may do, but what your enemies cannot do. No enemies from the outside can break that connection."⁹ The problem for most believers is not what *others* may do to them, but what *they* may do to themselves. Paul specifically omitted our personal failure in turning away from the living God or in falling from grace. So Paul is not discussing what *we* can do in committing spiritual suicide.

Robert Shank points out how Calvin's strong, dogmatic presuppositions adversely affected his exegesis. In exegeting Romans 11:14, he shows:

... no recognition that the "some of them" whom Paul hoped to save were some of "the rest [who] were blinded" (v. 7). In his treatment of verses 17-24, he evades the issue by shifting the frame of reference from individual Jews and Gentiles to Israel and the Gentiles corporately — despite Paul's explicit reference, not to Israel corporately, but to "some of the branches." Commenting on verse 21 he asserts that

... the discourse is addressed generally to the body of the Gentiles, for the excision of which he speaks could not apply to individuals, whose election is unchangeable, based on the eternal purpose of God ...

Thus Calvin salvages his "unchangeable election of individuals" by shifting the frame of reference, casually repudiating Paul's reference to "some of the branches" and other evidences that Paul's frame of reference is personal and individual rather than national and corporate.¹⁰

Again, in Romans 14:7 when Paul says: "For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself," he has been interpreted as speaking of our interpersonal relationship with others and our influence on them. "The writer has no such

thought before him," says Grubbs. "The next verse clearly shows that the Apostle is considering the fact that 'we are not our own,' but 'we are the Lord's . . .' the greater lesson of Christ's ownership is here set forth."¹¹

The statement by Paul in Galatians 3:28 — "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" — has been taken out of its frame of reference and used to justify the idea that women should be preachers or elders (pastors). Yet, the contrast before Paul's mind was between the divided, segregated condition of men under the Law and in the world and the spiritual unity that all have in Christ. The salvation offered in Christ is not partial nor is there any longer a special superiority or privilege for some in the Lord. All Christians stand equally saved, sanctified, and accepted in Christ, yes, even the women. Paul is not saying that women are no longer going to be mothers of children. He is not speaking on qualifications of officers in the congregation and thus contradicting what he later wrote to Timothy, that the overseer must be the husband of one wife.

The Corinthians misunderstood Paul's writing in regard to association with sinners because they missed his frame of reference. He corrected them in 1 Corinthians 5:9-11:

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a one.

Perhaps one of the most glaring examples of the failure to apply the Law of Frame of Reference is in Jesus' words, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). Without considering the context and frame of reference, many interpreters have assumed that this is a teaching on permitting of infants to be baptized. Yet this passage has no connection with any such action. The children were brought "so that He might lay His hands on them and pray" (19:13). The action involved was a prayer of blessing upon the children. Nothing is said about baptism in this connection.

A final example is another widely misinterpreted text from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. "Knowing therefore the

terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . ." (5:11 KJV). This has often been the proof text for a sermon or a convention address on evangelism. All the stops are pulled out to show why Christians must persuade men to accept Christ just as Paul did. Paul was a great soul-winner, and all must follow his example in persuading everyone to accept Christ.

While evangelism is a major responsibility of Christians, this verse does not teach this commendable duty. Some commentaries give some support to the mistaken view. (In the matter of uninspired commentaries, there is some safety in numbers; that is, check carefully in several of them and be sure that they are superior in scholarship.) Applying the Law of Frame of Reference, what was the contrast before the mind of the apostle? No one can know apart from the statements that Paul gives as the context for this declaration. Thus, the Law of Frame of Reference is very closely associated with the law of contextual interpretation.

Going back to chapter four, Paul has been talking about his ministry as an apostle of Christ. He has indicated what he has done, his method of conducting himself, and his personal attitude both to God and the work of Christ. He says such things as:

. . . we do not lose heart, . . . have renounced the things hidden because of shame, . . . preach not ourselves . . . we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, . . . we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day . . . while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen . . ." (2 Corinthians 4:1, 2, 5, 8-10, 16, 18).

In the fifth chapter he speaks (verses 1-10) about our glorious new body after the resurrection and the assurance with which we can look forward to that spiritual body and life with God. There is much of the personal witness in this — "While we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord . . . we are of good courage . . . we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. . . . we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:6, 8-10).

With a "therefore" Paul connects what he has just said about this judgment of God, our "fear" (not terror of the Lord), with the verse in question. Therefore, we must so work and act as to persuade men, even our opponents, of our integrity, our faith,

our honorable and honest standing before God. We have to persuade men because we have been slandered, smeared, and maligned by false brethren. Not for the moment, says Paul, do I think I have to persuade God or argue my case with Him. He knows all about me already. He is the perfect judge before whom I am not afraid to stand. He knows the thoughts and intents of the heart. He is utterly aware of everything I am. "All things are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13).

Then Paul adds, "I hope that I do not have to argue my case with you, brethren at Corinth, among whom I have worked and lived. Surely you know me also for what I am. I may have to persuade others about my faithfulness, my personal sanctification, and my true motives; but you at Corinth know me well. At least I trust that this is true." The succeeding context supports this interpretation as Paul says, "We are not again commending ourselves to you, but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, that you may have an answer for those who take pride in appearance, and not in heart" (2 Corinthians 5:12).

Paul is not only presenting Christian teaching but is answering his critics in the field. In the narrow context of this verse Paul expresses his faith and conduct as it answers the hostile attack of false brethren and others. The thought is that Paul's relationship to Christ, which is known to *God*, has to be argued persuasively before *men* who are dull or hypercritical.

All interpreters must remember to apply the Law of Frame of Reference as expressed in the context in the correct understanding of any passage of scripture.

III. OTHER IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES

Dr. Bernard Ramm has written of several major governing principles in his splendid book, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*.¹² (This is commended as a valuable book for your further study in the subject of interpretation.)

Original Language Appealed To

The first principle is always to refer your interpretation to the Hebrew or Greek text. Though much study and valuable interpretation is done on the basis of English translations, yet such interpretation is only as valid as the words and construction of the original language allow. The student not trained in the original languages must learn to use with good judgment the

various translations available as well as to weigh the judgments of scholars in the languages. No thoughtful interpreter will base his interpretation of a passage merely on the wording of an English translation which peculiarly supports his own view, while other translations give other and maybe better renderings of the words. Determine always to use the fairest and most accurate translation. Don't merely accept the traditional or familiar reading. If there is no clear scripture for your position, then drop your effort to establish a position on a foundation of pretext. The use of twisted texts always reflects adversely upon the interpreter and often brings the value of scripture into disrepute with unbelievers who can see through the flimsy reasoning involved.

Some have appealed, for example, to 1 Timothy 6:3-5 as a positive injunction to withdraw from a teacher with some erroneous interpretations or to have "no fellowship with him." First, it should be noted that the word "fellowship" does not occur in the passage, even in the *King James Version*. Secondly, the key phrase depended upon — "from such withdraw thyself" — is not a part of the original text as written by Paul. It is omitted from all recent translations as without manuscript support. Thus, Paul is found to be warning against teachers of error as those who may cause strife and disputes; but he did not say to withdraw from them. They need to be corrected and helped according to 2 Timothy 4:2 and 2:24-26.

Another illustration, mentioned by Ramm, is in regard to Melchizedek. Some strenuous efforts have been made to show that Melchizedek is actually Christ in a preincarnate state. Appeal is made to the fact that it is declared of Melchizedek that he was "without father, without mother, without genealogy" (Hebrews 7:3). This means that no record is to be found of who his father and mother were or of any children that he left. Also, appeal is made to the words "made like the Son of God" as identifying Melchizedek as Christ, but the verb form in the original Greek shows that this is to make a copy of or make a resemblance of something. Thus, the writer affirms that Melchizedek was a type of Christ in resembling Him in a number of ways.

A final example of the failure to examine one's interpretation in the light of the original language of the text is the familiar passage in 2 Timothy 3:15 which is constantly used to establish the requirement of Bible study — "Study to shew thyself approved unto God . . ." The word *study* is from the Greek word *spoudason* and means to strive eagerly, to press on. So the modern

translations uniformly give the correct idea — “Be diligent, try hard, do your best.”

Accommodation

The next major principle is the recognition of the accommodation of God’s truth to man in forms and conditions which man can grasp. The Bible is not just for the few, the highly intelligent or the initiated. God wanted all men to know Him and His will. Thus, the divine wisdom is put in the forms of human experience, in the words of men, and in cultural thought patterns. Heavenly and spiritual realities had to be presented in man-related terms. This is called anthropomorphic language.

Some have objected to the extensive use of anthropomorphic terms in the scriptures and have often taken these figurative terms as if they were literal. Yet, there is no escape from anthropomorphic language when talking about things invisible and beyond our physical experience. C.S. Lewis puts it this way:

The truth is that if we are going to talk at all about things which are not perceived by the senses, we are forced to use language metaphorically. Books on psychology or economics or politics are as continuously metaphorical as books of poetry or devotion. . . . all speech about supersensibles is, and must be, metaphorical in the highest degree.¹³

Lewis goes on to show that the interpreter of any material must be aware that the thought is to be distinguished from the images that are used, yet the thought may be valid or true even though the interpreter may suppose the false images to be true ones. So it is foolish to say to the Christian that because the images or figures expressing his faith can be misunderstood and made crassly literal, he should eliminate all such language. But if this is done, other figures and images are substituted which are often much poorer in value and descriptive quality. Lewis tells of a girl:

. . . brought up by “higher thinking” parents to regard God as a perfect “substance”; in later life she realized that this had actually led her to think of Him as something like a vast tapioca pudding. (To make matters worse, she disliked tapioca.) . . . If a man watches his own mind, I believe he will find that what profess to be specially advanced or philosophic conceptions of God are, in his thinking, always accompanied by vague images which, if inspected, would turn out to be even more absurd than the man-like images aroused by Christian theology. For man, after all, is the highest of the things we meet in sensuous experience.¹⁴

This is also illustrated by such substitute terms for God as "Ground of Being," the "World-Ground," the "First Principle," etc. These are metaphorical and will sound insipid, vague, and impersonal to most readers and may communicate less truth.

The most serious issue in regard to accommodation is to avoid the pitfall of the modern theory that no language is true because it has a relativism imposed by the linguistic-cultural-historical context out of which it was spoken.

The critical nature of this attack is seen in this quotation from Dr. Ralph C. Wilburn:

By a comparison of the mythological thought-forms of the biblical writings with those of Judaism and Hellenism, the conviction was now established, beyond further question, that the biblical writings are historical, human products, the form of which was shaped and determined by the relative forces of the age and culture out of which they came. This conclusion shatters the orthodox notion of an infallible book.¹⁵

The only alternative to this destructive position is that one set forth above in this book that the Bible is a unique, supernatural, rational, propositional communication from God. The amazing chaos and irresponsibility of modern theological pronouncements stem from the rejection of such a view of revelation in the Bible.

This is much too deep a subject for examination in this volume. As an introduction to the problem, the reader is referred to James D. Strauss' essay, "The Restoration Principle Revisited."¹⁶ The position to be affirmed and maintained is that the revelation of God is written down in a propositional (indicative) form so that its validity and eternal truthfulness is knowable in spite of the cultural or linguistic forms in which it is given. God is able to override the limitations of a cultural-historical and linguistic communication and has done so in the Bible.

This is not illogical nor is it without analogy in human experience. The philosophy of Plato is accepted by many as being rich in true philosophic insight into reality. Yet, the alphabet Plato used was Greek and not English; and his culture in the fourth century B.C. was quite different from the twentieth century. Furthermore, not all of his analogies and forms would be accepted as meaningful to men today or necessarily valid. Thus, Platonic thought is transcultural and conveys truth over the

centuries in spite of the cultural-historical context in which Plato wrote.

The same thing can be said of ancient subjects like mathematics and logic which have proved to be transcultural and true in spite of their human origins. Ramm points out that when men were speculating about other humans on other planets some time ago, it was suggested that communication might be established with such beings through producing the Pythagorean formula (the hypotenuse of a right angle triangle equals the square root of the sum of the squares of the two sides) in huge forms. It was believed that any intelligent beings would have discovered this truth which is transcultural and could be transplanetary.¹⁷

Cumulative Revelation

A third significant principle to employ is the concept of cumulative revelation. God did not disclose to man all that He is and all that He planned for man in the beginning. He gradually unfolded to man His purpose and will. This is not an evolution of religious insight on the part of man as proposed by liberals but is God's action in coming to man. Apart from God's self-disclosure, man would have no valid knowledge of God. In His own wisdom, God took time to prepare a people for the coming of Christ so that it was in the "fulness of time" that "God sent forth His son" (Galatians 4:4). There was the period of childhood, of training before there was the maturity of sonship as heirs under the New Covenant (Galatians 4:1-7). The Law was the tutor (the child-leader) to lead men to Christ; but now in Christ Christians are no longer under a child-leader, the Old Covenant (Galatians 3:23ff).

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews makes clear the cumulative movement of God's revelation as he declares,

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world (Hebrews 1:1-2).

John comments, "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17). Thus, there is a cumulative knowledge of God as He leads sinful man toward the final revelation of Jesus Christ.

One simple way to visualize the cumulative nature of God's

disclosure to man is to designate the first period, the patriarchal age, as the starlight stage, the Mosaic period as the moonlight stage, and the giving of the new covenant in Christ as the sunlight stage. Also, it is useful to recognize that the Old Covenant provided types, shadows, and prophecies while the New Covenant is the substance, reality, and the fulfillment of these shadows and prophecies. The Old Covenant was the divinely wrought will for that time and people, perfect for its purpose. Yet, it was incomplete and partial (Hebrews 9:7-13). The interpreter must be careful to consider the covenant under which any author wrote. Final conclusions and ultimate requirements are found for all men today in the scriptures of the New Covenant. More information on this subject will be given later under the discussion of covenants.

Clearest Meaning

Another valuable principle to govern the work of the interpreter noted by Ramm is that in every case the clearest, most obvious meaning should be preferred rather than a plausible but more obscure meaning. The scriptures were written with the common man in mind. God used common men, for the most part, to write the revelation and used common language so that common men could understand it. The words of the message of God are not obscure, technical, and difficult. The content of the message is the most profound upon the earth, but even the child can grasp much of the import of the message.

In examining various passages, then, the student should interpret the more difficult passages by the clearer passages. He should interpret the figurative statements as figurative and the literal statements as literal, not forcing either into the other. Ordinarily, the meaning of the words which are most directly gathered from the construction and the context by the intelligent and serious reader will be the proper or true meaning of the statement. This does not rule out the value and necessity of careful study of the passage with all the helps and tools available.

One Meaning, Several Applications

A final principle that must not be neglected is the difference between the actual meaning of a passage and the various applications of this meaning to other situations. The meaning of a passage is *one*, not many. There is one correct interpretation; and when this has been found, it, and it alone, is the meaning. All

straining and twisting of the passage to make it mean something else is wrong. It does not have many meanings, all of which are acceptable. It is wrong to spiritualize or allegorize the statements of scripture. The one, actual meaning intended by the author must be established. After this is done, there may be legitimate *applications* of this interpretation to a variety of persons or conditions. One needs to make it clear that the application is *not* intended as the interpretation.

Concerning the operation of extraordinary spiritual gifts in the Corinthian congregation, the apostle Paul set forth the principle, "But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner" (1 Corinthians 14:40). Most congregations today do not have the same conditions which gave rise to this inspired statement, but it is most appropriately applied to a number of different problems or circumstances in any congregation now. Likewise, Paul addressed himself to the Corinthian congregation's confusion in the misuse of the spiritual gifts and declared, "Let all things be done for edification" (1 Corinthians 14:26). This is valuable in evaluating various activities, functions, and efforts of a congregation today though the original context out of which it came may not be present.

Many accept as legitimate *application* to the Christian's consideration of a life partner in marriage the words of Paul in regard to the idolatrous temptations and associations in Corinth in the first century, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness" (2 Corinthians 6:14). Yet, this is an application and not the one meaning of the passage.

Paul indicates the proper use of some of the Old Covenant scriptures in applications when he writes, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4). Also, he wrote concerning the experiences of the Israelites in the wilderness,

Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. . . . Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11-12).

The spiritual-minded interpreter will be able to draw useful and fair applications of many things in the revelation of God.

Some applications will be rejected because they are not fairly drawn from the text accurately translated or because they lack propriety. Terry well says:

To build a moral lesson upon an erroneous interpretation of the language of God's word is a reprehensible procedure. But he who clearly discerns the exact grammatico-historical sense of a passage is the better qualified to give it any legitimate application which its language and context will allow.

Accordingly, in homiletical discourse, the public teacher is bound to base his applications of the truths and lessons of the divine word upon a correct apprehension of the primary signification of the language which he assumes to expound and enforce. To misinterpret the sacred writer is to discredit any application one may make of his words. But when, on the other hand, the preacher first shows by a valid interpretation, that he thoroughly comprehends that which is written, his various allowable accommodations of the writer's words will have the greater force, in whatever practical applications he may give them.¹⁸

It seems to have been in very poor taste for a prominent churchman a number of years ago to have used the words of Christ on the cross, "It is finished," as the text for a dedicatory message for a church building. It is reported that one young woman in a congregation, when admonished and disciplined by the pastors for her promiscuous behavior, replied that she was only carrying out the scripture which commanded, "Love the brethren." Foolish, farfetched, and demeaning applications must be rejected by all thoughtful students of the word. Another example of a miserable mishandling of the scripture in application is that of a German preacher in the nineteenth century who took as his text on an "Easter" morning: "Now on the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb" (John 29:1), from which he derived the message, "The Benefits of Early Rising."

W.E. Sangster comments favorably upon the use of John Wesley of 2 Kings 10:15 when Jehu met Jehonadab, ". . . and he saluted him, and said to Him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand." From this text, Wesley developed a message on the Catholic Spirit. He admitted that this was not the meaning of this text. He admitted that Jehu was a bloody man and that Jehonadab was a fanatic, but he asked, "What should a follower of *Christ* understand thereby, when he proposes it to any of his

brethren?"¹⁹ This application of such a passage in the light of its historical context and actual meaning would be questioned by many, though it was not by Sangster. There are better texts on the Catholic Spirit than this one; so why not use them, e.g., Romans 15:7; Ephesians 2:13-15? Broadus and Weatherspoon give an excellent statement on the problem of proper application:

A good and safe rule to follow is that, while probable allegorical or spiritual meanings may be adduced as probable, no allegorical meaning shall be made the basis of a sermon without clear warrant in Scripture usage. But, practically, as to texts, we can never feel safe in going beyond this rule; anything not thus used in the New Testament can only be spoken of as possibly, or, at most, as probably, having an allegorical meaning; and while possible or probable interpretations, when distinctly stated to be such, may be properly used as yielding part of the argument or illustration of a sermon, the text, which is the foundation or source of the whole sermon, ought in the preacher's judgment really to have, beyond peradventure, the meaning assigned to it.²⁰

In illustration of this point, Broadus and Weatherspoon call attention to a number of abused passages. One worthy of special attention, because of familiarity, will illustrate the error in misapplication as well as showing how legitimate interpretation of a text actually gives more than it takes away. In Psalm 23:4 it is written, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." This has been so constantly applied to death's near approach that all other meaning has been excluded. Yet, there is no specific reference to death *as such*. The figure used here was a familiar one to the people of the Old Testament as indicating any place or condition of great darkness. With such darkness there might be peril or fear as in this case on the part of sheep in passing through a mountain pass with lurking dangers or uncertainties. So the believer in God has the Good Shepherd to guide him through the dark crises, the fearful uncertainties of life regardless of what they may be. Death would be but one of the problems of life through which the Shepherd is going to lead the believer safely. The failure in application here is to see how broad the comfort and security of the Lord actually is and how wonderful His protection is through *all* of life's journey.

Among passages that are misunderstood and then misapplied, the statement by John is much abused, "If we walk in the light as He is in the Light we have fellowship one with another . . ." (1 John 1:7). How many "good Christians" have built up a strong

case for refusing to recognize other Christians because they were not walking in the light, that is the revealed will of God or the doctrine of Christ. But the Holy Spirit did not give this meaning and the application is farfetched. By applying the Law of Frame of Reference, it is clear the "light" in verse seven must be the "light" mentioned in verse five concerning God. In that term is found the true nature of God — holy, pure, open — and connects with "God is love" in 4:8 as "holy love." So Christians are to walk (live, act) in the nature of God, which is light and love. The message declared (1:5) is one and is that God is light and love (4:16; 3:11; 4:11). To walk in the light is to be as pure and holy as God is, to be filled with love as God is. It is not rejecting brethren but loving and accepting them in spite of their imperfection that manifests the love and the light of God.

The serious student of the scriptures cannot afford to neglect any of these fundamental laws and controlling principles. Careful application of these basic laws will enable anyone to gain a great deal of truth from the inspired writings and to avoid many of the mistakes in interpretation that are committed with too great frequency. So, memorize these overseeing principles until they become an accepted way of thinking on your part and then apply them diligently to all your study of the scriptures.

NOTES: GENERAL LAWS WHICH GOVERN THE INTERPRETER

1. I.B. Grubbs, "Class Notes," (unpublished).
2. T. Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1849), I, 342.
3. I.B. Grubbs, *Commentary on Romans* (Cincinnati: F.L. Rowe, 1913), pp. 123-24.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-57.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
6. Grubbs, "Class Notes."
7. Clinton Lockhart, *Principles of Interpretation* (Des Moines: Christian Index Publishing Company, 1901), p. 30.
8. John R.W. Stott, *Christ the Controversialist* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1970), p. 152.
9. Grubbs, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 116.
10. Robert Shank, *Elect in the Son* (Springfield, Missouri: Westcott Publishers, 1970), p. 122.
11. Grubbs, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 161.
12. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), pp. 97-106. (cf. first edition, 1956, pp. 107-24)

13. C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (London: The Centenary Press, 1947), p. 88.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
15. James Strauss, *Newness on the Earth Through Christ in a Fragmented World Come of Age . . .* (Lincoln, Illinois: Lincoln Christian College and Seminary, 1969), p. 44, citing R.G. Wilburn, *The Reformation of Tradition, A Critique of the Restoration Principle* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1963), p. 220.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-65.
17. Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
18. M.S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1883), p. 600.
19. W.E. Sangster, *The Craft of Sermon Construction* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), pp. 121-122.
20. John A. Broadus and Jesse Burton Weatherspoon, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), p. 34.

QUESTIONS

1. Give an example of Christ's use of the Law of Harmony.
2. The statements of the Bible hermeneutically interpreted will be found to be in contradiction a) seldom, b) frequently; c) never, d) only four or five times.
3. How do you know that Paul was not talking about women becoming elders or evangelists when he said, "There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ"?
4. Why did God not disclose all that He wanted man to know about Him from the very first book of the Bible?
5. T F The Law of Harmony can be used in Biblical study in a much surer way than in the study of any other book.
6. T F The correct method of hermeneutics holds that there are usually two meanings of a passage but only one application.
7. T F The Law of Frame of Reference is necessarily involved with the context of the passage.
8. T F That which is called "the analogy of faith" is the same as the Law of Harmony.
9. T F The Law of Frame of Reference will not allow the words, "Suffer little children to come to me," to mean that infants are to be baptized.
10. T F The Law of Harmony requires the interpreter to gather all that the Scripture says on a subject before deciding the meaning of one passage.
11. T F Without a knowledge of the original languages a person is unable to accurately understand the scriptures.
12. T F It is possible to describe spiritual data and things beyond the senses without the use of metaphorical language.

13. T F The Word of God has been given in a cultural setting.
14. T F That which is true continues to be true in any culture.
15. T F Ordinarily the meaning of the words which are most immediately gathered from the construction and context by the intelligent reader will be the true reading.
16. T F There is no limit upon the meaning that an author's statement can be given as long as it sounds good.
17. T F The Word of God in its meaning for our day is severely limited by the cultural conditioning of the authors.
18. T F It is an open door to misinterpretation to use a poor or special translation because it supports our view though we know that other translations give a different reading.
19. T F Lewis points out that we do not have to use anthropomorphic language when talking about invisible and spiritual things.
20. State Grubb's definition of the Law of Harmony.
21. Give an example of Paul's use of the Law of Harmony in Romans 9.
22. By using the Law of Harmony determine the solution to the supposed contradiction between Paul and James in regard to works required and not required for salvation (cf. p. 463ff).
23. State the Law of Frame of Reference as given by Ensign (p. 93).
24. Why is this Law of Frame of Reference so very important to sound interpretation (what does this Law if applied prevent the interpreter from doing)?
25. Discuss Stott's use of the Law of Frame of Reference in refuting the situational ethicist's misinterpretation of the phrase "not under law."
26. By some reading in various books or other literature, find three examples of what you believe are clear violations of the Law of Harmony.
27. Also by reading, find three examples of what you believe are clear violations of the Law of Frame of Reference.
28. Do you agree with the text in regard to the proper meaning gained by an appeal to the Law of Frame of Reference? Can you state the various aspects of that problem and the way the context is vitally important to establish the right meaning?
29. Have you ever had the experience of having your words taken out of the context in which you had spoken them and misapplied? What was the result?
30. Carefully study the frame of reference of the context of Isaiah 14:1-22 and determine from it the correct meaning of Lucifer (star of the morning) contrary to the popular supposition that he is the devil.

A Review of Material and Conclusions

It will be most helpful to get an overall view of the subject matter that has been covered before going on into the next part. Important principles and vital factors for correct interpretation have been presented as an indispensable foundation for the specific, functioning rules which are to follow. Without an appreciation of these points and a personal application in the student's own life and work, there cannot be strength, assurance, and accuracy in the work of interpretation.

First Chapter

It is of great value to start with the conviction that God wrote a book that ordinary people can understand and that with God's help you can understand it, at least enough to know God, serve Him acceptably and in the end go to be with Him forever. With confidence in your God-given intelligence, you have been encouraged to equip yourself with sound principles and the right method so that you can grasp the treasures of God's revelation.

God expects you to study the scriptures for yourself just as He expects you to know Him personally and to serve Him personally. No one else can do these things for you. Your faith is not to stand in the wisdom of men, in the systems of men's contriving, but in your own knowledge and experience of Christ as revealed in the scriptures.

There is always a body of knowledge, a collection of skills, or special equipment for almost every type of work that a person engages in. A deep-sea diver is ineffective and useless without his specialized equipment. The master surgeon without instruments is unable to perform his healing art. The telephone operator without the technical equipment could never complete a telephone call for anyone. Likewise, it stands to reason that the student of the scriptures must be equipped for the work of understanding the meaning of the written word. Certain tools are essential to that task. The purpose of this book is to provide the necessary equipment for the successful extraction of the truth from the pages of God's revelation.

At the same time, equipment without skill or art is powerless to perform any useful service. The finest computer in the world stands idle without the skills of the operator. The equipment or tools of interpretation are more mental than they are material; but they must be employed with skill, as an art. Thus, the science of interpretation is also an art to be practiced. It is something to be used correctly and with artfulness; so it takes learning, patience, and exacting practice.

The material that the biblical interpreter is most interested in and uses as the material of his art is the word of God as written down in the sixty-six books of the canon called the scriptures. It has been stated that this book is unique, inspired of God, and true as no other book ever written by man. As such it is worthy of the most concentrated study that the consecrated mind of man is capable of. Whenever possible the scriptures need to be studied in the original languages in which they were written. When this is not possible, great care should be used in the discriminating use of several of the best translations.

Several values were stated as achieved by the power of the science of interpretation. It enables the student to understand the meaning of the scriptures. This prepares the student to be a teacher of others of that truth he has found in the words. Communication is impossible without a method of interpretation. Also, the employment of this science should

eliminate many difficulties which divide followers of Christ today. Unity is desperately needed today among believers in Christ, and proper interpretation is one of the chief means of bringing about greater unity.

Again, it was pointed out that the result of good interpretation would eliminate the cause or the excuse for much hostile attack upon the Bible while at the same time encouraging sincere doubters to examine the scriptures for themselves. A final value mentioned was that each individual wants to live a life well pleasing to God. There is a strong, personal interest in the matter of understanding the Bible because men want to have peace with God and eternal life. Through a knowledge of the scriptures, men are brought to a knowledge and union with Christ. A growth in knowledge and sanctification by Christians is grounded in a regular use of the scriptures.

It was pointed out that the greatest weakness in interpretation is man himself. As a fallen, sinful person, man is prejudiced against the truth and is capable of much mistaken thinking. God does not miraculously inspire men to overcome this handicap, but He does provide the word to lead men to Christ. After receiving Christ, men receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who enables them to understand more and more of the truth revealed in the scriptures as they use the equipment of interpretation.

Second Chapter

In the second chapter, the word *hermeneutics* was introduced and discussed as the specialized word for the science of interpretation. Hermeneutics was defined as the science of interpretation, composed of principles and rules which are founded on the laws of thought as derived from the way people actually communicate. These principles and rules are validated by their being systematically consistent, and these principles and rules function within a correct method of application. The elaboration of this definition with examples is the chief subject matter of this book.

Because hermeneutics is a science, it rules out both authoritative dogmatism and individualistic license. The true interpretation will not be obtained by either of these approaches. The interpreter must be willing to let the evidence derived from the text itself be the determining factor, while he remains as objective, emotionally uninvolved, and disinterested as is possible.

Again, it was recognized that there is a real and definite necessity for the use of the correct method of interpretation among men because of the possible and actual misunderstandings that arise over human communication. This existing condition points to the reason or purpose of employing the science of interpretation. Its aim is to remove all the obstacles and difficulties that it can between the author and his readers of any communication so that they can lay hold of his exact meaning, no more and no less than he intended.

Third Chapter

In chapter three the task of the good interpreter was described as being exegesis or a leading out of the meaning that the author put into the words. This is a difficult task, exacting, and demanding if it is done accurately. Yet, the faithful and objective application of the scientific principles of hermeneutics has been successfully used through the years to produce a great body of truth or exegetical teaching of remarkable agreement. This was done by the application of the Law of Reproduction which states that it is the business of the interpreter to reproduce with perfect exactness and correctness the sense of the author, the very thought that he had in mind when he wrote his words.

Attention was called to vital qualifications of a good interpreter under three headings: intellectual, educational, and spiritual. The more of these qualifications a man has, the better he should be able to get at the correct interpretation of any writing. Every interpreter needs to constantly check himself against these qualifications so that he can avoid failures and improve his ability to draw out the true meaning.

Fourth Chapter

Chapter four took up the factors which help a person to interpret correctly the text. First, there is the confidence that God has given man a valid revelation of His true nature and will which man can use to know God. Secondly, the interpreter should have the best translations of the text he can obtain. Thirdly, the various resource books which can furnish good help and technical information were mentioned. Fourthly, it was pointed out that if a person really knows how to read, it is a great help; and Dr. Adler's book was cited as a valuable help in this neglected area.

Fifth Chapter

Then, in chapter five the factors which obstruct or make difficult interpretation were reviewed. These may be of two kinds, objective — in the text itself — or subjective — in the interpreter himself. Seven areas of subjective failure were noted: natural incapacity, moral unfitness, prejudice and selfish interest, striving for novelty, lack of general and thorough preparation for the work of interpretation, carelessness, and false or inadequate methods of interpretation.

Lord Bacon's discussion of the four kinds of prejudice was surveyed; so that the interpreter could be prepared to war against his own prejudices because every man has them.

The accurate interpreter must watch out for the hindrances brought about by seeking to be popular or pleasing to men, those brought about by surrendering the interpretation of the Bible to a clergy or an official class, those brought about by the use of human creeds or traditions (always fallible) as the measure of interpretation, and those brought about by a dogmatic effort to harmonize the Bible with current scientific theories.

Sixth Chapter

Chapter six was devoted to a consideration of fundamental laws and superintending principles which are utterly basic to good interpretation. The Law of Harmony was defined as requiring such interpretation of a passage as is consistent with other undoubted scriptural teaching. The Law of Frame of Reference was stated as the necessity of always interpreting the statements of an author within the context and contrast which he had in mind, his frame of reference. Bernard Ramm suggested the basic principle of basing everything upon the text in the original language. Another principle was that God gave His truth to man in forms and conditions that were an accommodation to man's own finite limitations. Then, the principle of cumulative revelation was pointed out. Not everything was given at one time. God prepared men for His further and more complete disclosure. As men were ready, God gave more truth. Another vital principle was that of always preferring the clearer or more obvious meaning. Finally, the principle was given that there is only one interpretation as the one meaning of a text; but legitimate applications of this meaning to various situations or

individuals are possible. No text has many meanings, only one. Applications may be more than one.

With these basic thoughts in mind, it is time to turn to the great question of establishing the correct method in hermeneutics whereby one can rightly use all the principles and rules. Good rules under the wrong method will result in wrong interpretation. True method is indispensable to good interpretation.

NOTES: A REVIEW OF MATERIAL AND CONCLUSIONS QUESTIONS

1. What should one believe about the authorship of the Bible?
2. What should one believe about his personal ability to understand God's revelation?
3. Why is it accurate to describe hermeneutics as an art-doctrine, a skill and a theory?
4. List four values achieved by following the science of interpretation.
5. Give the full definition of hermeneutics.
6. As a science what two things are to be excluded definitely in the practice of hermeneutics?
7. What existing need calls for the employment of hermeneutics? What is it seeking to overcome?
8. Write a paragraph on the three major areas of qualifications for a superior interpreter and give details of the meaning of each area.
9. What is the Law of Reproduction?
10. List four definite factors which help one interpret the Bible.
11. List seven definite obstructions to correct interpretation.
12. What are four kinds of prejudice listed by Lord Bacon?
13. Which one gives you the most trouble?
14. State the Law of Harmony and give two examples of its use in the scriptures.
15. State the Law of Frame of Reference and give two examples of its use in the scriptures.
16. What is the *right* meaning of the principle of accommodation in regard to God's word?
17. What is the abuse of the principle of accommodation by Bible doubting people?
18. How many meanings may any one passage correctly be given? How many applications may any one passage receive?

Part Two

The Method to be Used

The Importance of a Valid and Objective (Scientific) Method

In the earlier part of this work the position was taken that hermeneutics is a science in a proper sense of the word.¹ As a mental science hermeneutics must present an objective and logical method to be used to produce valid conclusions. It is the contention of this book that such an objective and universally recognized method exists in the inherent qualities of language communication as used by men everywhere through the millennia of the past.

Yet all are faced with the reality of many varied and contradictory interpretations of the same communication. Though the same principles or rules seem to be in operation, for some reason the results are different. At the same time it is noteworthy that those who come up with opposing interpretations of the same document are able in other passages of the same document to agree upon the meaning of the author.

Also, there are in many cases of varying interpretation a basic agreement in the meaning intended by the author and only disagreement as to the nuances of thought and extent of meaning. Though there are significant and undesirable disagreements among interpreters, this fact is sometimes exaggerated by skeptics to the point of making it impossible to understand any communication. This is the *reductio ad absurdum* of all logical inquiries into thought and is self-destructive, hence to be rejected by all intelligent human beings who care about truth.

I. THE UNIQUE PLACE OF METHOD

The most significant contributing force to a variety of interpretations of any communication is the choice of methodology. It is method that controls the use of principles and the operation of rules. Method describes the basic philosophic and theologic predisposition of the interpreter. It is like the spectacles that one wears in that it inevitably determines what one is going to see. Everyone approaches the study of a message with some kind of method or controlling principle even though it may be ill-defined or actually amounts to almost no method at all. In extreme cases this becomes an irrational approach to a document.

A person's hermeneutical method is an integral part of his world view (philosophy of life) and his theory of knowledge (epistemology). The person with a naturalistic, no-God world view is going to drastically differ from the interpreter who approaches from a theistic world view. Still it is possible for some communication to be carried on between the naturalist and supernaturalist on the basis of common knowledge and logic though there will obviously come a time when a dramatic break in regard to interpretation will take place.

Lamar states the singular importance of method this way,

That Method takes precedence and control of Rules, and cannot be superseded by them, is a proposition which seems never to have been considered by any of the writers on Hermeneutical Science. Hence they have not only failed to elaborate and insist upon the Inductive Method, but have been equally silent with reference to all others; and their works, which have so long been held as standard authorities in this department, are wholly destitute of *any* well-defined Method of Interpretation. Whereas, unless we have wholly misapprehended the fundamental principles of the subject which we have presumed to discuss, it will be seen, as we advance,

that the glaring discrepancies which have marked, and which continue to mark, the interpretations made by different individuals of equal intellectual and moral qualifications, are to be traced directly to this very deficiency — the absence of a well-established and all-comprehensive Method.²

Lamar illustrates the unique work of method in controlling rules from the activity of carpentry.

Rules, then, are immediate and special, methods ultimate and general in their application. According to the rules of cutting, sawing, hewing, and splitting, we provide ourselves with the materials for a building. Method, which has been directing all the while, now takes these and constructs the edifice. It may form them into a barn, a kitchen, or a residence; a house of one story or two; with few windows or many; adapted to this purpose or that: and, in any case, we use the same rules of measurement and mechanics; place the posts perpendicularly, the sleepers horizontally, the boards and shingles in a certain established order — and all is done regularly and according to rule. But it is the method which controls the rules, determines when and where this or that one shall be employed, directs the shape and arrangement of the materials, and, in short, constructs the building.³

II. FAILURES IN METHODOLOGY

In applying this principle to the methodology of hermeneutics Lamar points out that there has been broad agreement throughout Christendom on the various rules and principles to be used in interpreting the scripture. Also, there has been broad agreement upon the meaning of words, facts, and various statements of scripture.

It is only when we come to adjust these materials to their place in the great temple of truth that we are made painfully sensible of the utter insufficiency and incompleteness of our science. Then every builder has his own method, and immediately there springs up an interminable controversy about the design of this, the *location* of that; the *use* of one thing, and the *non-essentiality* of another.

Every one uses the Scripture materials, and honestly believes that he is building the veritable temple of God. And, by rejecting what he cannot use, as non-essentials, and supplying what the Scriptures do not furnish, under the warrent of expediency, every one succeeds in giving to his edifice an air of perfection and finish, and in fitting into it a large number of the most excellent of the divine materials. These serve to support and beautify the structure, while they furnish to its friends the standing proofs that

it is indeed the house of the Lord. And in this, mark you, he has applied *correct rules* to the texts he has employed. He has been careful in this matter. True, he has not needed *all* the rules that one might suppose belonged to the subject — and why? Because there was a *method* above, that controlled him in the selection of them. Thus a second, a third, and a fourth — thus, in fact, a hundred different structures might be reared out of the Scripture materials, and each one claim to be supported by the best-established principles known to our hermeneutics!⁴

Lamar points out the results of a correct and a false methodology, the one drawn from the scripture and the other drawn from philosophical speculation, by referring to the erection of Solomon's temple. All of the materials were cut at a distance and brought ready-made to the temple site. When all of these materials had been spread out on the ground, a skillful architect, knowing the general pattern of the temple from the scale model of the tabernacle, would have been able to determine the place every stone and plank was to occupy. By using the individual pieces according to their own nature, the result would have been a harmonious union of all the pieces resulting in the physical temple of Solomon.

On the other hand, if an architect had decided to use the materials according to a plan in his own mind apart from the pattern discernible in the materials themselves, he no doubt could have gone a long way toward uniting the individual parts. After a time it would be evident that many pieces could not be fitted without radical change of the pieces themselves. Also, new materials not originally prepared for the edifice would have to be worked up according to the new plan of the architect and the difficulties which he was encountering. The building might be completed and even appear to be a beautiful and proper structure, but it would not be Solomon's temple! In like manner the scriptural materials must be developed according to their own nature and relationship one to another according to the pattern of the author, God. The method in putting these together must be that used by Christ and the apostles. The result will be a Christian system.

D.R. Dungan declares that confusion over methods and a misunderstanding of the nature of the Bible itself has resulted in many false interpretations. The view that the scripture is a supernatural book and can be understood only by those who are inspired of God has led many to ignore scriptural study as their

privilege and obligation. The same view that the scripture is a supernatural book and must be supernaturally interpreted has been carried on the other side to the extreme of pietistic teaching that every believer is endowed with the infallible insight of the Holy Spirit into the meaning of the words. Both of these viewpoints are false as Moses Stuart says in Ernesti's *Principles*,

If the Scriptures be a *revelation* to men, then are they to be read and understood by men. If the same laws of language are not observed in this *revelation* as are common to men, then they have no guide to the right understanding of the Scriptures; and an *interpreter* needs *inspiration* as much as the original writer. It follows, of course, that the Scriptures would be no *revelation* in themselves; nor of any use, except to those who are inspired. But such a book the Scriptures are NOT; and nothing is more evident than that "*when God has spoken to men, he has spoken in the language of men, for he has spoken by man, and for men*".⁵

Dungan notes the damage that false methods have done to men's acceptance of the Bible. For example, some use a dogmatic-philosophic approach and teach that men are totally depraved without any desire for goodness or God. At the same time they are taught that they must believe in the God of the scriptures but that only God can give them this faith (called saving faith). The thoughtful sinner is immediately aware of the fact that there is no meaning in a command to him to believe if first God must miraculously give him faith. Then the sinner concludes that if he does not believe in God and obey Him, he has no moral responsibility in the matter. Thus the misinterpretation of scripture leads men to reject the scripture though the responsibility still lies upon the individual to search the scriptures for himself.

Austin Phelps critically evaluated failures of interpretation:

It should be further observed, that the past and present usages of the pulpit respecting truthfulness of interpretation is not entirely trustworthy. Explanations which exegesis has exploded are sometimes retained by the pulpit for their homiletic usefulness. Preachers often employ in the pulpit explanations of the texts which they would not defend in an association of scholars. The pulpit suffers in its exegetical practice by retaining for polemic uses explanations which originated in an abuse of philosophy. I do not say in the use of philosophy. We have seen that there is a legitimate use of philosophy, within certain limits, in aiding the discoveries and application of sound philology. But philosophy has

often tyrannized over philology. In the defense of the creeds of the Church, the exigencies of philosophy have overborne the philological instinct of the popular mind, as well as the philological learning of the schools. A modern exegete affirms that the interpretation of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which makes it a description of Christian experience, was never heard of in the Church till the time of Augustine. He originated it to support his theory of original sin. He held the opposite interpretation, as now held by many German exegetes, till he was pressed in the argument with Pelagius. The authority of Augustine, and the force of his theology, have sent down to our own day the interpretation he then adopted.⁶

III. SEARCH FOR A VALID METHOD

From this discussion it should become increasingly clear to the student why a valid and correct method of interpretation is required. As men have examined this subject and their own exercise of reason in interpretation, they have discerned a fundamental method at work among all mankind. This seems to be as real and innate as the law of contradiction is to reasoning. From this basic fact a beginning point and a direction is established in a search for a valid method of hermeneutics.

This method, to be described fully in a later chapter, involved the assumptions that truth exists and is one and that man's mind was capable of grasping truth from language. This tied interpretation to the terms of a text or the words of the communication as expressed in a time dimension or culture. Then it was seen that an author must be allowed to get his meaning across by the interpreter taking an objective and open-minded approach to the author and his words. The author must be allowed to speak for himself as he saw the truth, while the interpreter must faithfully reproduce the exact meaning the author intended (the Law of Reproduction). The author must be treated honestly and fairly as the exegete sought to obtain a comprehensive view of all the author had in mind.

All of these factors gradually were identified and formulated into a science of hermeneutics with a methodology that was composed of these salient factors: the grammar and the text are foundational; an open, comprehensive, and inductive approach was fair and objectively required; a critical or closely reasoned investigation supporting the meaning was rightly called for. This method increasingly commended itself to thoughtful and

truth-seeking minds. It received strong support and validation from two separate fields of investigation, physical science and biblical revelation.

IV. A SCIENTIFIC METHOD

In addition to such support of this inductive, grammatical, cultural, and critical method of interpreting the words of a communication, further support has been given to this methodology from the field of the physical sciences. J.S. Lamar did a most thorough work on the use of the inductive method as derived from science. His book is entitled *The Organon of Scripture* with the subtitle, *The Inductive Method of Biblical Interpretation*. Lamar claims in his preface that his work is original and is not a remodeled edition of earlier writers such as Ernesti, Michaelis, Stuart, or Horne. He declares that he is the first writer to apply and make use of the Baconian method of scientific inquiry in biblical interpretation and that in the light of all evidence this must be the true method of interpretation ruling out all other approaches. This author believes that his claim is true.

Lamar argues that the logical and scientific method of Lord Bacon came to be accepted as the only valid method by which the meaning of physical phenomena could be accurately determined and argued. He argues that the book of nature is given by the same Author of the book of revelation. Therefore, we should be able to use the same logical method of ascertaining the meaning of the divine wisdom in both volumes of revelation. This seems to be a cogent argument, and the inductive method has been adopted by the scholars in hermeneutics since Lamar as can be determined by an examination of Terry's *Hermeneutics*, Ramm's *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, etc.

V. A SCRIPTURAL METHOD

An examination of the scripture will indicate that God has given His revelation through men intelligently and rationally, so that men in spite of their sinfulness can grasp the truth by the use of their minds which are not totally depraved. C.S. Lewis has well said that if men were totally depraved they would not know it. If men's minds are totally corrupted by sin so that they cannot logically reason about anything in God's revelation through

nature or His written revelation through scripture, then there is a ghastly charade being carried on by men who are deceiving themselves that they are able to think any truth.

Such is not the case as set forth in scripture where men and women, confronted by the written word of God, become morally and intellectually responsible for its apprehension. The procedure of the apostles was everywhere to present the word of divine revelation to every kind of auditor and to await their decision which was always an acceptance by some and a rejection by others. The apostles did not begin by praying for God to enlighten miraculously the minds of individuals and then preach to them with the expectation that all or a select group whom God had arbitrarily endowed with the miracle of faith would believe. Paul continued to reason with the same group of people sabbath after sabbath and day after day that through hearing the word of God they might come to believe.

However, the scripture itself furnishes no systematic set of hermeneutical principles or a formulated statement of the correct method. As in so much of God's revelation He uses example to teach men the truth. As one examines the word of God, he finds that a method is being followed by Old Testament writers, the apostles, and preeminently Christ the Lord. To the Bible-believing Christian such a use of a method requires him to continue that method as the only God-approved method. This method is in harmony with the nature and procedure of the scientific, inductive method.

Old Testament

The first such indication of the method of interpretation is found in the scripture when the Old Testament prophets condemned the people for either not understanding the message communicated to them from God through human language or in refusing to follow it when they should have understood it. Ezra, the scribe, is the specific example of one who sought to understand the scriptures by a study of the text grammatically considered. He is declared to have "set his heart to study the law of Jehovah, and to practice it and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). Most scholars feel that it was from the Exile and particularly Ezra's concern that a clear hermeneutical method to the scripture for the benefit of those who should know the word developed.

When Ezra returned to Jerusalem with the Israelites released

from Babylon, the record indicates that public instruction of the people was initiated at once. Nehemiah 8:1-8 states the effort of Ezra to help the people interpret the scripture in its original meaning. He called all of the people, "men and women and all who could listen with understanding," together and read from the book of the law of Moses. Certain qualified men were appointed who stood around Ezra's platform (pulpit), and they were given the task of explaining the law of the people as they heard it. Thus these men were using hermeneutics to exegete the scripture. A part of this procedure may have been by translating its Hebrew language into more familiar terms. It is clear that the reading of God's word and its explanation brought about understanding, for "all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law" (Nehemiah 8:9).

From this notable beginning in the application of hermeneutics the development of interpretation of the scripture continued, particularly in the office of scribe or lawyer. Though not without failure, excesses, and later considerable corruption of the meaning of scripture through unlawful addition of human traditions and opinions, the meaning was diligently derived by concerned expositors in the tradition of Ezra using the literal method.

In the teaching of Jesus Christ He recognized that many of the Jews were engaged in this exacting grammatical study: "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is these that bear witness of men and you are unwilling to come to me, that you may have life" (John 5:39). Jesus did not condemn their exegetical research. It was the intention of God for men to know and identify His Messiah through the words of revelation. There was no indication that their understanding was incompetent; but, as in this day, there was the unwillingness in their hearts to submit to the truth that was so clearly portrayed on the pages of scripture and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Jesus the Perfect Exegete

Jesus was and is the perfect teacher and thus the perfect exegete of the word of God even as He is the object of the scripture and the perfect illustration of the meaning of its spiritual truth. The Lord approached the scriptures with a hermeneutical method in dealing with the devil, His enemies, and His disciples. Obviously, *Christ* did not require hermeneutics to

keep Him from error or to instruct Him in what was truth. As rational man He naturally employed the principles of hermeneutics which are coeval with man's nature. The Lord met the temptation of the devil by the use of scripture; and when the devil misused scripture, Christ used the Law of Harmony by pointing out that the devil had ignored other scripture.

In answering His enemies who were astute scholars of the written word, Jesus appealed to the correct meaning of the text as in John 10:34-35,

Has it not been written in your law, I said you are gods? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came and the scripture can not be broken, do you say of him whom the father sanctified and sent into the world, you are blaspheming; because I said, I am the Son of God?

They, in response, attempted to seize Him, which indicated that they were competent hermeneutes; for they had correctly apprehended the meaning of His words. It is clear that men can derive truth from communication even when there are serious problems of emotion, prejudice, and sin. John 12:42 declares, "Many of the rulers believed in him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue."

Further, Christ told the Jews who had believed in Him, "If you abide in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Again, Jesus had indicated that the truth which He expected them to understand was the truth revealed in the scripture: "No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me draws him: and I will raise him up on the last day." (Jesus then indicates how all men are drawn to Him.) "It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me" (John 6:44-45).

Jesus constantly taught His disciples from the scripture and exegeted it for them. The Sermon on the Mount is filled with allusions to the Old Testament and specific exegesis of passages especially from the Pentateuch or the Law.

One of the most remarkable passages indicating Jesus' hermeneutical approach to scripture is found in the account of Cleopas and his companion on the way to Emmaus. The risen Lord, as master teacher, joined them and put before their minds the essential truth that God's word is understandable. "And He

said to them, O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" (Luke 24:25). The Lord proceeded to conduct an inductive exegesis of the written word, "and beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he explained [the Greek word *diermeneusen*] to them the things concerning himself in all the scriptures" (Luke 24:27). The result of this hermeneutical exposition is expressed by the disciples, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us on the road, while he was explaining the scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32).

Apostolic Example

In the writings of the apostles the same hermeneutical procedure was continued. Both in their preaching and in their writing the apostles expected men to learn the truth of God from their words and invited all to an examination of the text itself. Luke begins his treatise to Theophilus by referring to written accounts and his own careful, investigative, and chronological history from which he expected Theophilus to "know the exact truth about the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:4). It is the historian Luke who records the exegetically grounded message of Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the historical and exegetical message of Stephen (Acts 7), and the exegesis of the apostle Paul in his message to the Jews in the synagogue at Antioch (Acts 13:16-41). In Acts 17:11 Luke indicates with approval the studious, exegetical research conducted by the Jews in Berea, "Now these were more noble minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." The natural result of this critical scrutiny of the very text of the scripture was that many of them believed.

The apostle Paul is very clear that the word of God is the inspired and authoritative word which is able to communicate God's will to man responsibly and adequately. He writes in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All scripture is God-breathed and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (NIV).

New Testament Use of Old Testament

Ernest F. Kevan has done a good job of research on the principles of interpretation which are found in the New Testament in the writers' use of the inspired Old Testament

scriptures. Kevan classifies the use of the Old Testament by the New Testament writers under four headings.⁷

One. The *historical use* is seen in reference to persons and events in the Old Testament which are taken literally as reliable history. Over one hundred events are alluded to in the New Testament ranging from the creation of Adam and Eve through the flood, the Exodus, the experience of Jonah, and the faithfulness of Daniel. This supports the validity of that part of the method which is called cultural-historical.

Two. The Old Testament is used *propositionally*; for statements of the Old Testament are taken in their ordinary, literal sense as truth. These statements are used in argumentation and teaching which indicates that scripture is to be taken in its most obvious sense as the true presentation of theological knowledge with the authority of God. It is quite clear that for Jesus and the apostles the scripture is accurate and true in its statements. Of course this does not mean that interpreters are not to rightly divide the word of truth into its dispensations or covenants. As will be seen later, it is of the utmost importance to discriminate between the covenants and to recognize that Christians are not living under the obligations of the Old Covenant or constitution which Jehovah had with Israel which was preparatory and temporary.

Three. The New Covenant writers used the Old Covenant writings in a *homological meaning*. This is quite similar to the meaning of the term typological (which is the word used by Ramm in his work), and typology has been recognized as a legitimate part of interpretation for years. By the use of homology, however, Kevan is trying to develop a strict and unambiguous term to describe what we have in the scripture beyond the more usual term of analogy or metaphor. He indicates that F.W. Farrar used this term in referring to the relationship of the Old to the New Testament in its pre-established harmony. He also quotes Pythian-Adams as encouraging the use of the term homology to enforce the idea of the profound unity between the Old Covenant teaching and New Covenant realization. The familiar homologies would include such things as "the last Adam," "the Israel of God," "Christ our Passover," "my blood of the New Covenant," and "Mount Zion . . . the heavenly Jerusalem." Also, in the likenesses between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant as the one prepared for the other, the typological or homological element may be discerned.

In Acts 7 Stephen argues from the historical acts of God with Old Testament people and sacred structures, such as the tabernacle, that he was preparing for new and better but not wholly different things. God's old temple is going out of use because God has now brought in a new, spiritual temple which is the body of Christ, the called-out assembly of God.

Four. The New Testament uses other historical material in a less direct way to indicate *illustrations* of truth. There is a distinction between a God-planned and predetermined likeness to a future reality and an event that has value as an illustration of spiritual truth or Christian behavior. Thus, the fact that the ox that was treading out the grain in the Old Testament culture was not to be muzzled is used by the apostle Paul as an illustration of the fact that the servants of God (like preachers) should be adequately paid for their labor, 1 Corinthians 9:9. James uses the fact that Elijah prayed that it would not rain and later prayed that it would rain to illustrate the fact that God hears the prayer of the righteous.

From these four usages of the Old Testament revelation by the inspired writers of the New Testament revelation Christians have evidence of the methodology of Christ and the apostles in hermeneutics. In future chapters the scriptural method will be developed in a more elaborate and systematic form. At this point it is believed that the fundamental outline of the valid and objective method of interpretation from the scripture itself has been established.

CONCLUSION

To establish its claim to be a mental science, hermeneutics must present an objective and logical method which will be applicable to all situations of interpretation. It is believed that such a method has been found in the philological method. This demands that an author's words in their context of grammar as well as historical culture be given first priority. The requirement is also that this investigation be done fairly and objectively, avoiding prejudice and subjective coloration. This is what is often meant by something being called "scientific."

With this philological method commended by the logic of communication, a strong reinforcement was found in the use of a critical, objective and inductive procedure in the physical sciences, that proposed by Lord Bacon. The proved value of this

method in physical research in God's material creation strongly recommends its use in the apprehension of God's written revelation.

Finally, the hermeneutical method was found in principle in the actual exegesis of the scriptures by the Old Testament prophets and scribes as well as by Christ and the apostles in the New Testament. Such use and sanction is for the Christian the highest validation of a method that could be asked for. The correct method is then established as the philological method with the factors of grammar, culture, induction, critical argumentation, and a spiritually in-depth understanding.

NOTES: THE IMPORTANCE OF A VALID AND OBJECTIVE (SCIENTIFIC) METHOD

1. cf. p. 20.
2. J.S. Lamar, *Organon of Scripture* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1860), pp. iii-iv.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.
5. Moses Stuart, *Elementary Principles of Interpretation*, translated from the Latin of J.A. Ernesti (third edition; New York: Gould and Newman, 1838), p. 15.
6. Austin Phelps, *The Theory of Preaching* (New York: Scribner's, 1911), pp. 160-61.
7. Ernest F. Kevan, "The Principles of Interpretation," *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. Carl F.H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), pp. 285-89.

QUESTIONS

1. If hermeneutics is to be recognized as a science, what must it offer to those using it?
2. The correct method is commended and verified as the valid method of interpretation by its use in the field of _____ and its practical use in the _____ themselves.
3. Who was the first specific exegete in the Old Testament to expound the scriptures hermeneutically?
4. What four uses does Kevan find the New Testament writers making of Old Testament statements and records?
5. T F There are many agreements as to the meaning of certain statements even among those who have contradictory interpretations on other statements.
6. T F The principles are in control of the method.
7. T F Everyone has some kind of method in seeking to understand a communication.

8. T F False methods have been the most significant cause of misinterpretation of the scriptures.
 9. T F It is clear that, since the Bible is a supernaturally inspired book, it requires supernatural illumination to understand it.
 10. T F The literal (philological) method is generally recognized as good for biblical interpretation but not in other fields.
 11. T F The Savior rebuked the ignorance and unbelief of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus because they had not understood what was plainly written in the scriptures.
 12. T F Even the enemies of Jesus were able to correctly interpret His statements in spite of their hatred of Him and His penetrating truth.
 13. T F A valid and objective method having wide acceptance exists and is available to all those who want to understand the actual thought of the inspired authors of the Bible.
 14. T F Ensign holds that the method of hermeneutics which is objective and true comes from the inherent qualities of language communication as universally used by men.
 15. T F Men are unable to read a communication and agree on its meaning for the most part.
 16. T F Since men can understand what they are saying when they discuss their disagreements about a particular message, the literal method is obviously at the root of all interpretation.
 17. T F Austin Phelps stated that the truthfulness of interpretation from the pulpit is entirely trustworthy.
 18. T F Lamar believes that the success of the inductive method in science in gathering truth from data makes a strong case for using it in scriptural data research.
 19. T F C.S. Lewis thought that men were totally depraved.
 20. T F The scriptures furnish us with a systematic set of hermeneutical principles and a definition of the correct method.
 21. T F This one perfect exegete used the elements of that method which is now formulated as the grammatical, cultural, critical, inductive, spiritual method.
 18. T F False methods have come entirely from those who were trying to defame or to twist the scriptures.
 19. T F The mystical method is older than the dogmatic-rationalistic.
 22. There has only been one perfect exegete on earth. His name was
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23. What basic commitment will almost entirely determine one's hermeneutical method (cf. p. 231)?
 24. How much difference does it make which method one may choose to use? (Note Lamar's use of the erection of Solomon's temple.)

An Historical Survey of Various Schools of Thought in Interpreting Scriptures

It is valuable to the student of scripture to consider the various historical schools of interpretation that developed as men neglected or distorted the scriptural approach to interpretation. Chapter II will be a brief review of the various schools or systems of exegesis in a chronological sequence along with the names of principal men involved with these hermeneutical systems. Chapter III will be an investigation of nine distinct, false methods which have been used by interpreters under the influence of these schools.

There is much value in studying an historical survey of the various schools of interpretation Bernard Ramm observes. Those who do not have a knowledge of history, it has been said, are destined to repeat history. To avoid the mistaken interpretations

of scripture that have been made in the past and often handed down to the present, one needs to know the historical record of interpretation. Thus there is positive profit as well as warning in considering what uninspired men have done in interpreting the scripture.

A very extensive survey of the hermeneutical development in an historical perspective is found in Terry's first edition of *Biblical Hermeneutics*.¹ He introduces this section with some incisive statements which the serious interpreter of scripture needs to bear in mind.

A knowledge of the history of biblical interpretation is of inestimable value to the student of the Holy Scriptures. It serves to guard against errors and exhibits the activity and efforts of the human mind in its search after truth and in relation to noblest themes. It shows what influences have led to the misunderstanding of God's word, and how acute minds, carried away by a misconception of the nature of the Bible, have sought mystic and manifold meanings in its contents. From the first, the scriptures, like other writings, were liable to be understood in different ways. . . . On the other hand, there were those who made light of what the prophets had written, attacked the sacred apologists and defenders of the holy volume, and among them not a few who searched for hidden treasures, and manifold meanings in every word. Besides assailants and apologists there were also many who, withdrawing from the field of controversy, searched the Scriptures on account of their religious value, and found in them wholesome food for the soul. . . . The student . . . observes how learned men, yielding to subtle speculation and fanciful analogies, have become the founders of schools and systems of interpretation. At the same time he becomes more fully qualified to maintain and defend the faith once delivered to the saints.²

One of the errors that Ramm rightly decries is provincialism in interpretation — a person supposes that the system he has inherited or has been taught is the only correct one. Through historical studies the student of hermeneutics is able to guard against his own limited views and to see the errors that speculation and dogmatism have led interpreters into during the past. Ramm's treatment of the historical development of exegesis is more helpful than the very long and detailed work of Terry. His coverage of the most recent schools of destructive, rationalistic interpretation which now confront the Bible-believing student of hermeneutics with the greatest threat for valid interpretation is especially needed. Students will want to

study carefully the presentation of Ramm in regard to the historical schools for details which this work will not attempt to go into.³

I. JEWISH SCHOOLS OF HERMENEUTICS

Three great schools or systems of interpretation have been in evidence throughout the history of biblical interpretation. These three schools are observable in the history of Jewish exegesis after the completion of the Old Testament canon.

Literal (Philological)

Coming out of the Old Testament background of literal interpretation, it was natural that a school of grammatical-cultural interpretation was found among the Jewish teachers. This literal method is basically the correct approach to proper understanding of any text. The interpreter must be bound by the text itself and the meaning carefully and fully extracted from the words expressing the thought of the author. (You should recall the generic Law of Reproduction.) The Jewish scholars recognized the need of hermeneutics and developed a number of significant rules, most of them valid, for interpreting the scripture. In some cases, as is true of all exegetes, they violated some of their own principles. Nevertheless there was strength and truth in much of the literal interpretation developed by this school.

Letterism. Over a period of time the literal approach was changed into a *literalistic* or over-done literalizing of the text. The text became a wooden word without life or vitality. This type of interpretation is often referred to as *letterism*. The details of the words and sentences became so important to these interpreters that they were in danger of missing the meaning. The idea of being so close to the trees that one could not see the forest is what happened to these interpreters. They got lost in the leaves, twigs, and branches of the language. It became an amazing complex game of *reading in (eisegesis)* all kinds of meanings and resulted in as much licentious and arbitrary interpretation as allegorism produced. This hyper-literalism in interpretation has occurred through the centuries, for it has proved to be a valuable tool for sectarian interpretation. Its greatest use today has been by dogmatic cults and sects.

Karaites. Still among the Jewish exegetes there was a school of literal interpretation that largely escaped the mystical-allegorical

method of interpretation. Terry mentions the sect of the Karaites or literalists who avoided the excesses of the rationalistic Sadducees on the one hand and the mystical-allegorical interpretation on the other hand. This school rejected the authority of oral traditions and was critical of the literature of interpretation derived from the past. Thus the Karaites were more lawful interpreters according to a literal method. This system of hermeneutics has continued to exist down to the present time.

Allegorical-mystical

A new school developed when Jewish scholars, motivated by a superstitious reverence for the scripture (though viewing it correctly as the unique book of all books), departed from the grammatical and cultural restrictions of the language and began to read into the text all kinds of secondary and fanciful meanings. Though sincere in this action, they brought chaos to interpretation, opening the way to every product of subjective imagination. Undoubtedly they felt that they were showing what an amazing and profound book the Old Testament canon was as divine revelation. This led into a system of allegorism and ultimately to mysticism in which there was practically no control by either the text or reason.

This allegorizing of the scripture was inherited largely from Grecian philosophy. As Greek philosophers encountered difficulties in their religious texts which contradicted their own rational thought, they developed the habit of substituting for the literal or obvious meaning a secondary meaning which was said to be the real meaning of the author. This neat device to remove supposed or real difficulties from a text proved too alluring to be resisted by teachers of the scripture. Among other things, the Jewish interpreters found the allegorical-mystical approach useful in removing the anthropomorphisms which conflicted with their views of God.

Rationalistic

The third school of interpretation that grew up among the Jewish interpreters was the rationalistic. This was not as important as the other schools and appeared rather late in the history of Jewish interpretation. To a considerable degree it was a reaction to the excesses of allegorism and is associated with the party of the Sadducees in the New Testament writings. Although

this approach was commendable in its opposition to the excesses of allegorism, it was false when it elevated human thinking as superior to the divine revelation.

Man has since the garden of Eden been tempted to become as God. Sinful man has corrupted his mind and has sought to become the judge of God's revelation and of God Himself! Among the Sadducees there was the denial of supernatural beings such as angels, the denial of some of the miracles, and the resurrection of the dead. This approach of rational superiority to the revelation of God has been an undercurrent in the history of interpretation, but in our day it has arisen to become the dominant school of interpretation among those who consider themselves to be sophisticated intellectuals and follow a naturalistic world view.

From the study of Jewish exegesis it is possible to see the beginnings of three main schools of thought which have dominated the methodology of interpretation — literal (philological), allegorical-mystical, and rationalistic. These systems of thought have appeared in the history of Christian interpretation along with other methods which are variations on these. Nine of these methods will be taken up in the next chapter to be analyzed in detail. Now attention must be given to the development of these schools of interpretation in Christian circles.

II. CHRISTIAN SCHOOL OF HERMENEUTICS, ALLEGORICAL-MYSTICAL

Alexandria

Alexandria in Egypt was a principal center for allegorism among the Jews, and *Philo* was the most famous allegorist. It was in Alexandria that Christian teachers became inoculated with the virus of mysticism. The second century saw definite development of allegorism in Alexandria through Pantaeus and Titus Flavius Clement. Clement adopted the allegorical principles of Philo. Clement, as was true of most of the mystical-allegorical interpreters, did not deny the literal or historical sense. He did find more meaning and value in the hidden sense of the scripture. He discovered three levels of hidden meaning — the mystic, the moral, and the prophetic — in the passages he worked on.

Origen. Clement had a pupil named *Origen* who surpassed his

teacher both in the area of scholarship and of influence. Origen is recognized as the greatest biblical critic and most learned scholar in the ancient church before the coming of Augustine. Yet Origen was deeply influenced by the mystical-allegorical method used by Philo. As Ramm points out,⁴ Origen was motivated to use this false method because of the errors of many of the Christians in being hyperliteralists and refusing to note the figures of speech and poetic materials in the scripture. He also sought to meet the reasoning of the Jews against the New Testament revelation by showing that the New Testament truths are found in the Old Testament. Finally, he wished to eliminate what were considered to be absurdities or contradictions (in the Old Testament especially) and thus make its teaching acceptable to the educated and philosophically minded people. Some of the same motivations are working in the case of some interpreters today who may move in the direction of allegorizing or spiritualizing scripture or by a rationalistic demythologizing as is apparent in Bultmann. The answer to the problems of interpretation or meeting objections is not found in using false methods.

Origen is defended by some writers as having a better hermeneutics than is apparent in his exegesis. Some feel that he basically was seeking a typological meaning in the light of the essential unity of the Old Covenant and New Covenant revelation. The reality and proper use of the typological will be discussed under the correct method and distinguished from the false method of allegorism.

Yet Origen took a threefold view of scripture for "as man consists of body and soul and spirit so in the same way does scripture, which has been arranged to be given by God for the salvation of men."⁵ He further justified this by an appeal to Proverbs 22:20-21 which reads in the Septuagint and Vulgate: "And do thou portray them in a threefold manner, in counsel and knowledge, to answer words of truth to them who propose them to thee." Thus on the basis of an allegorical interpretation of the human body and a text that does not *literally* indicate this as a *method* of interpretation, Origen said that the sinful man is edified by the flesh or the obvious sense of scripture. The psychical or soulish man who is somewhat advanced in spiritual things may profit from this second level of meaning. It remains for the perfect man to attain the true spiritual sense of scripture as indicated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:6-7.

Subjectivism. As can be seen from even these examples the

mystical-allegorical interpreters are not even agreed upon the principles for detecting the hidden meanings that are supposed to lie within the scripture. About the only agreement is that there are manifold hidden meanings which are to be dug out by the inquisitive and fanciful interpreter of the scripture. Mickelsen points out, by way of example, that Origen derived this allegorical meaning from the triumphant entry:

... the ass represents the letter of the Old Testament; the colt or foal of an ass (which was gentle and submissive) speaks of the New Testament. The two apostles who obtained the animals and brought them to Jesus are the moral and spiritual senses. Such examples illustrate how allegorizing tells the observer clearly what the interpreter is thinking but it tells nothing about what the biblical writer was saying. His meaning is ignored. We are left with only the interpreter's arbitrary assertions. These in themselves may be good but the interpreter should not pretend that his ideas are somehow found in, with, or under the biblical statements.⁶

The mystical-allegorical method with the great backing of scholars like Origen and Clement carried the day in interpretation. It also appealed to the imagination of many and appeared to have strong apologetical use in meeting problems or difficulties which seemed to be found in scripture. So Jerome, great scholar that he was, practiced allegorizing as did Augustine in the fourth century. Ambrose, who was a bishop of Milan, illustrates the excesses of allegorism and points up how the allegorizers do not agree among themselves. The exegesis becomes totally arbitrary and lawless. Terry reports,

... in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem Ambrose saw in the ass which was tied represents mankind as bound in sin, and the loosing of the same is the redemption of Christ. The placing of their garments under Christ shows that the apostles were ready to sacrifice their own works for the honor of preaching the gospel. The strewing of the branches by the way denotes the cutting off of unfruitful works!⁷

Augustine

Next in importance comes Augustine, bishop of Hippo in Africa, who was the greatest scholar since Origen and perhaps the greatest scholar since the apostles. Certainly his influence over theology became dominant and ruled western thinking for a thousand years until Thomas Aquinas came on the scene. Even though overshadowed by Aquinas in Roman Catholic theology,

Augustine continues to have a strong influence since the Protestant Reformers and especially Calvin were influenced by Augustine's system of theology.

Augustine wrote a book entitled *On Christian Doctrine*.⁸ In his work Augustine develops in Books Two and Three important considerations about hermeneutics. In actual practice he did not follow his own principles and, lacking a correct method, he used a great deal of allegorism in his interpretation of scripture. Thus much of his exegetical work is of little value in discerning the truth of the scripture and is misleading in its fanciful interpretation.

Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas recognized the authority and inspiration of scripture and accepted its literal meaning, yet at the same time he was unwilling to reject the traditional and widely accepted practice of allegorism. In his *Summa Theologica* he declared:

That meaning whereby things signified by words have themselves also a meaning is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposed it.

Now this spiritual sense has a threefold division. For as the Apostle says (Heb. 10:1) the Old Law is a figure of the New Law, and Dionysius says the New Law itself is a figure of future glory. Again, in the New Law, whatever our Head has done is a type of what we ought to do. Therefore, so far as the things of the Old Law signify the things of the New Law, there is the allegorical sense. But so far as the things done in Christ, or so far as the things which signify Christ, are types of what we ought to do, there is the moral sense. But so far as they signify what relates to eternal glory, there is the anagogical sense.⁹

Roman Catholic

With the great authority of Augustine and Aquinas for the mystical-allegorical method of interpretation, the Roman Catholic denomination moved into an exegetical wilderness followed by a spiritual desert without any sure word from God. Mickelsen notes a sixteenth century statement concerning the exegesis of scripture by the prevailing Roman Catholic method:

The *letter* shows us what God and our fathers did;
The *allegory* shows where our Faith is hid;
The *moral* meaning gives us rules of daily life;
The *anagogy* shows us where we end our strife.¹⁰

Mickelsen shows how this method might be applied to the word "Jerusalem." "It could refer to the literal city in Palestine. Allegorically it could mean the church. Morally (tropologically) it would refer to the human soul. Anagogically 'Jerusalem' refers to the heavenly city."¹¹ Such an approach to the interpretation of any document creates nothing but confusion and destroys any possibility of truth being derived from the words. Only the anti-scriptural authoritarianism of an ecclesiastical body like the Roman Catholic denomination could keep this type of interpretation from becoming utterly arbitrary and lawless.

Modern day Roman Catholic hermeneutics is still influenced by this ancient allegorical methodology though many modern Roman scholars recognize the great problems connected with allegorism. (Ramm gives a good overview of the condition of Roman Catholic scholarship today.) However, the Roman Catholic interpreter is so dominated by the extra-scriptural authority of the ecclesiastical establishment that it is impossible to practice a true, inductive, scientific interpretation based on the philological sense alone. Some modern day Roman Catholic scholars are now being consumed by the rationalistic method which moves away from the literal sense of scripture into an existential (subjective) interpretation. In this they are joining many of the radical Protestant theologians who have dissected the Bible to their own rationalistic fancy.

Protestantism

Consideration must be given next to the history of allegorism as it developed in the Protestant Reformation and its place in Protestant hermeneutics. As could be expected, much of the hermeneutics employed by the Roman Catholic Church was carried over by the Protestant reformers. There was a significant break with the authority and tradition of Rome and a realization that only the scripture was the word of God. The literal (philological) method took precedence over the fourfold method of interpretation, but most of the reformers had trouble shaking off the attractiveness of allegorizing or spiritualizing scripture to make it fit more their purposes. Luther was strong in rejecting allegorism as a principle, but he was willing to use it for himself when he believed that it exalted Christ or was against the papacy. His practice did not always agree with his principle, but he did recognize that it was a wrong method.

Illumination. Luther and the other reformers, while on the one

hand correctly emphasizing that the scripture must be approached as a spiritual revelation of God, yet overemphasized the "leading of the Spirit" in ascertaining the meaning of scripture. In principle the Holy Spirit is the interpreter of the word but not in a miraculous sense to men now. This principle was called by Protestants *illumination*. By this they meant that a man was unable to understand the meaning of scripture apart from a special work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart or mind of the interpreter. This is not borne out in scripture or in experience. Men can understand the teaching of God's word, but their sinful hearts may be hardened against it. The difficulty is not understanding the meaning of the terms but in submitting the will to the authority of Jesus Christ.

Under this principle of "the leading of the Holy Spirit" many Protestants have mistaken the leading of their own spirit for that of the Holy Spirit. This has opened the door to large amounts of subjectivism or human interpretation which is then clothed with the mantle of God's infallibility. This has continued to plague some Protestant interpretation down through the centuries. For the most part the more competent scholars in Protestant circles have risen above this tendency, but it has often been used by lesser scholars to support some theological position or to get rid of some difficult scripture opposing their position.

Calvin. John Calvin was superior in several respects to Luther as an interpreter of scripture. Ramm quotes Fullerton to the effect that "Calvin may not unfittingly be called the first scientific interpreter in the history of the Christian church."¹² This was true because Calvin rejected more emphatically than Luther all use of allegorism which he considered to be satanic in origin. Also, he was committed more soundly to the literal exegesis of the text, seeking to keep out all eisegesis. His strong use of grammatical exegesis in the light of the context and the historical-cultural background have kept his commentaries in a respected position even today.

Calvin was a thoroughgoing and honest interpreter of the scripture according to his knowledge, willing to break with traditional interpretations whether Roman Catholic or Protestant. Robert Shank has noted that Calvin's exegetical work is much superior to his dogmatic theological work as set forth in the *Institutes*. If Calvin had waited to write his *Institutes* in his mature years following extensive biblical exegesis as set forth in his commentaries, he might very well have written a different

type of theology. One is wiser in following Calvin in biblical exegesis of scripture than in following his dogmatic and philosophically grounded theology as set forth in the *Institutes*. This points toward the erroneous *method of dogmatic interpretation* which has been the major curse of Protestant interpretation.

Pietism. One other current of mystical-allegorical interpretation is located within the movement called *Pietism*. This movement grew out of a reaction to the extreme dogmatism of the post-Reformation period which was a time of great theological controversy. The bitterness engendered by this controversy along with the use of the scripture to attempt to win theological disputes caused other men to go to the scripture seeking mainly spiritual nourishment. This was an appropriate emphasis at that particular time and in harmony with the teaching of scripture that it is to provide personal, spiritual help and edification for the believer.

The founder of the movement was Philipp Jacob Spener, and he was followed by A.H. Francke. Francke was a very competent scholar and exegete. These men had the correct view of hermeneutics in that they taught the student to go directly to the scripture and through critical and grammatical study to ascertain its meaning. In later followers of the pietistic school of thought there grew up an overemphasis upon the personally satisfying interpretation of scripture with the neglect of the literal meaning. This was a reversion to the older allegorism and led to extravagant and false interpretation.

The influence of this movement continued down through the Moravians and the Wesleyans. The Puritans in England were influenced by pietistic thinking and especially George Fox, the founder of the Quakers. In the Quakers' movement the direct action of the Holy Spirit in illumination was stressed to the virtual exclusion of scholarly, critical, and inductive consideration of the words of scripture in their original setting.

This strain of Protestant, pietistic allegorism continues among many Protestant bodies today as examples in the next chapter will show. Many preachers and those who seek followers with a popular mentality frequently indulge in excessive typology or in allegorizing. Though it is popular and seemingly profound in its novel results, it is not an improvement upon the allegorizing of Clement or Origen. It is destructive of sound biblical interpretation and of faith grounded in an adequate understanding of the scripture as it is written.

Modern use. The mystical-allegorical method among Protestants is repudiated as a principle of interpretation, but it has value for those who are seeking to maintain a dogmatic position which cannot be sustained by a strictly grammatical interpretation of scripture. Lamar declares that it serves a purpose for denominational establishments who need to mix some human thinking in with scripture to produce the needed support for their theology. He gives an interesting and humorous illustration of this usage under the following allegory.

Along a valley various denominations have built their structures, some higher up on the hillside and some lower down by the water. There is a floodgate which controls the flow of the water down the river valley. For the most part the denominational groups desire the floodgate to be raised sufficiently to mix in some non-biblical ideas with the clear water produced by the word of God. Some few radicals have advocated shutting down the floodgate completely and eliminating all human traditions and teachings. A few on the other extreme desire to open the floodgate up to the limit allowing immense infusion of human ideas and subjective views. The majority are represented as wanting to have some mixture, and the control of the amount is determined by a guage which is called "Evangelicalism." Those who may attempt to elevate or lower the floodgate more than the majority believe that they should immediately alert able men to the emergency. They use the lever of "Orthodoxy" to get the floodgate back to the "proper evangelical" elevation.¹³

This still is a fairly accurate description of religious Christendom today where the majority are caught up in defending traditional positions which cannot be supported hermeneutically by the scripture. Almost all interpreters are guilty of intentionally or unintentionally allowing some of the subversive element of allegorism to creep into their reading of the scripture.

Lamar notes the danger of this pietistic-allegorical approach to scripture which is founded upon the assumed principle of the illumination of the Holy Spirit. He says,

Let a man but take to his soul the flattering conviction that in some sense and to a certain degree he is inspired to know the hidden mysteries of revelation, and he is lost to common sense. Every appeal made to him from the Bible falls powerless upon his ears, because he attaches a secret meaning to it. The pertinency and authority of the word are only recognized when his explanation is

placed upon it, and his explanation, however farfetched and absurd, favors his position. Question the correctness of his interpretation, and he speaks of the mysteries of the faith and the deep things of God, beyond the reach of vulgar sense. He *knows* that he is right — he has the consciousness of it with him. It would be next to infidelity for him to doubt the correctness of conclusions to which he has been guided under the gracious illumination of the Holy Spirit. And here are ten, twenty, fifty such men — all led to conclusions by the Holy Spirit, and all led to different ones!¹⁴

III. CHRISTIAN SCHOOL OF HERMENEUTICS, DOGOMATIC-RATIONALISTIC

Dogmatic

Having given an historical view of some of the developments of the mystical-allegorism from the early days of the post-apostolic church, it is necessary to go back and follow the other school of interpretation through to the modern period. This second great system of interpretation developed from the literalistic and rationalistic approaches.

Letterism. Letterism was the misuse of the text in overliteralizing it. It was an abuse of the right method of literally interpreting the scripture in its obvious sense as intended by the author. Letterism grew out of dogmatic considerations imposed upon the correct literal method. Thus it is not letterism that is so important but the dogmatic method of interpreting scripture whatever the dogmatic system may have been. This method became a dogmatic method which dominated the mind of some interpreters in spite of good reason for allowing figurative language within the scripture.

Actually letterism has been a minor variety of the dogmatic school. Dogmatic interpretation is founded upon presuppositions and *a priori* positions which control the mind in its investigation.

Example in science. In the field of science the Ptolemaic system of astronomy was such a dogmatic and deductive approach. It worked reasonably well with various adjustments being made as new data became available, but the time came when it broke down completely under the weight of inductive study of the objective reality of the universe. The same thing is true of a number of dogmatic systems which appear to be logical and cogent as they are presented within their own limitations. Sometimes the system takes such a fascinating hold upon the minds of individuals that it

predetermines all new data and precludes all criticism. At this point it may become a myth. Ultimately, this brings about a destructive revolution against the system with its entrenched authoritarianism. During the time of its dominance it jeopardizes the acquisition of new truth and of creative thinking.

Rationalizing tendency. Closely connected to this school of interpreting scripture dogmatically is the rationalistic method. The human quality is prominent in both. The dogmatic method has usually been the product of men's own view of what the scripture ought to teach. This type of thinking became most objectionable and destructive in the arrogant claims to human knowledge in the rationalism of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. The term rationalistic method is often restricted, therefore, to the more Bible-doubting and Bible-denying method of interpretation in the modern period.

The early dogmatists for the most part had great respect for the authority and inspiration of the Bible which made it the word of God. They did not rationalistically deny its authority though in practice they often undermined the literal truth, which was presented in the language of revelation.

Jewish letterism illustrates a type of a dogmatic approach to the scripture. The interpretation of the Sadducees indicates another type of the dogmatic approach in terms of rationalism. Out of their contact with this type of interpretation it was natural that a strong strain of dogmatic methodology would develop among Christians. It began to manifest itself among the church fathers apart from the mystical-allegorical school of Alexandria.

The scripture was often approached and read in the light of the Christian's previous education in pagan philosophy. This was true of even the great *Augustine*. He was extensively influenced by his education in Platonic philosophy and could be considered a disciple of Plato as well as a disciple of Christ. His exegesis of scripture was often marred by excessive allegorizing as noted earlier, and his theological conclusions drawn from the scripture were sometimes marred by the influence of Platonism.

Scholasticism

Aquinas. Later on Thomas Aquinas, greatly influenced by Aristotle, produced a theological system of dogmatics that mingled Aristotelian thought with scripture on practically an equal basis. This whole system of thought could not help but influence the investigation and interpretation of scripture. Thus

the great movement of *Scholasticism* took place within the Roman Catholic church and has ever since dominated that denomination's approach to both the Bible and theology.

Lamar points out that while mysticism has done tremendous damage to correct interpretation of the Bible, the dogmatic method actually has proved more powerful than the mystical and used the mystical method for its own predetermined goals. Also, it was mingled with a rationalistic approach because philosophical thought and dialectics became the most important study of the scholars. To be a skilled disputant concerning the teaching of scripture and theology was the highest attainment within the ecclesiastical structure.

Roman Catholic. Out of this dogmatic-rationalistic approach many new ideas and teachings were presented, and this brought reaction from the ecclesiastical authorities. In time they found that they could not overcome this philosophical and dialectical influence in the thinking of Roman Catholic scholars, so they simply adopted this method and made it the means for developing and propogating their dogmatics. Lamar declares that the University of Paris introduced the study of Aristotle, and by the end of the twelfth century his philosophy had become

... the main pillar of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and his logic the main instrument of its defense. Thus by slow and sometimes imperceptible degrees did the leaven of his influence extend itself, until his philosophy became indissolubly incorporated with the doctrine of the church, and "the philosopher who had lived and died without a line of inspiration, became the interpreter and the judge of the Apostles."¹⁵

Lamar quotes Sir James Mackintosh to the effect that the Schoolmen

... were properly theologians who employed philosophy only to define and support that system of Christian belief which they and their cotemporaries [*sic.*] had embraced. The founder of that theological system was Aurelious Augustinus, (called by us Augustin,) Bishop of Hippo, in the province of Africa; a man of great genius and ardent character, who adopted at different periods of his life the most various, but at all times the most decisive and systematic, as well as daring and extreme opinions. This extraordinary man became, after some struggles, the chief doctor, and for some ages almost the sole oracle of the Latin Church. It happened, by a singular accident, that the Schoolmen of the twelfth century, who adopted his theology, instead of borrowing

their defensive weapons from Plato, the favorite of their master, had recourse for the exposition and maintenance of their doctrines to the writings of Aristotle, the least pious of philosophical theists. The scholastic system was a collection of dialectical subtleties, contrived for the support of the corrupted Christianity of that age, by a succession of divines whose extraordinary powers of distinction and reasoning were morbidly enlarged in the long meditation of the cloister, by the exclusion of every other pursuit, and the consequent palsy of every other faculty; who were cut off from all the materials upon which the mind can operate, and *doomed forever to toil in defense of what they must never dare to examine.*¹⁶

Corrupting influence. Dogmatism always introduces a corrupting influence into the search for truth whether it be in the physical world or the scripture. This is nowhere more clearly seen than in the scholastic movement of the Roman Catholic church. A good illustration of this is the doctrine of transubstantiation. Once this was declared to be an official doctrine of the Roman Catholic church by Innocent III in 1215, it was supported by the reasoning of the Scholastic scholars. There is no reason for the scripture to take such a position. It was unheard of until the ninth century when a Benedictine monk, Paschasius Radbert, suggested the idea. The view that the bread and the fruit of the vine of the Lord's Supper is actually changed into the literal body and blood of Christ is contradicted by all the evidences of man's senses and reason.

Lamar correctly says,

To believe in transubstantiation, is to believe that Christ's body was broken and his blood shed many hours before his trial and crucifixion; that the disciples ate the one and drank the other while he was alive and unharmed before them; that in the different parts of the globe he is crucified a thousand times every Lord's day at the same hour; that Christ is perpetually *suffering* the agonies of immolation; that the priests are innocent, while, by their own showing, guilty, of crucifying him afresh; and finally, that the senses of sight, touch, taste, and smell — senses upon the accuracy and *reliability* of whose judgments the very truth of Christianity is assured to us — are not to be trusted! Yet such belief is produced and maintained by means of the Scholastic Method of searching the Scriptures; a method which jumps to a conclusion either without any shadow of Scripture warrant, or, what is even worse, because more delusive, from a hasty and incomplete collection of disjointed texts, raises this conclusion to the dignity of a positive

and unquestionable dogma, and then ever after reads the Scriptures for the purpose of finding it taught in them. By this process almost any propositions connected with religion or morals may be established, however antagonistic and irreconcilable; and hence it becomes the prolific source of so large a number of disputed points — none of which may be true, while each is propped up by a formidable array of Scripture proof-texts.¹⁷

Protestantism

Such a system of thought entrenched in ecclesiastical thinking would naturally influence those reformers who broke with the hierarchy of Rome and struck out into the new territory of a reformed Catholicism. Luther and Calvin were products of their time and were not able to free themselves wholly of the effects of Roman Catholic teaching. Both made strenuous and noble efforts to return to biblical Christianity as clearly set forth in God's word. They were not able to fully accomplish this; and while they got past Rome and Constantinople, they were not able to reach Jerusalem in a full restoration of the simplicity that is in Christ.

Lutheranism. Luther showed independence in his thinking. It was his followers who developed a dogmatic and creedal approach to the scripture. These formulations of men became to all effects and purposes equal to the word of God in application, teaching, and discipline of the denomination. The authority of the pope was replaced by the authority of Luther or the Protestant hierarchy that grew up in each of the denominations. The dogmas and decrees of Rome were replaced by the doctrine and rules of Protestant creeds. The persecution of Lutherans by the papacy was replaced by the persecution of the Lutherans of all who dissented from their human formulations of doctrine, what they supposed the Bible taught.

Calvinism. Perhaps Luther was less controlled by dogmatic considerations than Calvin with his legal education and his philosophical mind. As a reformed Roman Catholic, John Calvin brought with him the heavy dependence upon dialectics or logic which prevailed in the Scholastic climate of the time. Then Calvin developed his dialectical theology with his understanding of the scripture as a young man of only twenty-seven years by writing the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin was so enamored of his own theology that he could write,

I dare not bear too strong a testimony in its favour and declare how profitable the reading of it will be, lest I should seem to prize my own work too highly. However, I may promise this much, that it will be a kind of key opening up to all the children of God a right and ready access to the understanding of the sacred volume. . . . And since we are bound to acknowledge that all truth and sound doctrine proceed from God, I will venture boldly to declare what I think of this work, acknowledging it to be God's work rather than mine.¹⁸

This is almost tantamount to a claim of inspiration for his writing though Calvin would claim only "illumination of the Holy Spirit." Robert L. Shank comments that

We would not question Calvin's sincerity in assuming his *Institutes* to be a comprehensive expression of holy truth quite free from error, and the indispensable key to understanding the Scriptures. But we deny the wisdom of sharing his assumption. It is cause for regret that, in the past four centuries, many have seemed to regard Calvin's *Institutes*, not merely as the expression of a system of theology, but actually as a sort of infallible norm by which to judge all exegesis and doctrine. Such an assumption militates against the possibility of any really objective study of the Holy Scriptures and the formulation of a truly Biblical theology. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them".¹⁹

Because of this high view of his own work Calvin may have become intolerant of those who opposed his theological thinking and who dared to question some of his opinions. He was so sure of his dogmatic construction by the logic of his mind that he could even allow or acquiesce in the death of Michael Servetus. Though the ideas of this unorthodox Spaniard were in part muddled and even anti-scriptural, it is difficult for Christians living today to understand how a follower of Christ could ever allow this to happen in his city. Calvin was in virtual control of the religious and civil government of Geneva at the time.

One other valuable comment by Shank concerning the dogmatic system of Calvin and his followers is worthy of attention.

It is true, as Calvinists delight to contend, that there is a hard core of logic at the center of Calvin's theology. But it is a logic which proceeds on the erroneous assumption that the will of God has but a single aspect, and which is totally invalid. It is therefore inevitable

that, despite its core of logic, there should be much in Calvin's theology which is horribly illogical — a fact which Calvinists concede, but which they excuse on the plea that the frightful paradoxes are "mysteries" which our finite minds cannot comprehend. It is odd that men who glory in the "logic" of Calvin's theology are so ready to accept all that is grossly illogical in it. Even more distressing is the fact that they are quite ready to accept the many ingenious and artificial interpretations of simple, explicit statements of Holy Scripture which the defense of Calvin's theology requires.²⁰

Failure. Thus the sad report of history is that the Scholastic and dogmatic method of intermingling the Bible with human thought and making the Bible fit the pattern of human philosophy continued to a greater or lesser degree in all Protestantism. Theoretically and validly Protestantism declared its most basic tenets to be first, the Bible and the Bible alone is the all-sufficient rule of religious faith and practice to the exclusion of all human documents, traditions, and teachings. Second, private judgment or interpretation of the scripture is the right and duty of all men and women apart from dogmatic, authoritative formulations and binding creeds of men.

These grand principles were not carried out in practice. Each Protestant party developed its own views and convictions about the Christian faith and practice and then built a *creedal system*²¹ from proof texts in the scripture. While the Bible was conceded to be the only rule of faith and practice, the interpretation of the scripture with its elaboration in human reasoning became just as important as what the Bible itself said. The dogmatic method always proceeds by men adopting their dogmas and formulating their theories and then going to the scripture to attempt to support and authenticate them. This is no different from the attitude and action of the Roman Catholic denomination.

Restoration begins. One result realized by the Protestant Reformation was the breaking of the stranglehold of Rome as the one authoritative interpreter of scripture and putting in its place a large number of less powerful reformed Roman Catholic bodies. The only real gain was realized in the fact that the Bible was made available to a far greater number of people. Though the Bible was dreadfully buried under the debris of human thought and error, yet it was now able to assert its own tremendous, supernatural nature in the lives of the minority who dug through the debris to the word itself. The Protestant

Reformation was a beginning and not a conclusion of the restoration of biblical Christianity in both faith, doctrine, and life.

Other men and women coming after the Protestant Reformation were able to begin other reformatory movements and to go back to a purer Christianity, i.e., a more scriptural reality. This process continues in the present era and must continue until Christ returns. No one has entirely gotten over the obstacles of traditional thought, human authoritarianism, and prejudices that everyone inherits; and no one has either a perfect knowledge of the Bible or a perfect practice of the perfect will of God. It is not the ideal to return to the Reformation culture or theology as to the fountainhead of biblical Christianity. It is not found there. All must admire and thankfully acknowledge the efforts of the reformers to get back to the original revelation of God, the only fountainhead for biblical Christianity. The fault is not in the reformers' principles but in carrying them out faithfully and to their logical conclusion.

Liberal-rationalistic

Out of the dogmatic method with its Protestant aspect especially encouraging the legitimate right of private interpretation and judgment there arose the dangerous aspect of *rationalistic thought*. This may be distinguished more accurately as liberal-rationalistic since some earlier aspects of the dogmatic method involved a rationalizing approach. By this term is meant the misuse of reason in the development of a man-approved Christianity rather than a divine absolute. Warren C. Young elaborates,

Rationalism (Lat. *rationales*, from *ratio*, "reason") is the assertion by human reason of its own supremacy and sufficiency in all realms of experience. It is the view that human reason alone is sufficient to solve all the problems relating to man's nature and destiny. . . .

In theology rationalism . . . means that man's natural abilities are to be used exclusively in the formulation of religious beliefs. There is no reliance on authority or revelation — nothing but man's own reason.²²

Renaissance man. The whole spirit of the Renaissance — which in part encouraged the development of the Protestant Reformation through its resurgence of scholarship, scientific discoveries, and recovery of the ancient culture and literature — now gave rise to the abuse of human reasoning. Men became

enamored of the idea of man's great capacity to know and do everything. Man became autonomous man. He was liberated from the past, from superstitions and from errors of many kinds.

Up to a point this was helpful and most needed, but it was carried to excess in that ultimately the scripture as the word of God was denied along with the denial of the institutional church. In the post-reformation climate, a great amount of humanistic thinking tended to downgrade the idea of an authoritative scripture which was uniquely inspired of God and permanent truth. Thus, scholars investigating the scripture began to more and more become the judge and master of divine revelation. It was a new form of scholasticism in that the new humanistic philosophy began to be the authority before which all things must bow, including the word of God.

Kant. This new approach to the scripture grew out of the philosophy of seventeenth century thinkers such as Hobbes, Descartes, and Spinoza. In the eighteenth century *Hume* and *Kant* are the great names to be remembered. Kant is so significant in philosophy that a major division is made between pre-Kantian and post-Kantian thought. The emphasis was increasingly upon empiricism and the idea that everything must be proved by sense-data. This puts the human mind in control of the judgment upon all knowledge as to whether it is true or false. Mickelsen says,

It does this by reflection on all that the mind encounters in a time-space world, not by revelation from a transcendent God. According to the rationalists, the Bible is true where it corresponds to the conclusions of man's independent reason. The rest of the materials in the Bible may be ignored. Rationalism is closely interrelated with deism, humanism, and empiricism. Since interpreters are always influenced by thought movements of their times (whether they support them, oppose them or seek to modify them), biblical studies during this period show the impact of man's confidence in reason.²³

Ramm makes the statement that,

The debate over the Bible in modern times is a debate of rationalism versus authoritarianism. Rationalism in Biblical studies boils down to the fundamental assertion that whatever is not in harmony with *educated* mentality is to be rejected. The critic defines *educated* in a very special way. The authoritarian position asserts that if God has spoken, the human mind must be obedient to the voice of God. That there is a blind or credulous

authoritarianism cannot be denied, but it is not true that authoritarianism is anti-intellectual. The rationalistic premise has led to radical criticism of the Scriptures.²⁴

Semler. The major source of rationalistic interpretation of scripture was *Germany* with its great universities and profound scholars. Some of the greatest minds intellectually considered have been found among the Germans. John S. Semler is usually designated as the "father of modern rationalistic interpretation." By the nineteenth century the naturalistic philosophy had become such a part of the mind-set of the scholars that the scripture was increasingly under attack. Paulus, De Wette, and others made extensive efforts to remove every supernatural event from the scriptures. David F. Strauss approached the gospels with a view that they were mythological and had to be reinterpreted. His *Life of Jesus* was published in 1835 and marked a new direction for destructive criticism of the scriptures.

As might be expected, destructive criticism became more incisive and hostile as men lost all faith in the scripture as the unique revelation of God. These scholars passed from doubting the Bible to denying its statements and thus seeking to overturn the whole historical base of Christianity. The development of the Tübingen school of destructive criticism was headed up by F.C. Baur. Terry declares that the scholars connected with this school were under the influence of the Hegelian philosophy and rejected

... any truly miraculous events in the gospel history, regard Christianity as an offshoot of Judaism, and deny the authenticity of all the books of the New Testament except the four Pauline epistles named above [Galatians, Corinthians, Romans].²⁵

Schleiermacher: modernism. Around 1810 Schleiermacher came on the scene as a mediating scholar who was neither an extreme rationalist nor an orthodox evangelical. He is known as "the father of modernism" as that term is used of putting discovery in place of revelation and religious experience in place of the Bible. This type of liberalism was very influential through the time of Harry Emerson Fosdick in the United States. Schleiermacher made the sincere but futile attempt to water down biblical Christianity in its supernaturalness so that the rationalistic mind and secular culture would accept the Gospel or at least the teaching of Jesus Christ. All such attempts are always futile and destructive of that religion set forth in the word of God. As the

times and philosophies of men change, so a new and radical dissection of Christianity is called forth. The final result is the emasculation of the very life and meaning of Christianity.

After Schleiermacher's deluding effort to develop a compromise with destructive interpretation, negative criticism with its rationalistic predisposition continued to dominate the field of interpretation. There were some tremendous scholars, though in the minority, who produced great exegetical works on the scripture.²⁶ Their work will, in the long run, have the greatest validity and vitality because it did not come out of the humanistic and culturally conditioned presuppositions of negative criticism.

In the twentieth century the negative scholars themselves are less certain of their predecessors' philosophy, methodology, and conclusions. It is one of the interesting phenomena of rationalistic criticism that rationalistic scholars often are the most effective witnesses against other theories propounded by rationalists. Over a period of time conservatives can hope for the elimination of various rationalistic views by later rationalists. However, these later rationalists are often more extreme (more subjective) than the previous ones. Also, no Bible-believing scholar can fail to do positive, critical work in setting forth the truth of God's word and meeting the negative views proposed in his day.

Liberalism. Ramm summarizes the governing rules of the religious liberals of the nineteenth and early twentieth century as follows: (1). "Religious liberals believe that 'modern mentality' is to govern our approach to Scripture." This is the so-called scientific mentality which is in control of the minds of men today and results in the elimination of miracles and everything that offends the conceited mind of sinful men. (2). "Religious liberals redefine inspiration." Miraculous inspiration of the writers of the scripture is repudiated. In its place is put the inspiration of religious genius. Men discover truths about God; they are not revealed to men by God. (3). "The supernatural is redefined."²⁷

(4). "The concept of evolution is applied to the religion of Israel and thereby to its documents."²⁸ The ruling myth of the twentieth century is evolutionism,²⁹ and the religious liberals imposed this philosophical speculative construct on the scripture though they violated the very self-proclaimed nature of the Bible. The scripture sharply states that it is unique revelation and not one of a class. It is very certain that this revelation is not of human origin but of divine disclosure. Evolutionary religious development is

the very antithesis of what is to be read in the pages of scripture taken in their obvious, literal meaning. (5). "The notion of accommodation has been applied to the Bible." All scripture is so intermingled with cultural concepts and terms that these must be eliminated from the theological meaning. The religious liberals thought that they could pass through the supposed cultural limitations to the essence of a spiritual truth imbedded in some of the words. (6). "The Bible was interpreted historically — with a vengeance." The Bible is made to be a product of its own time and to be heavily dependent upon the surrounding pagan cultures and religions. It strips the Bible of its *sui generis* character as divine revelation. The Bible is merely a human book of religion developed by ingenious men who had religious insights far above the average. (7). "Philosophy has had an influence on religious liberalism." Kant and Hegel had great influence upon the whole background of the liberals' theology. With these human philosophies in mind the interpreter approached the Bible with a humanistic prejudice that incapacitated him from objectively considering the biblical data itself.³⁰

Barth: neo-orthodoxy. For all of its vaunted and self-proclaimed intellectual achievement, the modernistic liberalism of Schleiermacher's school began to fail to satisfy and to be criticized by other liberals. *Karl Barth* began a new movement through the publication of his *Commentary on Romans*³¹ published in 1919. This new movement has been most often referred to as "neo-orthodoxy" as it tended to forsake the tenets of modernism and to return to some of the fundamental categories of the Reformation and the Bible. It was an effort to develop a biblical theology, but it approached the Bible with certain rationalistic principles held over from modernism which made it impossible to get a coherent view of the Bible testimony. Thus, its biblical theology was an exegesis which was defective by the rationalistic limitations placed upon the Bible materials beforehand. One good aspect of Barthianism was that it emphasized the scripture as a more ultimate resource than previous movements in rationalism.

According to Ramm there are six major principles of interpretation which control the neo-orthodox interpreter. First, the *revelation principle* is that revelation is always personal encounter with God and not through the words of the Bible. The Bible is only a record of the experiences of men in the past who met God in revelation. Their experiences were impressive and

valuable but not perfect. The scriptures may trigger one's encounter with God today, but they are not the Word of God. Scriptures are to the neo-orthodox fallible and errant.

Second, the *Christological principle* means that the real witness of the Bible is about Jesus the Christ, and it alone is authoritative. Christ is the only true Word of God, and man's experience with Jesus is revelation. If in the judgment of the neo-orthodox interpreter the statements of scripture have no value in regard to Christ, then these statements may be disregarded or reinterpreted.

Third, the *totality principle* is that isolated texts or passages of scripture are not to be appealed to as stating truth in themselves but only as a part of the whole scriptural witness. The scripture is not to be taken literally but filtered through the hermeneutical filter of what is acceptable to the neo-orthodox interpreter. Ramm comments that "under the guise of taking all the Scripture says on a subject, they take only that which concurs with their presuppositions and ignore the rest."³²

Fourth, the neo-orthodox uses a *mythological principle*. He takes the events of scripture and reinterprets them as myths, a proper form of communicating religious or metaphysical truth. The philological interpreter is wrong, they say, to take these reports as actual history or literal. Stories that seem historical are only ways of presenting the spiritual or special meaning that God wants men to know.

Fifth, the *existential principle* sounds somewhat difficult to comprehend, but actually it is the only thing offered by the neo-orthodox that can be used by Bible-believing people. The idea is that the Bible reader must let the word of God become real and personal to him. God wants to speak to men and women in the living situation of their contemporary lives. The scripture is not an antique, a book unrelated to life, a book to be read academically. The way to read the Bible existentially is with eagerness, expectancy, and personal involvement. (See the discussion of this matter under the factor of the correct method called "spiritual," pp. 212ff.)

Finally, the neo-orthodox propose the use of the *paradoxical principle*. This flows from the reaction of Kierkegaard to the extreme logical thought system of Hegel where autonomous man reasoned everything out. Kierkegaard saw a great gap between what God is and what sinful, finite man is. From this he concluded that man cannot have a certain, clear knowledge of God but that

such knowledge is going to be paradoxical or in tension. Formulations of theology are too "logically structured," and knowledge of God is more nonrational; it is too high for man.³³

These six principles are fundamental to the operation of the hermeneutic of the neo-orthodox; but they are either false in their statement or carried to an extreme which invalidates them. The philological interpreter must reject these principles and continue to hold to the grammatical, cultural, critical, inductive, and spiritual method.

The neo-orthodox school emphasized the idea of "personal encounter with God" as being true revelation rather than the disclosure of God in "verbal communication." Many men were won over by the apparent value of neo-orthodoxy in maintaining a biblically-oriented theology while at the same time getting rid of the many so-called objectionable and false elements with the scripture. It seemed to allow men to have faith in God and Christ without being committed to an infallible, inspired word of God written down in permanent form. Some believers of what may be called evangelical persuasion found the climate of neo-orthodoxy a very acceptable one as they could use all kinds of biblical terms with new meanings.

Again, it was the old device whereby one seemed to keep the essential "faith in Jesus" while allowing negative criticism to cut away the historical records which formed the very foundation for the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Modern man with his scientifically-oriented education and his belief in a closed time-space continuum was able to reinterpret the portions of scripture which did not fit his philosophy and still have a personal encounter with God. Revelation *happened* to individuals from time to time. It was not confined to a written record.

So during the second quarter of the twentieth century the dogmatic-rationalistic school of neo-orthodoxy gained in influence throughout the theological world displacing the older modernism in most seminaries. The bright lights in the sky of the neo-orthodox school were Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Reinhold Niebuhr, and C.H. Dodd.

Kierkegaard: existentialism. Back of these notable scholars is another, the Danish philosopher-theologian, Soren Kierkegaard. He is given the credit for the development of the philosophy of *existentialism* — the fundamental tenet of which is that existence is prior to essence. Kierkegaard's philosophical approach was influential in the thinking of the neo-orthodox, and it has

superseded the neo-orthodox school with its greater subjectivism and free (lawless) exegesis. Sartre and Heidegger developed existentialism in atheistic terms. Heidegger has influenced the new theological development brought through Bultmann, Tillich, and others in our time.

Bultmann. This existential form of dogmatic-rationalism has developed a *new hermeneutic* which is more radical in its subjectivism, destructive biblical criticism, and erosion of Christian theology. Rudolf Bultmann started this new and more radical school of interpretation through the publication of his essay, "New Testament and Mythology," in 1941. Bultmann believed that the New Testament was loaded with myths, the cultural forms and thought-patterns of the first century, and that all of this antiscientific material must be stripped away.

The process of demythologizing calls for a *new hermeneutic*. (This term is used in the singular by its advocates.) After drastic and extensive surgery on the records which have come to men, not from Christ and the apostles but from the community of faith, Christians can then possess the essence of truth upon which to build their faith. In Bultmann's case practically everything in the gospel is given up except the truth of the cross of Jesus Christ. This is the one certain event which cannot be surrendered to criticism. It would seem that this is an inconsistent position for Bultmann to hold in the presence of the logic of his own new hermeneutic.

Bankruptcy. This is the end of the line for the rational study of the scripture. The dogmatic-rationalistic school has arrived at a bankruptcy of rational theology. Its rationalism has ended in irrationalism, yes, in mysticism. Its reductionism of the unique, divine revelation recorded in the scripture has resulted in a nihilistic position devoid of any value for thoughtful men. It is no wonder that the theological seminaries of Europe, floundering in the mire of Bultmannian hermeneutic, find themselves increasingly empty of students. Who in his right mind would want to spend his life in pursuing the emptiness of a mythological Christ of whom almost nothing can be known?

IV. CHRISTIAN SCHOOL OF HERMENEUTICS, LITERAL

Having traced two great schools of interpretation — the mystical-allegorical and dogmatic — from the time of the Jews down to modern times, it is necessary and wonderfully refreshing to be able to go back to pick up the minority school which, with

varying success, maintained the correct method of interpretation. This literal or philological method was that used by Christ and the apostles as has been shown earlier.

Early Christian

Antioch. In the fourth century there were Christians in Antioch of Syria who established a school of literal interpretation. It is possible that they were influenced by the Jewish Karaites. They were strongly opposed to the allegorism of Alexandria yet avoided the extremes of literalism and followed an objective, philological method of interpretation. Lucian is given credit for being the founder of this school of a critical, grammatical-historical approach.

A number of notable scholars came from this Antioch school. Diodorus was one of the outstanding teachers in the Antioch school. Two of his students became famous leaders in the church, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* and *John Chrysostom of Constantinople*. Theodore wrote some outstanding exegetical works on scripture, but in overreacting to the allegorist he denied the inspiration of portions of the scripture. (It is well to note the possibility of the literal method being abused.) Chrysostom was a notable example of the correct employment of the literal method and became a profound exegete and notable preacher of the word of God. Terry says that he is unquestionably the greatest commentator among the church fathers and the greatest representative of the Antioch school. The Antioch school had a vital, though not dominant, influence upon biblical hermeneutics.

Roman Catholic

St. Victor. Ramm notes the existence of a group of scholars in Paris at the Abbey of St. Victor who followed the valid method used by the Antioch school. He suggests that there is evidence that the Jewish exegetes of this period influenced the scholars at St. Victor even as earlier ones did the Antioch school. The method pursued was a refusal to allegorize the scripture or to over-literalize it. It was a sane and balanced philological interpretation critically arrived at with due consideration of the grammar, history, and geography of the scripture. This method of interpretation commended itself to the growing Protestant movement and became the respected method used by the Protestant leaders. Luther and Calvin sought to interpret the scripture according to this valid method. The literal method went

a long way in getting away from the allegorism of the Roman Catholic method of interpretation.

Protestant

Ernesti. The most outstanding name in hermeneutics in the post-reformation period is John A. Ernesti, who wrote a textbook in hermeneutics which became the standard text for many years, *Principles of New Testament Interpretation*, 1761. Ernesti was a philologist, and he grounded the interpretation in the grammar of the text. His influence was positive and helped to develop the inductive and critical approach that has come to be accepted among conservative Bible-believing scholars as the correct method. Moses Stuart of Andover Theological Seminary produced an edition of Ernesti in America which became the standard textbook for many years.

This literal, philological approach commends itself especially to those who have a strong belief in God and His ability to communicate truth to men through written revelation. Since it will be developed in a later chapter as the only correct, valid, and scientific method of exegesis, no further details will be given at this point.

CONCLUSION

This brings to a close the survey of the three major *schools of interpretation* as they appeared historically among Jewish and Christian interpreters. From this study you can learn valuable lessons to help you in your interpretation of the scripture.

First, you should have learned how difficult it has been for men to keep their sinful, finite minds fixed on the actual meaning of the text and to fulfill the Law of Reproduction. The failures of the past cry out definite warnings to every interpreter to beware of his own presuppositions, ignorance, subjectivism, and willfulness. No man is a perfect interpreter.

Second, you have seen the origin and development of the dominant systems of interpretation from early times. Like mighty currents in the ocean these have drawn men into certain methods of exegesis. Their influence has been great. Sometimes it is not even suspected to be present. All of us are children of our time and culture.

Third, these schools of interpretation have continued in one form or another through the history of hermeneutics. They are influential today. The dogmatic-rationalistic system has been the

most powerful and continues to be today. The mystical-allegorical, though weaker in practice, is still a potent means of handling the scriptures in a way that seems right to an interpreter. The literal or philological method has always been the minority method in use though it has to be used to a limited extent by even the doctrinaire allegorist or dogmatist. Denial of the literal brings irrational chaos to communication.

In the next chapter a detailed examination of the various *methods* used by various individuals under these dominant schools will show the confusion and loss which the false systems have introduced into exegesis. If by their fruits you shall know them, then these methods will be rejected on that basis alone.

NOTES: AN HISTORICAL SURVEY OF VARIOUS SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT IN INTERPRETING SCRIPTURES

1. M.S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1883), pp. 603-738.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 603-04.

3. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), pp. 23-92. Reference also may be had to F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961) Bampton Lectures 1885. Robert M. Grant, "History of the Interpretation of the Bible: I, Ancient Period," *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), I, 106-14. John T. McNeill, "History of the Interpretation of the Bible: II, Medieval and Reformation Period," *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), I, 115-26. Samuel Terrien, "History of the Interpretation of the Bible: III, Modern Period," *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), I, 127-41. A. Berkeley Michelsen, *Interpreting The Bible* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963), pp. 20-53.

4. Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

5. Origen, *De Principiis*, Book iv., chap. i, 11, cited by M.S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1883), p. 641.

6. A.B. Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963), pp. 32-33.

7. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 655.

8. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* (Vol. 18 of *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert M. Hutchins. 54 vols.; Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952) pp. 619-98.

9. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Vol. 19 of *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert M. Hutchins. 54 vols.; Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952) 1st part Q. 1. ART. 10.

10. Mickelsen, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

11. *Ibid.*

12. K. Fullerton, *Prophecy and Authority*, p. 133, cited by B. Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), p. 57.

13. J.S. Lamar, *Organon of Scripture* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1860), pp. 73-78.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 116-17.

16. Sir James Mackintosh, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, cited by J.S. Lamar, *Organon of Scripture* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1860), pp. 119-20.

17. Lamar, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-25.

18. Robert L. Shank, *Life in the Son* (Springfield, Missouri: Westcott Publishers, 1960), pp. 356-57.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 356.

21. In the historic Campbell-Rice debate held in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1843, Mr. Campbell affirmed that creeds of union and communion are necessarily heretical and schismatic. Students are urged to examine this material for its great value in meeting those conservative and evangelical believers who are committed to the defense of the human creeds of the past, especially those of the reformers. Also, consult J.S. Lamar, *Organon of Scripture*, pp. 154-76 for excellent refutation in a briefer presentation.

22. Warren C. Young, "Rationalism;" *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 434.

23. Mickelsen, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

24. Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

25. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 716.

26. Karl Augustus Keil, Joachim Lange, E.W. Hengstenberg, Frederick Bleek, H.A.W. Meyer, Carl Frederick Keil, Franz Delitzsch, John Peter Lange, Charles J. Ellicott, J.B. Lightfoot, etc.

27. Ramm, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

29. cf. C.L. Lewis, "The Funeral of a Great Myth," *Christian Reflections* (London: Geoffrey Bles, Ltd., 1967), pp. 82-93. R.J. Rushdoony, "The Mythology of Science," "The Concept of Evolution as Cultural Myth," *The Mythology of Science* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1967), pp. 1-15.

30. Ramm, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

31. *Die Romerbrief*.

32. Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 73, footnote 75.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-79.

QUESTIONS

1. There have been a) two, b) three, c) four, d) five great schools or systems of exegesis.

2. Terry thought that a knowledge of the history of interpretation is of a) inestimable, b) little, c) considerable, d) no value.

3. The biblical system of interpretation is the a) allegorical, b) mystical, c) dogmatic, d) literal.

4. The Roman Catholic interpreters have been almost entirely under the domination of the method designated as a) literal, b) rationalistic, c) allegorical.

5. The idea of a miraculous (supernatural) work of *illumination* is a) a Protestant concept, b) biblical teaching, c) Roman Catholic view, d) found only among mystical interpreters.

6. The greatest threat to sound interpretation today is from the method of a) allegorism, b) literal, c) rationalistic.

7. Where was the chief center of allegorizing located?

8. Where was the chief center of the correct method (literal) located?

9. List five of the governing rules that Ramm says controlled religious liberals.

10. T F A great value of historical survey is that it may remove an interpreter's provincialism.

11. T F The three great schools of interpretation are found in the Jewish exegesis.

12. T F The grammatical-cultural method has been in use through the years but has usually been overshadowed by other methods.

13. T F The Protestant Reformers broke with the false Roman Catholic method and turned toward the grammatical-cultural method.

14. T F The Protestant scholars in time fell under a strong influence from the rationalistic-dogmatic method.

15. T F There is no real peril to sound interpretation in the belief in illumination.

16. T F The dogmatic method gave rise to the destructive rationalistic method.

Nine False Methods of Interpretation Used by Followers of the Mystical or the Dogmatic Schools

It is most helpful for the interpreter to have a knowledge of the “blind alleys” that men have followed in seeking to get the meaning of the word of God. Many have sought sincerely to get the correct meaning but were often hindered by their false method or approach. This chapter seeks to provide the reader with an examination of nine different methods plus illustrations of their use and the result. Four of these will be classed as varieties of the school of the mystical-allegorical interpretation, and five will be products of the dogmatic-rationalistic school. It may help to think of these as flowing from a great spring and becoming four or five distinguishable streams. These streams bring

contaminated and poisonous elements into the water of life, the word of God. Still nothing can completely destroy God's word; and its meaning still is available for those who seek it, who will filter out the human errors and poisons. The correct method has continued to be used to a greater or lesser degree and by a minority who kept the word of God visible in spite of the mud of false methods.

I. METHODS OF THE MYSTICAL-ALLEGORICAL SCHOOL

A Dutch writer on hermeneutics, J.J. Doedes, set forth an interesting and accurate description of the schools of interpretation. His evaluation of the mystical-allegorical was,

They who must be considered as belonging to the first of these three, have this in common, that they do not allow themselves to be fettered by what is written, and of which they have to give the interpretation that accords with the intention of the author, but treat it (though they do not intend it) arbitrarily, as if they had not merely to confine themselves to the inquiry as to what the author wished to communicate in his writing. By not restricting themselves to what is written, *they are unrestrainedly arbitrary.*¹

Bear this description in mind as you consider the following four methods flowing out of the mystical-allegorical school.

Halachic or Hagadic Method

Jewish exegesis after the close of the Old Testament canon (about 400 B.C.) began to degenerate from the literal and correct method of interpretation to a mystical interpretation of the very letters and forms of the scriptural language. Over the years these writings developed into the commentary called the Midrashim. It is composed of the Halachah and the Hagadah. The Halachah was the legal exegesis of the law of Moses. It was strongly mixed with human opinion and uninspired tradition. On the other hand, the Hagadah was the practical and homiletical exegesis of the entire Old Testament.

Armed with the conviction that the scripture was inspired of God (which is true), the assumption was made that there simply must be hidden meanings in the words beyond the literal meaning the words gave (which is false). One device used was to take the letters of a word and give them their numerical value. (Hebrew uses letters for numbering rather than figures, such as the Arabic derived numbers or the Roman numerals.) By adding these numerical quantities together, the interpreter could seek

another word or phrase that had an equal numerical value. These were assumed to be equal; and the meaning of the one transferred to the other, or the terms explained each other.

Some examples will make this procedure clear. The numerical value of the letters in the name Eliezer, the chief servant of Abraham, amounts to 318. In Genesis 14:14 the number of Abraham's trained men is stated to be 318. The Halachic interpreter then understood that Eliezer was as valuable or powerful as 318 servants.

Again in Genesis 18:2, it is stated, "behold, three men" came to visit Abraham. Using the Halachic method, the interpreter counted up the numerical value of the three words which amounted to 701. Diligent hunting turned up the fact that the names Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael also have a numerical value of 701. Thus, it was clear (?) that the three men were these three angels.

The comment of Terry is most appropriate:

Surely no exposition of Scripture, however deep its reverence for the letter of God's word, could be safe or useful which proceeded on the principles of Rabbi Akiba, who maintained that every repetition, figure, parallelism, synonyme, word, letter, particle, pleonasm, nay, the very shape of a letter, had a recondite meaning just as every fibre of a fly's wing or an ant's foot has its peculiar significance.²

With such a method and a strong conviction that the word of God must be full of profound meanings, the unrestrained imagination ran wildly into the most fantastic meanings wholly unrelated to the biblical text. This method continued in general use until the time of Moses Mendelssohn (A.D. 1780) according to F.W. Farrar.³ The results of this method are undeniable illustrations of Doedes' description of the mystical method as "unrestrainedly arbitrary."

Mystical Method

This term is used of a particular type under the general class of mystical-allegorical. It is based on the conviction that the scripture as the greatest book in the world and wholly worthy of God's greatness must have many meanings beside the ordinary or surface meaning. The mystical interpreter searches for manifold depths of meaning and shades of truth in any word or sentence of scripture. While not denying the literal (obvious) meaning, this type of interpreter is certain that the hidden things he discovers

are the chief values of the passage. Thus motivated, it is not surprising to find that every such interpreter makes "rewarding and amazing" discoveries in the scriptures.

The history of interpretation is sadly burdened with many examples of such misinterpretation. Philo the Jew commented upon the Septuagint rendering of Genesis 2:6 — "A fountain went up from the land and watered all the face of the land:

He here calls the mind the fountain of the earth, and the sensations he calls the face of the earth, because there is the most suitable place in the whole body for them with reference to their appropriate energies, a place that nature, which foreknows everything, has assigned to them. And the mind waters the sensations like a fountain, sending appropriate streams over each.⁴

A Christian writer, Justin Martyr, in writing of the Jew, Trypho, presents this mystical interpretation:

The marriages of Jacob were types of that which Christ was about to accomplish. For it was not lawful for Jacob to marry two sisters at once. Being deceived in obtaining the younger he again served seven years. Now, Leah is your people and the synagogue, but Rachel is our Church. And for these, and for the servants in both, Christ even now serves. For while Noah gave to the two sons the seed of the third as servants, now, on the other hand, Christ has come to restore both the free sons and the servants among them, conferring the same honour on all of them who keep his commandments . . . Jacob served Laban for speckled and many-spotted sheep, and Christ served, even to the slavery of the cross, for the various and many-formed races of mankind, acquiring them through the blood and mystery of the cross. Leah was weak-eyed; for the eyes of your souls [Jews] are excessively weak. Rachel stole the gods of Laban, and has hid them to this day; and we have lost our paternal and material gods.⁵

Clement of Alexandria gave this interpretation of Genesis 22:3-4:

Abraham, when he came to the place which God told him of on the third day, looking up, saw the place afar off. For the first day is that which is constituted by the sight of good things; and the second is the soul's best desire; on the third the mind perceives spiritual things, the eyes of the understanding being opened by the Teacher who rose on the third day. The three days may be the mystery of the seal (baptism) in which God is really believed. It is, consequently, afar off that he perceives the place. For the reign of God is hard to attain, which Plato calls the reign of ideas, having

learned from Moses that it was a place which contained all things universally. But it is seen by Abraham afar off, rightly, because of his being in the realms of generation, and he is forthwith initiated by the angel.⁶

In the modern era the mystical method has been used by assorted groups and individuals. Emmanuel Swedenborg maintained that it had been revealed to him that there was a threefold sense in scripture because there were three heavens, a lowest, a middle, and a highest. The proper interpreter should find three meanings in the word. First comes the literal meaning, then the spiritual, and finally the celestial. Thus, the command, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13) means in its natural (literal) sense to forbid murder and all cherishing of hatred and revenge. In its spiritual meaning it forbids one to act like the devil and destroy a man's soul; and in the celestial sense the angels understand killing to signify hating the Lord and the word.⁷ (For other illustrations see those given on pages 138 and 139.)

Allegorical Method

The allegorical method actually sprang from the mystical method (though motivated by a rationalistic concern), but it is more moderate and restricts its imagination in searching the scripture. Where the mystical method seeks to find three, four, or more meanings in the text, the allegorical method is usually satisfied to find one other meaning beyond the literal. The mystical approach differs from the allegorical as the Greek word *theoria* differs from *allegoria*; for *theoria* means "to gaze on, contemplate; to behold, view with interest and attention . . ." while *allegoria* means "to say what is either designed or fitted to convey a meaning other than the literal one . . ."⁸ McClintock and Strong declare that the allegorical is a "representation of one thing which is intended to excite the representation of another thing."⁹ Readers who are acquainted with Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* or Spenser's *Fairie Queene* are aware of the literary use of allegory. C.S. Lewis was a capable writer of allegory, and most interesting reading awaits the person who reads *The Pilgrim's Regress*.

But there is a vast difference between the use of allegory for literary communication and allegorizing of non-allegorical material as a hermeneutical method. That which is written allegorically by the choice of the author must be interpreted allegorically because that is its nature. Thus, the literal (actual,

intended) meaning of an allegory is its secondary or allegorical meaning. It would be incorrect interpretation to take an allegory and interpret it as history or doctrine.

The inspired writers used some allegories, e.g., Psalm 80:8-15, Ezekiel 13:10-15, Ecclesiastes 12:3-7, 1 Corinthians 3:9-15, Ephesians 6:11-17. Jesus used allegories in his teaching besides parables, e.g., John 15:1-6, 10:1-5, 7-10, 11-13. Yet, such use of allegory does not justify the use of the false allegorizing *method*.

Sometimes Paul's statement in Galatians 4:21ff that the history of Abraham, his two wives (Sarah and Hagar) and his two sons (Ishmael and Isaac) "contains an allegory" is appealed to as approving and justifying the use of the allegorical *method*. Yet, this is not true. Paul was led of the Holy Spirit to know that back of the historical account there was a deeper meaning intended by God. Thus, this is more properly an example of the typological meaning which will be studied later.

This allegorical method was extensively used after the apostles and largely under the influence of the Alexandrian school. As mentioned earlier, Philo the Jew was of Alexandria; and this type of interpretation was apparently transmitted from the Jews to the Christians. For example, Philo spoke of Paradise,

These statements appear to me to be dictated by a philosophy which is symbolical rather than strictly accurate. For no trees of life or of knowledge have ever at any previous time appeared upon the earth, nor is it likely that any will appear hereafter. But I rather conceive that Moses was speaking in an allegorical spirit, intending by his Paradise to intimate the dominant character of the soul, which is full of innumerable opinions, as this figurative Paradise was of trees. And by the tree of life he was shadowing out the greatest of the virtues — namely, piety toward the gods, by means of which the soul is made immortal — and by the tree which had the knowledge of good and evil he was intimating that wisdom and moderation by means of which things contrary in their nature to one another are distinguished.¹⁰

Clement of Alexandria commented upon the Mosaic prohibition of eating the swine, the hawk, the eagle, and the raven as follows: "The sow is the emblem of voluptuous and unclean lust of food . . . the eagle indicates robbery, the hawk injustice, and the raven greed."¹¹ Again, on Exodus 15:1, which declares, "Jehovah has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has he thrown into the sea," Clement remarked, "The many limbed and brutal affection, lust, with the rider mounted, who gives the reins to

pleasures, he casts into the sea — throwing them away into the disorders of the world . . .”¹²

Allegorical interpretation is guilty of reading into the scripture the imaginative ideas and fanciful speculations of the interpreter. It would be wonderful if one could report that the allegorizing approach was only in history; but, unfortunately, it is practiced to a considerable degree among Roman Catholic interpreters both with their knowledge and approval. To the shame of Protestants, who are not obligated to follow the dictum of the papacy, it must be admitted that they practice a considerable amount of allegorizing also.

The parables are frequently allegorized to get some supposed “spiritual” meaning. One such example is the misuse of the parable of the woman with ten coins who lost one. Supposedly, though no confirmation is available from first century culture, each husband gave his wife ten coins. She wore these on her forehead; but if she was unfaithful to her husband, the judge took the middle one out and she had to wear her piece with an empty space in the center. Thus, the wife with a *lost* coin might be considered unfaithful.

Now according to the allegorist, the ten coins are the members of the church; and one gets lost. This one is inanimate and cannot save himself. The church must go and seek him. The woman swept the house, so the church must be cleansed. She lit a candle to find the lost one, and this is the Holy Spirit; for nothing can be done without the Holy Spirit. From this eisegesis it can be readily seen that the only limit to allegorizing is the extent of one’s imagination.

Another such example of allegorizing a parable, cited by Dungan, is Bishop Heber’s interpretation of the parable of the good Samaritan.

. . . Bishop Heber has a sermonic exegesis of it in which the traveler represents the human race; his leaving Jerusalem is made to symbolize man’s departure from God; Jericho is the symbol for temptations; the robbers are the devil and his angels; the priest signifies the sacrifices of the Old Testament; the Levite represents the law of Moses, and the Samaritan typifies the Saviour. And yet it is candidly asserted that the Bishop was a man of good sense! I think he might have gone further, and made the inn represent the church of Christ; the oil and the wine the blood of the atonement and the gift of the Holy Spirit; the two pieces of money the two ordinances left till the Saviour shall come again; and the promised

return of this man, to stand for the second coming of the Saviour to the world. Then it would be too bad to leave out the ass on which the man had ridden. The beast might symbolize the feeling of self-sufficiency on which the world rides away from God. But the time is coming when such vagaries and conceits will not form any part of the culture or genius necessary to the ministry.¹³

Still another example of allegorizing an historical passage was given by a Protestant preacher speaking on 2 Kings 4:1-7. This passage tells of the plight of a widow of a prophet whose sons were about to be sold into bondage for debts. The woman came to the prophet and laid her extreme need before him. He commanded her to borrow all the vessels and pots from her neighbors that she could and to pour the little bit of oil which she had left into the pots. When she did this, she filled all the pots with a miraculous and continual flow of oil from the little bit which she had. Now, what can this possibly mean? The assumption, which is not proved, is made that the oil always is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The meaning of this story is that Christians should come or appeal to the man of God, that is, to Jesus. The woman was told to use what she had, which required faith. The Christian must use faith. There was involved a work of pouring out the oil, and this is the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Christians. The payment of the debts and living well thereafter is the paying of our debt of salvation to others, and we will live well.

While such fanciful interpretation seems to be relatively harmless and even somewhat humorous, it is a false approach to the scripture and does violence to the actual meaning of the text. Such misuse of the scripture is wrong. Once started along the path of allegorizing, it is easy for it to become more extreme and absurd.

A certain radio preacher went into a great development of an allegorical meaning of the three arks that are mentioned in the scripture. Of course, the English translation of the *ark* covers two Hebrew words — *aron* meaning a chest and *tebah* which means boat or vessel. However, for his purposes he considered all of these arks as being similar and declared that they are all types or shadows of the Lord Jesus Christ. (The New Testament does *not* use them as types of Christ.)

The little ark of bullrushes sealed to make it watertight was declared to be a beautiful symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ; and Moses is a picture of the believer secure in Christ, that is the ark. Since the ark of bullrushes was unsinkable and perfectly sealed,

the preacher declared that "surely one sees here the wise provision of God insuring perfect safety and security in Christ." The ark of the covenant was made of wood, which speaks of Christ's humanity, a root out of a dry ground; and it was covered with gold — speaking of Christ's deity. While typology is a legitimate element of teaching and a legitimate literary device, yet excessive typology without scriptural example or parallel becomes excessive and falls into allegorizing.

In commenting upon the ark of Noah the radio preacher, with the obvious intent to reinforce his concept of the eternal security of the believer, says that Noah's ark was perfectly patterned to assure the absolute safety and security for those within. Furthermore, the specifications of the ark give the whole story of the gospel from the birth of the Lord Jesus to his final ascension into heaven. The story of the ark is the story of the gospel: the death, the burial, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

It is not necessary to argue that this is not found in the inspired interpretation of this history. What is surprising is the total disregard of the *inspired* interpretation of the meaning of the flood of Noah. Peter gives us the true antitype in 1 Peter 3:21. Here he declares that as those eight souls were saved by water, so even now, baptism, the antitype of the flood, saves us.

These examples should be sufficient warning to any interpreter to stick closely to the literal meaning as determined by the usual word usage and the context with a strong lock on the assumption that there must be some deeper, more spiritual meaning under the literal meaning. The basic rule of hermeneutics must be underscored again that scripture has *only one* meaning in any one statement. That is the basic law which raises the barrier against all speculative, fantastic eisegesis. The exceptions to this rule are recognized in *legitimate* typology, but that is a limited area of both inspired interpretation and cautious description of parallel examples believed to be typological.

It is recognized that more than one *application* may be drawn from the one meaning of the text; but to find allegorical and symbolic meanings in many, many details is to go beyond reasonable application. The admonition of the Holy Spirit through Paul, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14), may have application to a number of associations including marriage. But this does not declare that the original and one *meaning* refers to marriage.

The correct method — the literal or philological — is so much

superior in its objectivity and valid results that the person concerned to interpret scripture accurately will abandon the allegorical in the light of the superior method. Certainly, there is the legitimate area, using scripture as illustrative material and steering clear of allégorizing. The interpreter must make it crystal clear that he is using something as an illustration and not saying that this is the meaning of the text. In the above examples, it seems clear that a lawless and arbitrary kind of eisegesis is being carried on which is without justification.

Going back to the historical incident of Noah and the flood, it can be seen that Peter was saying that this is typological. The transitional act of God leading Noah through and beyond the flood of water, which cut him off from the wicked world and allowed him to land later in a cleansed and purified earth, is now fully realized in its spiritual meaning as the transitional act of baptism in water. As Noah had faith and obedience unto the Lord to the saving of his family, so Christians today go safely through the water of baptism in their faith in Christ and obedience to Him. Since the inspired apostle Peter interprets this historical event in this fashion, students of the word are able to affirm that this is its correct meaning and typological fulfillment. If Peter had not so instructed the people of God, then the interpreter could only draw some apparent parallels or illustrations from the matter. Without inspired interpretation, the exegete should never say that *this* is the meaning of the text, but rather that it is possible to see an illustration or symbolic meaning in this particular event.

Pietistic

Pietistic is the name given to another type of the mystical school. It is different from the others in this school in that it is wide open to everyone, while the earlier types are generally restricted to those who are a special class or gifted interpreters. The pietistic method is the claim to be guided by the inner-light on the basis of 1 John 2:27, but this scripture does not indicate necessarily a miraculous or inspired interpretation of the scripture. Some would also make use of John 16:14 — “The Holy Spirit will guide you into all the truth.” This was a promise to the apostles and involved supernatural revelation which is now recorded for all Christians. It is not a promise that can be claimed by anyone living today.

The pietistic approach has less system, boundaries, or guidelines than any other method. Thus, it becomes extremely

wild, irrational and goes in almost any direction that one cares to push it. As noted earlier in the historical survey (p. 142), the pietistic label is derived from the strong movement which was developed in Germany called Pietism. It developed into the most excessive type of mystical interpretation with almost no regard to the context, the law of harmony, or the law of reproduction.

These four types of the mystical method are open to four strong objections. *First*, they are not controlled by the very words of the text of scripture. The words can be given almost any meaning that occurs to the interpreter and contradictory meanings are often affirmed by those claiming to have the one Holy Spirit. *Second*, there is no objective standard of control of the investigation of the meaning, but everything is subjective. The objective method, which has been referred to as the inductive, critical, and grammatical, is almost entirely ignored. *Third*, the result is lawless and contradictory results from the mystical interpreters. They do not agree among themselves. It is impossible to tell which one is the true interpretation in the relativism and subjectivism of the mystical methods. *Fourth*, the correct method will be presented as so far superior to this inferior method that intelligent people will see the folly and falseness of the mystical school.

II. METHODS OF THE DOGMATIC-RATIONALISTIC SCHOOL

J.J. Doedes made an incisive observation upon the nature of the dogmatic-rationalistic school:

They who belong to the second class have this peculiarity, that they are not free with regard to what is written, but allow themselves to be governed by a foreign influence, and not by the writing itself which they have to interpret. They are not free with regard to it, are not prepared to surrender themselves entirely to what is expressed in it, without introducing anything foreign. They are the slaves of a system which determines beforehand what the writing more or less contains. These are, with regard to what is written, *slavishly fettered*.¹⁴

As five types of the dogmatic-rationalistic school are surveyed, it will become evident that this description is well founded. Men have often enslaved themselves to a system of authority or dogmatics and have abandoned the grammatical and actual meaning of the text for that which has been handed down or thrust upon them by their commitment to an external authority.

Hierarchical

This is a type of the dogmatic method that proceeds upon interpretation of the scripture by the voice of authority. It may be the pope, the synod, the house of bishops, the editor of "the brotherhood" paper, etc.; but exegetes must say what their authority dictates. These authorities come with all kinds of titles and pretensions, some claiming to be appointed by God as the lords over God's heritage, and others claiming to be inspired of the Holy Spirit, even prophets or prophetesses.

Any denominational and creedal system, and especially the cults, will furnish many glaring examples of this false method. The scripture is twisted to fit the expressed dogmatic position of the denomination or the leader. Of course, this is totally wrong. Hermeneutics as a science excludes the authority of men. Interpretation is to be objective and inductively arrived at regardless of the dictates of men or the statements of a creed. There is no authority but that of God and His revealed will.

Roman Catholic. The power structure of the denomination becomes "the voice of God" and increasingly frowns upon any opposition to its word. As the church grew through the first centuries, an increasingly dominant voice was given to the authority of church fathers and of the church hierarchy with its priests. When the Roman Catholic denomination came on the scene about 600 A.D., its popes began to take to themselves a power of interpreting the word. It was claimed that the church had come *before* the word and produced the New Testament. Therefore, the church had the right to interpret the word and to use "tradition" in interpreting the word of God.

This claim is completely without foundation because without the word of Christ, the gospel, there never would have been the church. On the day of Pentecost the word of God was preached by the inspired apostle with the result that 3,000 people were baptized into Christ. The *written* word of the apostles was the result of the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the necessity for the church to have the word which had brought it into existence. The church of the New Testament was never empowered nor ever sought to change, add to, or corrupt the word. Its duty was to preserve, safeguard, and propagate the word in its original, apostolic form.

Protestant. The Protestant bodies did not fare much better in their development out of the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestants soon began to speak with hierarchical authority and

to develop councils or synods as authoritative interpreters of scripture. Increasingly the freedom of men to study the word of God on their own was removed. The ecclesiastical rulers declared the meaning of scripture which became the dogma of the church. It was not desirable or necessary to ask what the scriptures said but only to ask what the "church" says. Those who were intelligent and alert individuals were put in a strait jacket if they remained within the establishment, and in other cases they were forced out or voluntarily abandoned the system.

J.S. Lamar quotes this insightful comment by a Mr. Hallam:

It is often said that the essential principle of Protestantism, that for which the struggle was made, was a perpetual freedom from all authority in religious belief, or what goes by the name of the right of private judgment. But to look more nearly at what occurred, this permanent independence was not much asserted, and still less acted upon. The Reformation was a CHANGE OF MASTERS — a voluntary one, no doubt, in those who had any choice; and in this sense, an exercise, for the time, of their personal judgment. But no one, having gone over to the confession of Augsburg, or that of Zurich, was deemed at liberty to modify these creeds at his pleasure. He might, of course, become an Anabaptist or an Arian; but he was not the less a heretic in doing so than if he had continued in the Church of Rome.

The adherents of the Church of Rome have never failed to cast two reproaches on those who left them: one, that the reform was brought about by intemperate and calumnious abuse, by outrages of an excited populace, or by the tyranny of princes; the other, that after stimulating the most ignorant to reject the authority of their church, it instantly withdrew this liberty of judgment, and devoted all who presumed to swerve from the line drawn by law to virulent obloquy, or sometimes to bonds and death. These reproaches, it may be a shame for us to own, "can be uttered and cannot be refuted" (*Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, I, ch. 6, sec. 33).¹⁵

Examples of this hierarchical method are probably well known to the reader from having contacted interpreters who are always referring with respect and authority to certain ecclesiastical leaders. In many cases today, these are people like Joseph Smith of the Mormon cult; Mrs. Ellen G. White of the Seventh Day Adventists, their prophetess; Mrs. Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy of the Christian Science cult, who claimed to have received a key to the scripture from which her followers dare not depart. Many denominational bodies are often known to be strongly

controlled in their thinking by such men as Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, and so forth. Whenever the appeal is to an interpretation because some particular man or group of men have declared it authoritatively, it is clear that this hierarchical method is being used.

Dogmatic

The dogmatic method is closely related to the hierarchical and is often found functioning under the hierarchical or in harmony with it. Basically, the dogmatic interpreter comes to the word of God with his teaching or theology worked out and accepted by him. The Bible only serves as proof of the validity of his accepted dogma. Instead of going to the Bible to learn what its true teaching is, the dogmatic exegete accepts his system *a priori*; and then by whatever means necessary (often the allegorical method), he gives "Bible proof" for his creed. Hugo of St. Victor is reported to have said, "Learn first what you should believe, and then go to the Bible to find it there."¹⁶

This is a very dangerous and insidious method. Every interpreter must be alert to the peril it presents. It is so easy to assume a teaching and then "prove" it from the Bible. The dogmatic method has been widely used from early times as well as today. It is almost always operating in some measure when one is strongly committed to a preadopted theological system.

Of course, this violates the Law of Inductive Procedure. It is deductive and begins with the conclusion with efforts to prove the preaccepted conclusion. It is not scientific or objective but subjective.

Immer in his work on hermeneutics gave an example of the dogmatic method at work:

One of the most frightful causes of false explanations is dogmatic presupposition. See Matt. vii. 16-20. This passage has been thus understood by Luther and by other old Protestant exegetes in an anti-Catholic interest: The tree must first be good fruit — i.e., man must, through faith, be regenerated, before he can perform good works. But this contradicts the connection and the clear intention of the passage. Immediately before, Jesus has warned his disciples against false prophets, who appear outwardly like innocent and pious sheep, but inwardly are ravening wolves. He now gives them the criterion by which they may distinguish the false and the good teachers from each other, viz.: their fruits — i.e., good works, conduct corresponding to the words of Jesus.¹⁷

Rationalistic

The rationalistic approach is a dogmatic system as well. The rationalist declares that man's reason is the final judge of all truth and is capable of sitting in judgment upon the word of God itself. Man's reason is to sift and evaluate all the statements of God's revelation and to reject everything that reason determines is incapable of acceptance by modern man. This particular false method has been around since the devil said, "Indeed, has God said . . .?" but in a minor way among interpreters of the Bible until the time of the Enlightenment. The Renaissance opened up to man the idea that he was the measure of all things and capable of arriving at ultimate truth unaided by revelation.

The historical sketch of this school of interpretation has been given in Chapter II. There have been various movements in the liberal-rationalistic school with increasing skepticism and unbelief. Terry summarizes some of the interpretations of Paulus:

He rejects all supernatural agency in human affairs, and explains the miracles of Jesus either as acts of kindness, or exhibitions of medical skill, or illustrations of personal sagacity and tact, recorded in a manner peculiar to the age and opinions of the different writers. Jesus' walking on the sea was really a walking on the shore; but the boat was all the time so near the shore, that when Peter jumped into the sea Jesus could reach and rescue him from the shore. The apparent miracle of making five loaves feed five thousand people was done simply by the example, which Jesus bade his disciples set, of distributing of their own little store to those immediately about them. This example was promptly followed by other companies, and it was found that there was more than sufficient food for all. Lazarus did not really die, but fell into a swoon, and was supposed to be dead. But Jesus suspected the real state of the case, and coming to the tomb at the opportune moment, happily found that his suspicions were correct; and his wisdom and power in the case made a profound and lasting impression.¹⁸

More recently, one hundred and fifty years after Paulus, the same naturalistic and rationalistic presupposition guides R. Bultmann to declare:

All this [Biblical theology] is the language of mythology, and the origin of the various themes can be easily traced in the contemporary mythology of Jewish Apocalyptic and in the redemption myths of Gnosticism. To this extent *the kerygma*

[preached gospel] is incredible to modern man, for he is convinced that the mythical view of the world is obsolete. . . . theology must undertake the task of stripping the Kerygma from its mythical framework, of "demythologizing" it.

The *resurrection of Jesus* is just as difficult, if it means an event whereby a supernatural power is released which can henceforth be appropriated through the sacraments. To the biologist such language is meaningless, for he does not regard death as a problem at all. The idealist would not object to the idea of a life immune from death, but he could not believe that such a life is made available by the resuscitation of a corpse. If that is the way God makes life available for man, his action is inextricably involved in a nature miracle. Such a notion he finds intolerable. . . . But, quite apart from the incredibility of such a miracle, he cannot see how an event like this could be the act of God, or how it could affect his own life.¹⁹

Having cut themselves off from a supernatural, infallible, and authoritative revelation from God, the rationalists have wallowed in the storms of human error like a ship without a pilot. The increasing bankruptcy of rationalism is seen in its subjectivism and so-called rationalism becoming irrational. So-called rationalism has destroyed meaning and truth, left men in despair without hope or certainty, and pushed them toward a foolish, irrational and mystical "leap of faith" toward nothing.

Apologetical

This method of interpretation was developed as an overreaction to the extreme and destructive attacks upon the Bible by rationalists. Like most reactions, this one was carried to the extreme and became as false in its principles as the rationalistic theory. In its most radical form, the apologetical method undertook to defend every statement in the scriptures, every action of the characters of the Bible, as of God, morally right and perfect. Apologetics has a place in the interpretation of the Bible, but to employ it as a principle of interpretation, a hermeneutical method, is wrong.

There is an important distinction that must be kept in mind. The scripture is the inspired record of God's dealings with men, but this does *not* mean that everything recorded in the Bible by the inspiration of the writer is of *divine origin*. What is recorded is an accurate and true record of what was said or done; but the statement or the action may have been the work of uninspired men, evil men, or the devil. It is in the Bible because God wanted

men to have it. It is accurately and truthfully given because of the inspiration of the writer of the scripture. Yet, it may be false, evil, or blasphemous as to its *content*.

The lie of the devil in the garden of Eden is found upon the pages of inspiration, but it is a falsehood. Just because it is in the Bible does not mean that it is morally right or divine counsel for us. The advice of Gamaliel concerning the apostles (Acts 5:34-39) is not inspired of God. It was the counsel of a leader to do the expedient thing. It is not the highest advice for Christians. Silent truth will not win against vigorously propagated error in this generation. Truth will triumph; but in the meantime, countless souls will go to hell because of the silence of those who have the truth. As has been said, "Sometimes silence is golden and sometimes it is just plain yellow."

Again, it must be noted that men of God and even inspired men could and did commit sin. Though David was a man after God's own heart, yet he could forget the righteous commandments of God and commit the sins of adultery and murder. He was not "after God's own heart" then. There is no covering up or apologizing for David's moral failure. The Bible does not attempt to whitewash it, and interpreters cannot do so either.

Judas betrayed Christ, and even Peter denied His Master. The recorded facts are written by inspiration; but the actions were not inspired, not of God, and not morally right. Jephthah offered up his daughter as a sacrifice to God because of a foolish vow to God that he made (Judges 11:30-40). God did not inspire the vow. He did not demand the sacrifice, and He did not endorse the action of this zealous but mistaken man of God.

A prophet might speak without inspiration or revelation from God. Nathan did (2 Samuel 7:1-5). Inspiration did not prevent a man from sometimes committing error in *life* or *conduct*. Peter, an inspired apostle, was guilty of error and hypocrisy in conduct (*not in doctrine*) when he was at Antioch. For fear of the Judaizers, Peter refused to eat with the Gentile Christians. Paul rebuked him to the face. His whole appeal was, "Peter, you know the truth. Why are you ACTING contrary to your own teaching and knowledge of the truth of the gospel?" (Galatians 2:11-16).

In quoting any portion of the scripture, we must be careful to exegete first. Who is speaking? Was he speaking by inspiration? Was he authorized of God to reveal truth? Of course, it is probably true that no one interpreter has ever tried to defend

every statement or action recorded in the Bible. This method would be used when it suited the dogmatic interpreter.

The strained effort to purify the scripture from all that seemed to be repugnant to the modern mind or to be immoral was in its way a rationalistic approach. Clearly, the Lord permitted the recording of events in a true manner that were tragic and sinful because they actually happened. The interpreter has no privilege to cut them out of scripture or remove them by a false method. All interpreters must be careful not to treat the scripture according to their own prejudice and interest. That which is subjective and human is not to be forced into the scripture.

Literalistic

Rightly understood and limited by the method of hermeneutics the Bible is to be interpreted literally (philologically). The grammatico-cultural method is a more complete and accurate name for the literal interpretation of the scripture. The *literalistic* method is wrong because it misunderstands and misuses the literal. So often the interpreter under this approach will make literal many things which are actually figurative, typological, or metaphorical. In doing this he violates the Law of Reproduction because he is not objectively reproducing what the author said but what the interpreter wants to make him say.

No interpreter uses this literalistic method with consistency nor applies it in many scriptural passages. It is often the dogmatic interpreter who finds the literalistic method a welcome device to get him out of some difficulty, that is, scriptural statements which contradict his belief. He may go in the direction of allegorizing literal statements or he may literalize figurative statements so as to support his doctrine.

Among the greatest users of the literalistic method are teachers and preachers with "hobbies" to prove. Men with dogmatic and sectarian views often find it valuable to literalize the scripture, ignoring the frame of reference and the cultural context of passages. No one is really immune to the use of the literalistic method when it enables him to prove what he wants to believe.

An example of the literalistic method can be found in Herbert W. Armstrong's dogmatic assertion concerning Matthew 12:30 that the three days and three nights spoken of by Jesus must be actually seventy-two hours, no more and no less. This is his assertion, and he makes it in the face of the Law of Harmony

which produces the evidence that Jesus spoke a number of times about His resurrection on the *third* day and not *after* three whole days. Armstrong, for his own purposes, is willing to ignore the idiom of speech among the Jews and to condemn most of Christendom as false teachers. Armstrong seeks to prove that Jesus was not crucified on Friday but on Wednesday and was resurrected on Saturday. This view will not stand up under hermeneutical investigation using the grammatical language approach and the Law of Harmony.

The Mormons are guilty of using a literalistic method in 1 Corinthians 15:29 in declaring a literal baptism for those who are dead. The Law of Harmony and the Law of Frame of Reference will go far to indicate that this is not an acceptable interpretation. Also, the cultural information of this first century situation does not encourage the view that this was an accepted practice of the early church nor an understanding of this scripture.

In premillennial teaching the literalistic method is very strongly practiced as the true method of interpreting Old Testament passages especially. Dispensational teachers are extreme literalistic interpreters as Dr. Allis declares,

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.²⁰

C.I. Scofield, editor of the *Scofield Reference Bible*, urged that prophetic passages be taken literalistically when he wrote,

The remarkable results of the modern study of the Prophets, in recovering to the church not only a clear and coherent harmony of the predictive portions . . . are indicated in expository notes. This portion of the Bible, nearly one-fourth of the whole, has been closed to the average reader by fanciful and allegorical schemes of interpretation. The method followed gives ready access also to the amazing literary riches of the Prophetic Books.²¹

Later he said, "It is necessary to keep this Israelitish character of the prophet in mind. . . . The Church corporately is not in the view of the O.T. Prophet (Eph. 3:1-6)."²²

William E. Cox quotes the outstanding dispensationalist writer, John F. Walvoord, as admitting that dispensationalists do spiritualize when convenient and literalize all prophecy:

The tendency of followers of Darby to spiritualize the resurrection of Daniel 12:1-2 as merely the restoration of Israel, thereby refuting its post-tribulationism, is to forsake literal interpretation to gain a point, a rather costly concession for premillenarians who build upon literal interpretation of prophecy.²³

Cox goes on to illustrate Scofield's own spiritualizing of a very clear statement of Jesus in Matthew 10 addressed to the twelve apostles as noted in 10:1 and 11:1.

Scofield tells his readers that verses 16-23 of this tenth chapter of Matthew reach far beyond the personal ministry of the twelve disciples, covering the sphere of our present age. . . . Jesus really had in view the preaching ministry of a remnant of Jews who would be preaching during a time of tribulation *after the church is raptured*. . . . And all of this by the pen of a man who has done more, perhaps, than any other individual, to impress upon people that the Bible should be taken *literally*, "just as it reads!"²⁴

Actually, dispensationalism, which has become so popular today among many evangelicals, is guilty of excessive literalizing of prophecy, allegorizing of history, and dogmatic assertions. Much of this stems from the originator of this recent teaching, J.N. Darby, a British interpreter with very strong dogmatic viewpoints. Modern dispensationalism is really Darbyism and not historic premillennialism.

According to dispensational interpreters, the Jews must go back to Palestine and possess the land which was promised unconditionally to them through the Abrahamic covenant. Naturally, they are positive that the return of many Jews to Palestine fulfills this prophecy. O.T. Allis points out some very grave problems with this view:

Scofield does not concern himself with the, for literalists, thorny question of Abraham's personal return to and possession of the land. He insists that his seed must possess it. But if Gen. xii.15 is to be taken with absolute literalness, Abraham himself and all his posterity, not merely his descendants of an age still future, must actually possess the land. Yet Hebrews tells us plainly that the patriarchs were seeking not an earthly but a heavenly country. If the promise is not to be taken literally as regards Abraham, why must it be taken literally as regards *some* of his descendants? If it is to be taken literally, then Abraham is to return to earth and possess the land of Canaan for ever. This raises a further question. How can Abraham possess the literal land of his sojournings, if the

earth is to be consumed with fire and there are to be new heavens and a new earth?²⁵

Again, one is led to wonder if David is literally going to rule over the kingdom instead of Jesus Christ. According to Jeremiah's prophecy in 30:9, it is David who is going to reign over them. It does not say David's son; and to be consistent, the literalist must hold that it is David. Is David going to be resurrected so that he can sit upon his throne? This seems to be unlikely and is not even held by some of the dispensational or futuristic interpreters of this predictive prophecy.

From the example of Christ and the apostles it seems evident that, while Old Testament passages may be interpreted literally, they are not to be forced into a literalistic or overly physical form. The typological aspect again must be considered, and this will be taken up in a future section of this book. James Orr has proposed a rule concerning the interpretation of predictive prophecy which states that the *form* may be actually different from the meaning *content*. The writers of scripture at the time had no other recourse but to use the cultural and idiomatic forms of the language. This means that in a far later period of time the fulfillment may be quite different from the form.

Perhaps an illustration of this in another direction would help, and that is John's description of heaven. It is clear that the writer is talking about a heavenly and spiritual reality in human and earthly language. There is no other way for him to communicate to human beings except in human language. The rational view of spiritual realities described in human language is to assume that there is much more reality and depth of meaning in the actual event or truth than the human words can do justice to, not less meaning or some different meaning.

CONCLUSION

Farrar says:

In conclusion, 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 "by 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 Scriptures 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.²⁶

By studying these major varieties of false methods some important lessons have been learned as to how not to interpret the word of God. Every interpreter must set a strict guard over his life and mind to keep out motives that would encourage him to use a false method. Selfishness and egotism are enemies of the true exegete. The faithful interpreter will love the truth more than his theory. He will be pure in life and doctrine so that he does not have to stoop to the use of these false and foolish methods.

These nine false methods are inadequate and fallacious for one or more of the following reasons:

1. They fail to get their interpretation from the text alone giving full weight to its grammatical construction, lexical meaning, and context. There is a careless neglect or deliberate disregard for the actual meaning of the words as intended by the author.
2. These methods fail to produce a consistent or harmonious interpretation even among the most capable men using this or that method. The results are often contradictory and uncritical (lacking objective, factual data for supporting the interpretation).
3. Not one of these methods is parallel to that methodology implied in the scriptural teaching of Christ and His apostles. They lack scriptural support and are without scriptural example.
4. Each of these methods partakes of too much subjective and humanistic judgment. They lack objectivity in handling the scriptural data. Their procedure is not inductive and is often a special pleading of a predetermined position while ignoring the scriptures which contradict their position.²⁷
5. These methods are not those used by other disciplines where interpretation of words must be determined such as in law, history, and literature.
6. Finally, these methods are so inferior to the grammatical-cultural-critical-inductive-spiritual method in both its character and results that the intelligent interpreter must reject the other methods and hold to the philological method as the correct one.

All sincere interpreters who want to secure the entire meaning intended by the author and only that meaning which he had in

mind will avoid these false methods with their sad history of confusion, contradiction, and distortion of the word of God in interpretation. When the correct method is presented in its fullness, and when its valid and objective product is examined, it is believed that the interpreter will see the great contrast with the false methods.

NOTES: NINE FALSE METHODS OF INTERPRETATION USED BY FOLLOWERS OF THE MYSTICAL OR THE DOGMATIC SCHOOLS

1. J.J. Doedes, *Manual of Hermeneutics for the Writings of the New Testament*, translated from the Dutch by G.W. Stegmann (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1867), pp. 17-18.

2. M.S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1883), p. 609, footnote.¹

3. F.W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961), p. 83. Reprint of 1886 edition. This book is the Bampton Lectures for 1885. It is a definitive text on the history of interpretation and supplies many examples of exegesis through the centuries. It is marred by Farrar's defective view of biblical inspiration.

4. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 613.

5. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 634.

6. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 639, footnote.²

7. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

8. *Analytical Greek Lexicon* (New York: Harper and Brothers, n.d.), pp. 194, 18.

9. John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1867), I, 162.

10. D.R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 161.

11. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

13. Dungan, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-39.

14. Doedes, *op. cit.*, p. 17-18.

15. J.S. Lamar, *The Organon of Scripture* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1859), p. 142.

16. Quoted by L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957), p. 23.

17. A. Immer, *Hermeneutics of the New Testament* (Andover: n.n., 1877), pp. 144-145, quoted by D.R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics*, pp. 76-77.

18. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

19. R. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology" in *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London:

S.P.C.K., 1953), quoted by Donald Walhout, *Interpreting Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), pp. 127, 131.

20. O.T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1945), p. 21.

21. C.I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), p. iii.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 711.

23. John F. Walvoord, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 113, number 449, January, 1956, p. 4, quoted by W.E. Cox, *An Examination of Dispensationalism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Company, 1963), p. 23.

24. Cox, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.

25. Allis, *op. cit.*, p. 298, note.¹

26. Farrar, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

27. Cf. Robert Shank's list of Lewis S. Chafer's "Complete" listing of all the passages on eternal security (which Chafer defended) and the serious omissions of some of the most damaging passages against eternal security. *Life in the Son* (Springfield, Missouri: Westcott Publishers, 1960), pp. 333-37.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the description that Doedes gave of the mystical-allegorical school of interpretation?

2. What was Doedes' description of the dogmatic-rationalistic?

3. What was the principle used in the Halachic method?

4. How does the mystical interpreter's aim or procedure differ from that of the allegorist?

5. The Roman Catholics use the hierarchical method, but the Protestants do a) not at all, b) even more, c) sometimes, d) far too much.

6. The most dangerous and destructive method of false interpretation is the a) mystical, b) rationalistic, c) apologetical, d) literalistic.

7. The rationalistic interpreter violates the right use of reason, for he puts human _____ in judgment upon God's _____.

8. State five reasons why these nine false methods must be rejected.

9. T F The allegorizing method is wrong even though there are allegories in the scriptures.

10. T F Paul approved of the allegorizing method because he used it in Galatians.

11. T F Allegorizing is now an historical curiosity as no one would think of using it today.

12. T F Allegorizing is a relatively harmless and interesting way to handle the scriptures.

13. T F People who are constantly referring to church authorities or

certain leaders in support of their positions are very likely to be using the hierarchical method.

14. T F The dogmatic interpreter with his own view established goes to the Bible to prove it.
15. T F Every statement in the scripture is approved of God and is true.
16. T F The literalistic method is false because it abuses the literal method through forcing the literalistic meaning upon figurative or spiritual truth.
17. T F No one can be a consistent literalizer of scripture.
18. T F False methods have come entirely from those who were trying to defame or to twist the scriptures.
19. T F The mystical method is older than the dogmatic-rationalistic.
20. State at least two distinct violations of hermeneutics by those using the mystical method.
21. During the modern period one of the most outstanding mystical method interpreters was _____.
22. The only real limitation upon those who use the mystical or the allegorical method is their own _____.
23. All interpreters need to be reminded repeatedly of that basic rule of hermeneutics that scripture has only _____ meaning.
24. There is a deeper meaning by the intention of God of the historical fact of the flood in the day of Noah, and this is a typological meaning which refers it to our _____.
25. This deeper meaning is true and not allegorizing because it is the inspired interpretation of the apostle _____.
26. State why you agree or disagree with Hallam's statement that the Protestant Reformation was a CHANGE OF MASTERS (p. 176).
27. Give a clear example from your experience (reading or otherwise) of the mystical, allegorical and dogmatic methods.
28. Two methods have been quite attractive to conservative Bible-believing people and sometimes employed to "defend the faith."

Part Three
The Correct Method:
Its Factors and Functions

The Basic Factors Identified and Described

It is refreshing to turn from the inadequate and false methods used by various men to the correct method, a method which is implied and exemplified by its use by inspired writers. It is a method commended by its use in the fields of literature, jurisprudence, and science. In defining hermeneutics earlier, it is said that it is validated by being systematically consistent or coherent. This means that it considers and uses all the data of knowledge and experience plus logical reasoning to integrate and explain what is true. Others have said the principles are validated by "the dictates of common sense and universal, objective acknowledgement."¹ This appeals to hermeneutics' nature as being coeval with man's creation by God like logic, inherent in the image of God in which man was made.

I. THE RECOGNITION AND COMMENDATION OF THE CORRECT METHOD

Ramm

The method defined as the correct method is widely commended by Bible-believing scholars especially Protestants. This is emphasized by Ramm. He discusses what he calls "the Protestant system of hermeneutics" through pages 93-162 of his text. From these pages it is clear that he is using and approving the grammatical-historical method. He speaks of the philological meaning and declares:

... but in the larger historical context philology meant a total program in understanding a piece of literature. This included linguistics but also much more — such as history, cultural surroundings and literary criticism. We are using the word *philological* in this second sense.²

Ramm elaborates,

Sometimes the philological method is called the historical method, or the grammatical method, or the historico-grammatical method, and sometimes the literal method where it is contrasted with the allegorical or mystical methods. It may also be called the critical method. By being critical, hermeneutical theory has become very self-conscious of what hermeneutics is all about and what criteria are necessary to insure faithful interpretation of documents. Any interpretation of a given passage or book of Holy Scripture must be given an adequate justification.³

Unger

Merrill Unger in an article entitled "Approaching the Bible" speaks about some implications of a sound scientific approach to biblical interpretation by the grammatical-historical-critical method:

This approach encourages the highest and most God-honoring type of interpretation. This, we believe, is the grammatical-historical-critical method that takes into account all the advances in Hebrew and Greek syntax, Bible history, geography, and archaeology, as well as the conclusions of sound criticism, both higher and lower. This sort of interpretation takes the full gamut of Scripture as equally inspired and regards *all* phases of the divine revelation as important. It seeks to deal with *all* and to interpret all as a unified

system of truth. It seeks to reconcile seeming discrepancies and difficulties on the basis of rigid inductive logic. Never does it deductively superimpose doctrinal conclusions on the Bible; it allows the particulars to produce the generalizations. This is but saying that the Bible is to produce its own theology instead of having man's theology imposed on it; in other words, the Bible is to be interpreted scientifically.

A correct and workable system of interpretation that harmonizes many difficult and seemingly conflicting passages is needed as a vital part of the apologetic for the truth of full scriptural authority. Part of the reason for the wholesale rejection of verbal inspiration is the refusal of many evangelicals to rise to a system of interpretation worthy of the Bible as a fully authoritative revelation from God. If unbelief is manifested in an unscientific rationalistic criticism that refuses full scriptural authority, unbelief may also be manifested by those who, although subscribing to this truth in theory, yet reject it in practice by refusing to interpret its teachings by a literal, grammatical, historical, critical, rigidly inductive method that believes the Bible says what it means and means what it says, and take *all* that Scripture says on a subject in its exegetical, expository, and theological systematizations.⁴

Terry

Strong approval of this method is voiced by M.S. Terry:

In distinction from all the above-mentioned methods of interpretation, we may name the Grammatico-Historical as the method which most fully commends itself to the judgment and conscience of Christian scholars. Its fundamental principle is to gather from the Scriptures themselves the precise meaning which the writers intended to convey. It applies to the sacred books the same principles, the same grammatical process and exercise of common sense and reason, which we apply to other books. The grammatico-historical exegete, furnished with suitable qualifications, intellectual, educational, and moral, will accept the claims of the Bible without prejudice and adverse prepossession, and, with no ambition to prove them true or false, will investigate the language and import of each book with fearless independence. He will master the language of the writer, the particular dialect which he used, and his peculiar style and manner of expression. He will inquire into the circumstances under which he wrote, the manners and customs of his age, and the purpose or object which he had in view. He has a right to assume that no sensible author will be knowingly inconsistent with himself, or seek to bewilder and mislead his readers.⁵

Lamar

The method proposed as the correct method, the inductive method, is warmly recommended by J.S. Lamar:

In all cases where the inductive method has been strictly followed, men have arrived at conclusions, satisfactory, clear, and consistent, both in themselves and with the other Scriptures; and all are agreed and united. While, wherever any other method has been pursued, there is uncertainty, obscurity, inconsistency; and all are disagreed and disunited. Can those who love truth more than party hesitate to adopt a conclusion which is forced upon them by considerations so powerful?

.....
 Upon the whole, then we conclude that though in some instances, and perhaps in very many, due attention has been paid to the method by which truth is to be sought and found, in a very large majority this has been disregarded, or but partially employed, and then often neutralized by the simultaneous presence and employment of improper and heterogeneous processes. We think, also, that it is not too much to conclude, from the arguments introduced in this chapter, that the inductive method *can* be employed in the interpretation of Scripture; that it *should* be; and that, *when* thus employed, the best and happiest results may be expected to follow.⁶

Mickelsen

A.B. Mickelsen summarizes the wide-spread acceptance and approval of the correct method:

Since the middle of the nineteenth century grammatical-historical interpretation has been a basic premise of all serious interpreters. Yet with this basic premise there is the constant danger that the study of history and culture may make the background appear more important than the actual content being examined. It is certainly true that without knowledge of history and culture the interpreter may easily fall into many errors. But if he is preoccupied with history and culture, the interpreter can treat the content as secondary to the reconstruction of the original setting. History and culture, then as secondary elements, are essential for the understanding of content. Out of a complex maze of events and into the agonizing pressures of daily existence, God's message came and confronted men with God himself.⁷

Again, in discussing the interpretation of prophecy, Mickelsen refers to this correct method as the beginning point of interpretation of special areas such as prophecy:

Make a careful grammatical-historical-contextual analysis of the passage. This is fundamental and is the first task of the interpreter. He must understand the meaning of the words and the exact relationship which the words have to each other. He should know the historical background of the prophet and the people to whom the prophet ministers. He should note the context that precedes the passage and the context that follows the passage. The flow of thought from the preceding passage and on to that which follows should be clear in the interpreter's mind. Any parallel passages that may shed some light should be consulted. But in comparing passages he must be sure to treat each from the grammatical-historical-contextual approach *before* comparisons are drawn.⁸

There seems to be no question that the correct method has always had some use and recognition and that in modern times it has been the dominant method. It has been almost universally recognized by those not bound by an ecclesiastical authority such as Romanism. Only in this century has the grammatical-cultural method been attacked by the rationalistic liberals. They have sought to change it over into the "historical-critical" method in which they sit in judgment on the Bible, which they declare to be only a book of religious experience and ideas on a plane with other religious developments of men searching for God. This approach is a denial of the Bible's own declarations and the apologetic evidence available for the uniqueness of the Bible.

Farrar

Even though Farrar had tendencies toward the "historical-critical" method, yet he declared:

We may therefore assume that all Exegesis must be unsound which is not based on the literal, grammatical, historical contextual sense of the sacred writers. It is an exegetic fraud to invest with their authority the conclusions at which we only arrive by distorting the plain significance of their words. It is the duty of an Exegete to explain, and not to explain away. If the Revelation of God has come to us in great measure through a Book set in time, place, and human conditions, it is impossible that we should rightly apprehend the meaning of that Book otherwise than by linguistic and literary laws. Only by studying the temporary setting can we reach the eternal verity. And if it be objected that this is to interpret the Bible as we interpret any other book, we will not merely answer that the necessity for such a rule has been admitted by some of the wisest alike of the Rabbis, the Fathers, and the Reformers, but will

say that from such a formula fairly apprehended there is no need to shrink. The Bible indeed is not a common book. It is a book supreme and unique, which will ever be reckoned among the divinest gifts of God to man.⁹

Doedes

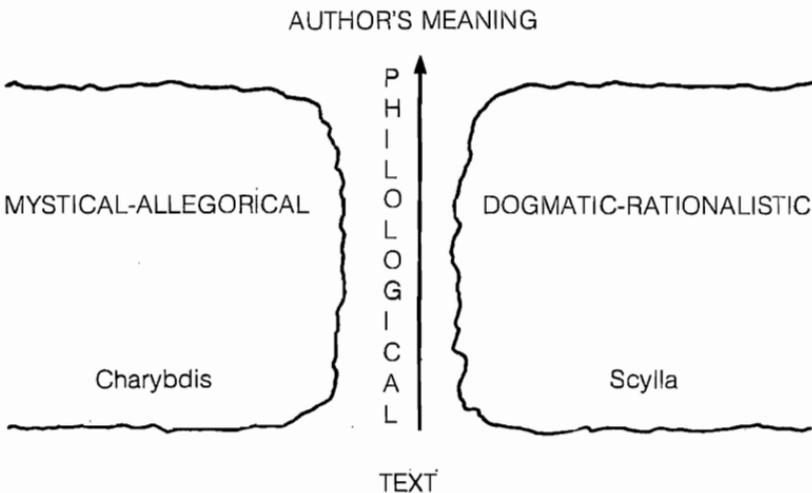
In contrast to his descriptions of the mystical-allegorical method as "*unrestrainedly arbitrary*" and the dogmatic-rationalistic as "*slavishly fettered*," Doedes commends the correct method:

They who belong to the third class consciously refuse to be bound in the interpretation of those writings by anything than what is written, and which they desire to interpret without being governed by any external influence, and without any caprice whatsoever. They may be considered to be *legally free*, being fettered by no bond whatever from without.¹⁰

II. THE CORRECT METHOD ILLUSTRATED

Scylla and Charybdis

Perhaps an illustration of the correct method in relationship to the two major, false schools will help. In ancient times when sailing vessels were not very maneuverable, sailors feared to sail through the strait of Messina because of the great danger to them of being forced upon the rock Scylla or, avoiding that, to be caught up in the whirlpool Charybdis on the other side. This dangerous situation was so well known that it became a common



expression of avoiding dangers or evil on the right and the left side.

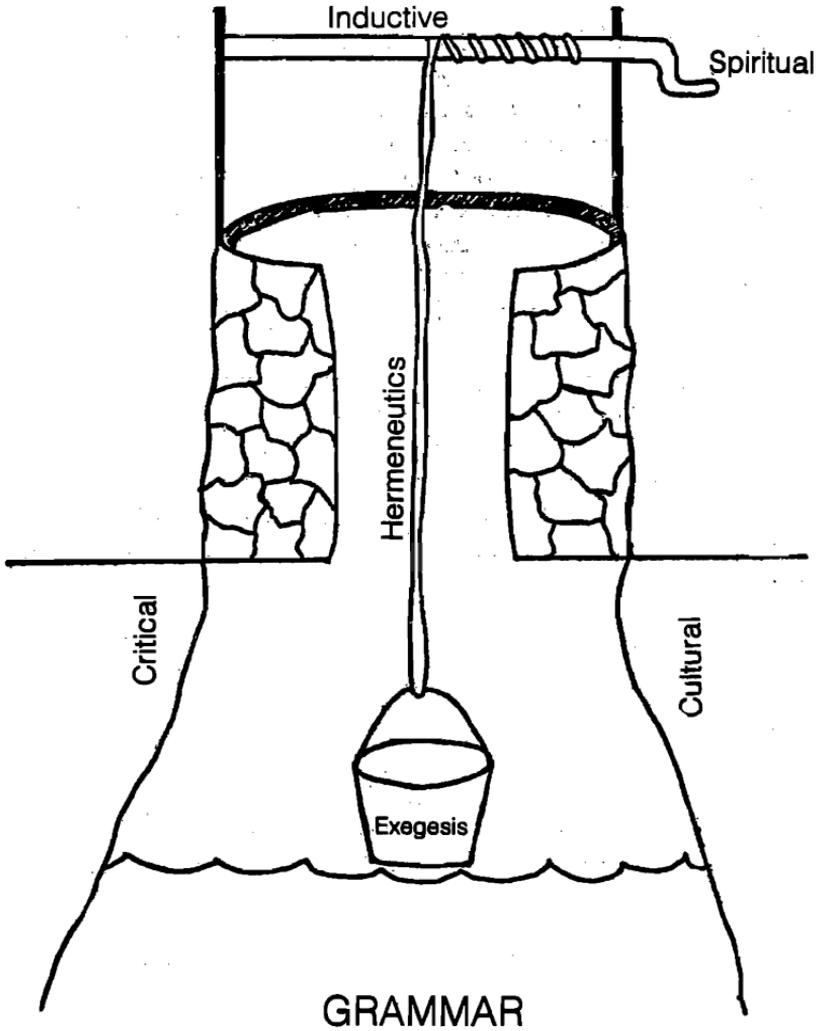
Using this as an illustration, it can be said that all interpreters must avoid on the one side the Scylla of dogmatic-rationalistic interpretation while at the same time steering clear of the danger of the mystical-allegorical method. The true interpreter will sail a straight course between these two destructive elements by the use of the philological method. This will bring the mind of the interpreter from the text through to the author's meaning.

The philological method will be presented under five outstanding factors which compose its elements and govern its functions. By paying close attention to these five notable parts of the correct method, the interpreter should be able to fulfill the Law of Reproduction — reproducing with perfect exactness and correctness the thought the author had in mind when he penned the text. These five descriptive terms are grammatical, cultural-historical, critical, inductive, and spiritual.

Allegory of the Well

To enable the student to grasp the interrelationship and function of these parts as well as to make them easy to remember, the following illustration is presented called the allegory of the well. The interpreter comes to the well of scripture in which the pure water of life is found in the grammar of the text, the word of God. The interpreter uses the bucket of exegesis (which means *to draw out of*) on the many-stranded rope of hermeneutics. Lowering the exegetical bucket into the grammar of the word, the interpreter wants to draw out only the pure water or the pure word. This is accomplished by a strong wall on the one side of the well which is the cultural factor in interpretation. This helps to keep out wrong ideas and any false assumptions from an ignorance or misuse of culture. The other strong wall represents the critical factor in the correct method. The critical factor requires clear reasoning and logical support for the interpretation that is offered concerning the text. These two walls are very helpful to keep out impurities as the exegetical bucket seeks to draw out only the pure word of life.

At the top of the well is the windlass. The windlass is the essential mechanism which allows the bucket to perform its function. In this allegory, the windlass represents the inductive procedure or function which is the operation by which



hermeneutics is enabled to provide the exegesis of the word. The inductive procedure uses all of the parts of the correct method in arriving at an objective meaning. At the end of the windlass is the handle or the crank which turns the windlass. The correct method must be operated by an interpreter. He will be seeking the most accurate and penetrating meaning. The word must bring the full impact of God's presence and power into the life of the reader. Perhaps in a strict and careful sense it is an existential, dynamic, and personal meaning that is sought in distinction to an arid, academic interpretation.

The interpreter will then come to the well of scripture and drop the exegetical bucket attached to the many-stranded rope of

hermeneutics into the word, the very grammar of the text. By means of the inductive procedure he will bring out the pure water because the walls of the critical element and the cultural element will keep out the impurities or contamination. By turning the handle of spiritual endeavor and looking to God for His help in understanding, the qualified interpreter will provide the hungry multitudes with the refreshing and all-sufficient word of God.

III. THE FIVE FACTORS EXPLAINED

Grammatical

First of all, the factor of the grammar and the text must be considered. Sometimes the term philological is used to describe this feature of correct interpretation. It requires the interpreter to find his meaning from the words of the text alone. Nothing from the outside can be allowed in the interpretation of the words. No added words are permitted, and there must be no subtraction of the words. The text must be accepted as it stands in its best form, restored to its closest possible proximity to the original text.

Samuel Davidson gives this helpful explanation:

Grammatical and historical interpretation, when rightly understood are synonymous. The special laws of grammar, agreeably to which the sacred writers employed language, were the result of their peculiar circumstances; and history alone throws us back into these circumstances. A new language was not made for the authors of Scripture; they conformed to the current language of the country and time. Their compositions would not have been otherwise intelligible. They took up the *usus loquendi* as they found it, modifying it, as is quite natural, by the relations internal and external amid which they thought and wrote.¹¹

The meaning derived from the words of the text will be carefully drawn from the context, the meaning of the words themselves (lexical), the syntax, and the grammar which binds all of these together in their arrangement. The various parts of speech, the tenses of the verbs, and the location of words for emphasis will all be duly appreciated and utilized. The superior interpreter must be a good grammarian who will be able to understand the value of the arrangement of the words and the sentences.

The meaning of the words will be determined through careful study of all resources such as lexicons or dictionaries of words, the

use of the word within the scripture, and the use of the word in other writings contemporaneous with the material being studied. The primary meaning of the word as it is customarily understood by intelligent readers will be assumed to be the correct meaning. A secondary meaning will not be considered unless forced by the context and the evident intent of the author to present a figurative meaning. Often this will be detected by the impossibility of its being taken in its customary and accepted sense. When the Lord Jesus declared, "Let the dead bury the dead," the physical impossibility of this taking place indicates that the figure of speech, paranomasia, is being used. This play on words would become evident to the reader as he ponders the statement. He could see that the spiritually dead could bury the physically dead while the spiritually alive must be active in the kingdom work.

In later sections of the book, the interpreter will be helped with more specific information concerning language and grammar as it is involved with the interpretation of scripture. Principles and rules will be offered which will enable the interpreter to work through the words of the text and utilize the values of grammar in achieving superior interpretation. At the present time the student should recognize two major points about the grammatical aspect of interpretation. First, the interpreter is always committed to the text of his author and must not depart from the text either on the right hand or on the left hand. Second, the words of the text are to be taken in their most obvious, primary, literal sense as the prevailing understanding among people of the time of the writer. This leads naturally into the second major factor of the correct method.

Cultural-historical

The older term used in hermeneutics was "historical." For many years the correct method was referred to as the grammatical-historical method, and this usage is still found among many conservatives. Recently, the word *historical* has seemed to many to be too limited in its scope for the correct appreciation of this factor. The preferred word now is *cultural* which embraces all the historical aspects of the situation surrounding the author and the text.

Langford forcibly indicates the great need of this cultural factor for correct interpretation of an author's words:

Whenever historical facts are lifted from their human-temporal context and woven to fit the pattern of preconceived outlooks, one is stretching the facts to fit the thesis. Such a method precludes true and valid understanding of a past event. Human history takes place in unique circumstances. Historical accuracy demands as a prerequisite a thorough knowledge of the people, loves, fears, culture, trends of thought, and traditions surrounding a past event. Lack of insight into the context of the Galileo case is the glaring defect in most of the writings which deal with it.¹²

Because of this factor, Langford indicates his disagreement with some of the influential work on Galileo by Giorgio de Santillana, *Crime of Galileo*. He points out that the science, philosophy, and theology of the seventeenth century had important influence upon the action taken against Galileo. By neglecting these areas, he asserts, Santillana has failed to grasp the full meaning of Galileo's trial.

Robert H. Stein in his interesting, inductive study of "Wine-Drinking in New Testament Times" has put his finger on the vital contribution of the cultural context:

As evangelicals we maintain that the Bible is for us the only infallible rule of faith and practice. It is our final authority in all matters of doctrine (faith) and ethics (practice). Yet the Bible was not written to evangelicals living in the twentieth century. The science — or better, the art — of interpreting the biblical text so that the revelation of God written centuries ago is meaningful and correctly understood today is called "hermeneutics." The basic principle of hermeneutics, to be somewhat simplistic, is that the question "What does it mean for us today?" must be preceded by the question "What did it mean for them yesterday?" If we do not seek first to understand what the text meant when it was written, it will be very difficult to interpret intelligently what it means and demands of us today.¹³

By the word cultural, an omnibus word, the interpreter is directed to every feature of the writer in his social environment and the total conditions of his thought patterns. The interpreter will study the geography that may be referred to in the writings or if it may have played any part in the preparation of the author or the underlying presuppositions of his writing. Again, the interpreter will study the nations and tribal groups that are involved in the life of the author or the writing of the text. It is important to know a man's national characteristics and the impingement of ethnic attitudes on the thinking of an individual.

Also, under cultural factors that the interpreter will want to know are such things as the domestic life of the people, their material objects, the tools, utensils, food, and even the furniture of their dwellings. It may be of value to know about their military establishment, armies and armory, the military strategy employed, and the titles for their officers. The term *centurion* is frequently used in the New Testament, and this Roman soldier who was in command of one hundred men is of interest to the interpreter as he appears within the gospel and the early years of the church as recorded in Acts.

The cultural element will lead the student into a study of architecture, the type of building materials used as well as the structural principles. What can the twentieth century reader understand about the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness without information about the culture of the time of Moses? Samson's destruction of the pagan temple by pulling out the pillars does not make much sense to a person who has never seen a temple with that type of supporting columns. The reader of the scripture concerning the temple of Solomon will be helped a great deal by a careful study of the sketches and possible reconstruction of this magnificent temple as it may have appeared to the people of Jerusalem.

Though passages of scripture present some difficulty to people of a different culture, yet the interpreter can speedily clear them up by bringing the culture of that time before their mind. For example, the incident of the four men who brought their friend to Jesus only to find Him surrounded by a great multitude filling the house comes to mind. Their ingenuity led them to go upon the roof of the house and to tear up that roof that they might lower their needy friend right down in the front of Jesus. Since most houses today are not built like those in the first century in Palestine, Americans might question how they carried the sick man up ladders onto a sloping roof and how they were able to successfully get through the shingles, rafters, and other materials to lower the man through such an opening. It is all cleared up when the cultural situation is known that there was an outside stairway that led to a flat roof which was like an open area porch and that the material there was probably dried mud laid over rafters and sticks which could be rather easily removed by determined and devoted friends.

Cultural information is required in interpreting the episodes when Jesus' feet were anointed by women followed by wiping

them with the hair of the head (Luke 7:36-38; John 12:2-3). Unless one realizes that the Jews who were able to afford it had adopted the Roman culture in regard to a leisurely and relaxed posture at a meal, the narrative might sound strange. When it is understood that Jesus with the guests was not seated at a table with their feet underneath, as takes place in most areas today in western civilization, but was reclining on a couch with his bare feet extending over the couch, it becomes quite obvious how the women came and stood at his feet and anointed them with tears and perfume.

The cultural conditions and a knowledge of them is of great value to proper interpretation as well as being extremely interesting to the educated person. This information is available in museums which may be visited, especially those of ancient times. There are many resource books that describe the political and social circumstances of various people at various stages of their development.¹⁴ The competent interpreter will make full use of these assets that he may have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the circumstances surrounding the writing of the text and assumed in the text itself.

Critical

Any interpretation that is offered must be a well-researched piece of work, that is, be critically supported. The correct method demands thorough and objective investigation of all aspects of the text and its probable meaning. The interpreter will know why he has selected the particular meaning of particular words because words have more than one meaning in different contexts. He will be able to provide adequate grounds for believing that his interpretation is the best one. It is not a matter of selecting an interpretation that he likes or that has a long history of acceptance. Rather, the interpreter will argue as objectively as possible from all the evidence that is available to him for a sound interpretation.

In giving the reasons for preferring one interpretation over another, the exegete may appeal to the cultural or historical factors. He may argue from the lexical meaning of the words or the particular arrangement of the grammar. He may appeal to the context or the general usages in various passages or in other literature of the time. Certainly he would use logical reasoning and show as complete an induction as possible.

The great purpose of the critical factor is to require

interpretation to be objectively grounded in valid reasons and arguments which can be checked by other people. It aims to eliminate the subjective danger of special pleading for things that a person accepts by prejudice and to eliminate dogmatic assertions which cannot be supported by evidence. This is explained in Ramm's words:

"Critical" does not mean the same as "sceptical," just as "academic" is not necessarily the opposite of the "spiritual." In essence, to be critical in the exegesis of Scripture means to bring into one's methodology the kinds of procedures that are characteristic of good scholarship. Devotional commentaries have a place in the general edification of the Church but they must never be considered as scholarly commentaries. The persistent problem of scholarship in any field is also true of Biblical scholarship: all scholarly work is done by men, and men who are not pure scholars but have their presuppositions, or biases. . . .¹⁵

The best interpretation will always commend itself to the student by being the most systematically consistent, that which handles all of the data and details affecting the subject in the most logical manner. This means that all scriptural teaching on the subject will be brought before the mind for relevant consideration and that the conclusion will be drawn from an objective, inductive procedure. This introduces the subject of the fourth major factor of the correct method.

Inductive

The inductive feature of the correct method has to do with the procedure or process by which a sound interpretation is achieved from the use of the other four factors. In the allegory of the correct method, this was represented by the windlass on the well in that the windlass is the mechanism by which the exegetical bucket is drawn out of the well with the pure water of the text. The interpreter will be using all the other factors involved in the correct method with this procedure. For those who have been involved in various studies of the physical science, this method is the scientific method though applied to verbal communication and mental data. Induction is the means of arriving at conclusions from the investigation of the words of the text in their grammatical and cultural meaning.

Definition. As pointed out earlier, J.S. Lamar provided an excellent description and illustration of the use of the inductive method in hermeneutics. His book, *The Organon of Scripture*, is

worthy of careful study. He goes into considerable detail concerning the meaning and value of the inductive method as used by science, and a summary of this material will be helpful to the student. Induction is defined by *Webster's New International Dictionary* as the "act or process of reasoning from a part to a whole, from particulars to generals, or from the individual to the universal. . . ." ¹⁶ This goes back to Aristotle in what is called induction by simple enumeration. Francis Bacon, however, took this simple induction and carried it on to a much higher degree of refinement. He recognized that the particular instances or facts must be carefully studied and compared *before* they are admitted as legitimate factors leading to the conclusion or generalization. He recognized that some facts are irrelevant and some are exceptional in their force or meaning. Also, it was recognized that the deductive process would play a part in the establishment of the generalization by a reconsideration of each part in the light of that generalization. Then it would be applied to other particulars that came under observation.

The induction followed by the students of scripture differs from the scientific induction in that they have a set body of literature which is exhaustive of the written revelation of God. The Bible *alone* is considered the resource for all the particulars or factual data that can be gathered on any particular subject of theology. In the physical science only samplings of a certain magnitude are achieved, and from these a conclusion is drawn or extrapolated. This is referred to as an inductive leap from the number of observed cases to all cases. In the use of the inductive method in hermeneutics, exegetes are dealing with a determinate group of evidence and information, that is, a limited area of study — the word of God written in the scriptures. Actually, the limitation of the data in hermeneutics to the word of God means that generalizations or conclusions are capable of a much higher degree of probability or finality than in the sciences where there is an incomplete observation of facts and perhaps an impossibility of ever knowing all the facts. It is possible, though sinful and finite man slowly achieves it, to have all the scriptural data presented in a logical, objective way so as to be a complete observation. Aristotle called these "perfect inductions" though logicians today speak of them as "descriptions and *quasi*-generalizations."

Value. The basic value of the inductive method for the interpreter of the Bible is that it precludes dogmatism and

arm-chair speculations that do not come to grips with the actual evidence in the case. It is not philosophizing on the base of a presupposition or a prejudice. It is designed to force the interpreter of the scripture to go to the scripture alone and to establish his interpretation for critical analysis by other concerned interpreters. The result should be a clear conclusion as to the exact statement of God's truth that will commend itself to and captivate the mind of all sincere seekers after the meaning that God has revealed.

Science illustration. An illustration of this inductive method in the field of science will be helpful to see its actual operation. Lamar cites the example of Sir Isaac Newton's theory of universal gravitation:

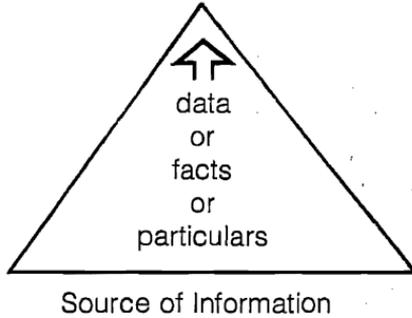
From a large number of facts and experiments regarding the falling of bodies towards the earth's center, he reached the conclusion that *all bodies* gravitate towards the earth's center with forces proportioned to their masses, and inversely as the squares of their distance from the center. In other words, from the fact that stones, sticks, apples, snow, water, and all the various objects that could be observed, were seen to gravitate in this way, he "led or drew off" the general conclusion that this was true in all cases, or that such was the doctrine or rule of terrestrial gravitation. This being verified and established, he was enabled to carry the inductive process still higher. By examining the motions of the heavenly bodies, and availing himself of the laws of terrestrial gravitation, previously established, he arrived at a still more general conclusion, namely, that every particle of matter in the universe attracts every other particle with a force proportional to the product of their masses directly, and the square of their mutual distance inversely, and is itself attracted with an equal force. This law has been verified a thousand times and in as many different ways, and it now stands out before us an eternal monument to the excellency of a method which could point out a principle so sublime and so important written upon the face of a falling apple.¹⁷

It may help the student to understand the procedure involved in the inductive method by looking at it visually in the accompanying illustration. Using the form of a triangle, the question to be answered by the data is placed at the apex. At the bottom is found the source or sources of information. Within the triangle the data, facts, or particulars that are truly related to the subject under consideration are collected. When all of these have been drawn together, carefully analyzed for their meaning and their admissibility to the induction, they are studied in their

entirety to give rise to the answer to the question which is called a generalization or a conclusion.

ILLUSTRATION OF INDUCTIVE PROCEDURE

Question to be Answered by the Data
 Answer — Generalization or a Conclusion



The strength of the conclusion depends upon the critical and objective manner in which the investigation of the entire subject with its sufficient particulars was carried out. The greater the number of *relevant* instances which furnish common agreement pointing to the conclusion, the greater the certainty of the conclusion. It is because of the coherence of all of these factors together in a logical way that moves the mind to accept the conclusion as one that is true because of the evidence itself.

Bible illustration. It will be helpful to understand induction by working through a brief inductive process in regard to the identity of the angel of the Lord (Jehovah) in the Old Testament. This is not a matter of the gospel and does not affect one's salvation. By doing an induction on this question, the student can at least learn some of the procedure required. It is suggested that you take a large piece of paper and draw a triangle on it, and at the top of the paper at the point of the triangle write the question, Is the angel of Jehovah a created being or an uncreated being identified with the second person of the God-head, the Logos? At the bottom of the page you will put the source of your information, the scripture. Primarily it will be the scriptures of the Old Covenant; for the specific angel of Jehovah, identified often with the definite article, is almost entirely absent from the New Covenant scriptures. There are nine references to "the angel of the Lord" in the New Testament scriptures. In no case does the action or words of the angel parallel those found in the Old Testament instances. It is quite possible to hold that the New

Testament angel of the Lord is only a created messenger of God who is specified with the definite article because of his being the appointed messenger for that particular work.

This is far from true of most of the forty-nine cases in the Old Testament where the angel of Jehovah is involved. No argument for the identity of the Old Testament angel of Jehovah as the *Logos* will be made on the basis of the appearance of the definite article. There would be an interesting and possibly confirmatory indication of the identity of the angel of Jehovah as the *Logos* if it is, indeed, established that the angel of the Lord as set forth in the Old Covenant scriptures is not found in the New Covenant scriptures. All Christians acknowledge that the *Logos* became incarnate in the Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, would not have separate and distinct identity from the Son of God.

A thorough induction would have to evaluate all forty-nine passages using the term "the angel of the Lord" (Jehovah) as well as those that may refer to him under some other designation. This the student is encouraged to do for himself, but the author will only call attention to a selection of the more significant passages that indicate the nature of the angel. At the bottom of the triangle you may put down the first reference as Genesis 22:11-15 and note carefully the word spoken by the angel of the Lord. The term in verse 16, "says the Lord," is the Hebrew expression *n'um Yahweh* "the oracle of Jehovah," which is one of the strongest expressions of God's authority and word. On the next line you may consider Exodus 3:2-7 and note the particular terms designating the being who appeared to Moses in the bush. Along with this the passage in Genesis 18:1-22 is most significant, for there the being who appeared to Abraham is simply called the Lord himself and not even the angel of the Lord, though the supernatural being who appeared to him was most likely the angel.

The next references to be considered are those in Judges 6:11-24 and 13:3-21. In these cases the angel of Jehovah accepts the worship by sacrifice of man. Revelation 19:1ff and 21:9 show that no created angel can or will receive worship. Still another reference is found in Genesis 32:24-30 which gives the history of Jacob wrestling with a man. Jacob declares he has seen God face to face (verse 30). Hosea comments that the personage whom Jacob wrestled with was God (12:3).

Another most interesting reference is found in Exodus 23:20-25. The angel who is sent by God to accompany the

Israelites through the wilderness is to be obeyed by the people; they are not to rebel against him. "If you rebel against him, he will not pardon your transgression." Only God can forgive sins as Christ agreed and established in Mark 2:7-10. No created angel would have the authority to forgive sins. The reason the angel can forgive sins is because God says, "My name is in him." The word *name* to the Hebrews was a highly potent word indicating the nature and character of an individual. Thus, the passage would indicate that the nature of God is in this angel. This needs to be read in connection with Isaiah 63:8-9 where "the angel of his presence" saved the people. Then consider Paul's instruction to Christians that Christ was with the children of Israel in the wilderness, and they drank "from the spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). The next reference that should be considered is found in Isaiah 6:1-6 where the Lord appeared to Isaiah. The apostle John writes an inspired commentary on this episode in 12:41. He indicates that Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and spoke of Him.

The final reference in the Old Testament is found in Malachi 3:1 where the promise is made that "the Lord himself is going to come suddenly to his temple even the angel of the covenant in whom you delight" which seems to tie in with the Exodus 23 passage in a clear way. Since this is fulfilled in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in His incarnate state, it appears that the identity with the Logos is rather strong.

On the basis of these and any other scriptures that you want to analyze on this subject that are relevant, you can draw a generalization that the angel of Jehovah is not created but is best identified as the Logos, the revealer of the Father in both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, the Savior of those in the Old Testament time as well as those under the New Testament. Whether or not you are ready to draw such a generalization from this brief induction, it has helped you to visualize the actual technique of gathering from the scripture the meaning and the conclusion to be drawn from a collation of relevant biblical passages.

Technique. With these examples from both science and the scripture before the mind, it is desirable that the technique of the inductive process in the scripture be outlined.

1. Collection. By the means of an exhaustive concordance and careful reading gather all of the passages of scripture which

throw any light upon the topic of investigation. Ideally, all the relevant facts of evidence should be collected. In some cases it is not possible to find all of the relevant evidence, and a tentative conclusion may be drawn. This will be only as strong as the thoroughness of the induction will allow. A person may desire to know more about the matter of conversion. He may gather all the examples of conversions reported by Luke in the book of Acts. Again, a person may desire to know more about the personality of the Holy Spirit. Again, the beginning point is to collate all the appropriate passages on this subject.

2. Classification. The next step is to form general classifications of the material that you have found in the scripture. Look it over carefully and organize it in categories that are no more than needed and yet are distinct and helpful. By a general classification is meant something like the periods of God's dealing with men in the patriarchal age, the Mosaic age, and the Christian age. Another means of classification would be in regard to things that are under the Old Covenant and those that pertain to the New Covenant, for example the duties that God has laid upon His people.

Then a more special classification should be worked out or the subpoints under the general classification. In regard to conversions, a person might well subdivide it into the area of the message, the messenger, and the means. Or another case dealing with conversion might concern itself with the action of God, the action of the angels, the involvement of the Bible, and the action of men. Such special classification defines the material and enables the interpreter to focus upon the pertinent information in each special class.

3. Exegesis. At this point all that the interpreter knows of hermeneutical principles should be brought to bear upon these particulars to determine if they have the meaning he supposes and if they are truly factors with a right to a place in the inductive development. In this process the interpreter will consider both positive and negative factors which can enter into the conclusion. A negatively stated fact is like that found in Revelation 3:5, "he who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life . . ." From this negative statement you can make a positive affirmation about the matter of those who are going to be saved, those who have overcome. One can affirm that those who do not overcome will have their names erased from the book of life.

Also, other types of negative statements have to be taken into consideration from time to time when they seem to contradict positive affirmations of the scripture. When Christ said in Matthew 7:1, "do not judge lest you be judged yourselves," He is not to be understood to give an absolute prohibition upon all judgment. This would contradict His own statement later in that same paragraph, "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine . . ." (Matthew 7:6). Or consider the negative statement of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:17, "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel. . . ." From this statement men have sought to minimize the importance of baptism or to deny that it is a part of the gospel which was preached. Obviously, this is an error since such an interpretation of his words contradicts Paul's own admission that he baptized certain people at Corinth as well as his very strong statements concerning the significance of baptism into Christ (e.g., Romans 6:1-17; Galatians 3:26-27). Paul operated under the commission of the Lord Jesus Christ which is identical with that given to the other apostles in Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15-16.

4. Conclusion. Draw the conclusion that is indicated by the sum total of the relevant facts and particulars that have been established. This conclusion should provide the interpreter with a clear statement of truth concerning the topic of his investigation.

5. Application. The last work to be performed in the inductive technique is to apply the generalization to each factor that has been used in the original induction to see if it will stand as a valid particular. Lamar mentions that the deductive procedure will be used to verify the conclusion of induction and then to conduct the new truth embraced in the conclusions. He declares:

But strictly speaking, it is not, perhaps, so accurate to say that deduction serves to verify, as that it starts us on the track that leads to verification. It says, if this conclusion be true, then this also must be true, and this, and this; and here it pauses. Having pointed out to us the direction that our conclusion *must* take, if it be true, and the goal to which it is *obliged* to conduct, it leaves us to watch the result; to determine by observation whether our induction holds good in its consequences; and to ascertain whether other particulars of the same class, not embraced in the original process, are explicable by the conclusion we have reached.¹⁸

The student of hermeneutics is urged to develop some serious

inductive studies of various topics of concern and even controversy among Christians. For example, if one wants to determine how baptism was performed in the New Testament, he can collect all of the passages that have to do with the action of people who were baptized and determine the meaning of each of these passages. The generalization resulting from a careful induction will give any student the answer to this question.

Again, it may be a matter of concern to determine when the New Covenant or the kingdom of Christ began. Various answers have been given to this question by theologians. By going to the scriptures and drawing all of them together on this particular topic a definitive answer is possible. D.R. Dungan, in his book *Hermeneutics*, has given a fine example of inductive procedure on this question.¹⁹

Spiritual

Finally, consideration must be given to the spiritual element of the correct method. In a real sense, this is a part of the procedure though it involves the personal qualification of the exegete as a spiritually-minded believer in God. Because it is clear that the scripture claims to be a revelation from Almighty God, it means that the spiritual nature of man is involved in both the humble approach in handling the word of truth and in the meaning drawn from the words. A spiritually-minded person will more readily grasp the meaning of the text than an impure, sinful, or worldly-minded person because of the very nature of the material content of the word. This is borne out by Christ's statement to the Jews,

Why do you not understand what I am saying. It is because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. . . . But because I speak the truth you do not believe Me. . . . He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God (John 8:43-44a, 45, 47).

The discussion of the natural man in 1 Corinthians 2:14 (under the topic of spiritual qualification) indicated that the natural man is the unspiritual man who is not thinking on the right frequency with God or letting the Spirit of God guide him into the word. He refuses to accept the meaning of the scriptures because he does not want to accept their truth. Even the Christians in Corinth are rebuked by Paul for being unspiritual and not able to receive the solid food of the word of God.

Likewise, the writer to the Hebrews condemns them for their lack of understanding of the revelation concerning Melchizedek because they have "become dull of hearing" (Hebrews 5:10-14). Those who have a mind-set and profound concern to follow God's teaching at all cost will have a very positive advantage in grasping the meaning that God has put in the words. It is not mere words that they are studying but the words of *God* and the words of *life*.

E.C. Blackman seems to favor a spiritual factor in interpretation when he states,

The aim of the exegete is to present it so that it may become revelation to a modern hearer, the ancient Word revived so as to be contemporary, and the ancient believers ranging themselves alongside us as our contemporaries. This is, in the older terminology, the finding of the spiritual sense.²⁰

This is a very sensitive area of definition with great danger in falling off into mystical-allegorical spiritualizing which is eisegesis. Blackman is *not* to be followed in some of his statements, but one part of his writing seems to come close to establishing the view that is being presented as a valid factor in the correct method.

Contempt is often expressed for allegory in the name of scientific exegesis. That is understandable, but it should not be forgotten that the allegorist stands in defence of the richness of Scripture and of a depth of meaning which he feels, by a kind of spiritual intuition, is not reached by the usual methods of exposition. That is surely worthy of respect. A practice which commended itself to Paul, the author of Hebrews and Bernard of Clairvaux must not too easily be ruled out of order. We are not contending for a type of exegesis which assumes that anything in Scripture can be made to signify anything else, according to the fancy of the expositor or the need of a particular congregation. . . . There can be no inward or spiritual or allegorical meaning which is not compatible with, and in fact does not arise out of, the basic literal meaning. . . . We prefer the term spiritual sense as the complement of the literal, understanding by it the deeper significance of a passage, extracted from the original reference and having timeless applicability. . . . For it is essentially the continuous attempt to make the historic revelation in Jesus Christ contemporary, and the Word spoken in time past a living word for today.²¹

In line with this, Luther is referred to by Mickelsen as having . . . balanced the literal or grammatical sense with the spiritual

depth of meaning. Depth of meaning is due to explicitly formulated ideas. Allegory for Luther had no depth. It consisted of "monkey tricks" to show the ingenuity of the exegete. Luther knew that for genuine depth of spiritual meaning, we must experience the illumination of the Holy Spirit.²²

This matter of illumination has been critically appraised already, and the word is suspect as often involving the idea of a miraculous impartation of knowledge to an elect few. Without becoming subjectivists, it is nevertheless true that the *Christian* is helped and guided by the Holy Spirit in his understanding of scripture. Prayer to the Holy Spirit to help in understanding the word of God is both natural and effective as shown by the psalmist when he prays, "Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things from thy law" (Psalm 119:18). James is bold to affirm, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

Paul is equally encouraging when writing to the Colossians:

. . . we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously . . . (Colossians 1:9-11).

In a similar way the apostle prays for the Ephesian Christians:

For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man . . . (Ephesians 3:14-16).

Perhaps the clearest statement by the Holy Spirit through Paul is found in his declaration of his strong feelings for the Ephesian Christians, how he has been giving thanks for them, praying for them that,

. . . the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing

greatness of His power toward us who believe (Ephesians 1:17-19a).

Surely Paul is praying that the Holy Spirit within the saints will activate their minds and the eyes of their hearts so they may understand more of God through His revelation.

The whole aim of the Christian exegete is to bring himself *under* the authority and the teaching of the word of God. The author feels that this emphasis is needed on the one hand by those brethren who tend toward an overemphasis upon the adequacy of the human mind to grasp the truth apart from the help and blessing of Almighty God. On the other hand, it is needed by those who tend toward the overemphasis on a supernatural working of the Spirit even to giving miraculous illumination to some while withholding it from others. The guidance and the blessing of the Holy Spirit is not miraculous in the life of the Christian, but He is very much active in all of the thinking and development of the Christian. He gives the children of God the fruit of His divine nature and so leads them in their daily activities, including the study of the word (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:22-25).

IV. AN EVALUATION OF THE CORRECT METHOD

Objections

There are various objections brought against the grammatical-cultural-critical-inductive-spiritual method. Two of these are based on misunderstanding of scripture. Some persons have felt that the scripture declares that all revelation is a mystery. Appeal is made to 1 Timothy 3:16; 3:9; 1 Corinthians 2:7. From the use of the word mystery it has been inferred that it is all mysterious, and there can be no correct or objective interpretation of the scripture which would be valid for all intelligent students. This hinges upon the meaning given to the word mystery and requires an inductive study of the word mystery in the New Testament usage. The meaning of the word, its use in context, and its use in parallel passages will enable the interpreter to answer this problem of whether the scripture is unintelligible or unreachable by the mind of man.

The term mystery comes from the Greek *musterion* (from the word *mueo*) which means to "initiate, instruct in the sacred

mysteries."²³ The word is used in several New Testament passages in such a way as to make clear the meaning as it is used by the inspired writers. For example, in Romans 16:25,26 Paul declares,

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith.

Here it is evident that Paul uses the word mystery as that which has not been disclosed previously and that which cannot be discovered by man. The mystery of the gospel has now been fully disclosed and is no longer something hidden or unknown. It is made manifest (brought to light) for all people through the gospel.

In Colossians 1:25-27 Paul makes very clear the meaning of the word as far as he is concerned. He declares,

Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory.

Note again that Paul declares that the mystery is something that has been hidden from previous generations but has now become a matter of public information to all who are willing to listen to the message. Thus, it would be just as well stated that this remarkable gospel for all men was a secret, something not disclosed, until God Himself was ready to reveal it. When it is revealed, it is easily understood by all who hear the message.

This is confirmed by the statement of Vine when he writes,

. . . in the N.T. it denotes, not the mysterious (as with the English word), but that which being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by divine revelation. . . .²⁴

Another objection to the grammatical-cultural-inductive method has been advanced by those who have a misunderstanding of 2 Corinthians 3:6, "Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." From this verse

many have concluded that the literal or "letter meaning" of the scripture is inadequate, if not wrong, and there must be a spiritualized or mystical meaning. This would fit in to the modern existential method as allowing whatever meaning "the spirit" gives the interpreter for those particular words. These people contend that the interpreter does not have to stick with the literal meaning of the words but is free to take them in some other "higher" or "better" sense.

This interpretation is wrong and would lead the student back into all the chaos and failure of the allegorical-mystical method. It is not too difficult to show that this interpretation is imposed upon the words and not drawn from them as they were used by the apostle Paul.

Applying the Law of Frame of Reference, it is clear from the context that Paul is not talking about hermeneutics. He is not giving a rule of interpretation. The frame of reference throughout the entire passage is the contrast between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Thus, the apostle speaks of the New Covenant as of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is now given to individuals to live the New Covenant. It is a matter of life, of inward spiritual depth and not of external observances or by keeping laws that were written on tables of stone. This clearly refers to the Mosaic covenant and the ten commandments. Besides having written revelation of the Spirit, Christians have personalized and internalized that word into the fruit of the Spirit in transformed lives. The term *letter* refers to the Old Covenant itself and the word *spirit* stands for and represents the New Covenant.

Again, the error of this interpretation is seen in that it is self-contradictory. How did the interpreter with his understanding that it is wrong to take the literal meaning and must seek another deeper, more mystical meaning, arrive at this understanding of the verse? Did he allegorize the verse as he says all verses must be treated and thus find the mystical meaning? No, he did not follow his own dictum in the matter but took the words in their ordinary, literal sense. This exposes the folly of his own interpretation because the false theory is derived by the literal which he seeks to deny.

A. Plummer speaks to this point very well:

"Killeth" refers to eternal death as the opposite of eternal life. The prohibitions of the Law incited to sin which involved death. Moreover, the Law gave no promise of resurrection. The Gospel "maketh alive" with a life which is eternal. Origen was strangely

mistaken in supposing that this passage supports the view that the literal interpretation of scripture is harmful, and that, to be profitable, interpretation must be mystical and "spiritual," or at least moral. Nor is the doctrine that to keep insisting upon the letter becomes fatal to the spirit "however true it may be" what is meant here. The point here is, that the Law, even at its best, is incomparably inferior to the Gospel.²⁵

This passage is completely misinterpreted when it is used as a hermeneutical rule to get away from the literal meaning. It is popularly used by many who do not want to be bound by the commandments of the scripture and its clear statements. Yet, it is evident that it cannot have that meaning. The example of Christ and the apostles is to appeal to the literal meaning and not to some mystical or spiritual meaning. The word of God in its grammatical-cultural setting must be appealed to inductively and reasoned about critically if there is to be any genuine understanding of the word of God.

There is one other objection that is thrust at the person who holds to this correct method of interpretation, and it comes from the neo-orthodox and rationalistic interpreter. Today he is the modern scholar who has considerable doubts about the authority of the inscripturated word and who rejects bluntly the view of an infallible and inerrant scripture. A recent and *moderate* example of this type of hostility to the grammatical-cultural method is found in a writing by C.E. Blackman. Blackman is not as radical as some would be but is quite clear that he rejects what he pleases to call the "Fundamentalist-literalist attitude." Typical of his comments, and of the many who would hold a similar theological and hermeneutical position, are the following statements:

In the latter Protestant scholasticism there was a rigid·Biblicist wing, deriving from Calvin more than Luther, which developed into modern Fundamentalism or literalism, and this is reinforced today by the authoritarianism which is in the air and appeals to those who prize definite direction more highly than absolute truth.

.....
This is not a dead issue. It must be remembered that the majority of church members and adherents in the Younger Churches outside Europe and America are literalist in their use of the Bible.

.....
The alternatives to the Fundamentalist-literalist attitude to the Bible are, in the main, two.

The first is Roman Catholicism, which is simply the

Fundamentalist position as regards the Bible taken up into that larger whole of Catholic dogma upon which the Roman Church takes its stand. Within the Biblical area of reference it is still Fundamentalism, and we need discuss it no further here. The second alternative is the modern critical method.

.....
But there is an important distinction, pointed out long ago by P. T. Forsyth, between the Bible as a whole and the whole of the Bible. The inability to see the point of this is the basic error of the literalist approach, and there goes with it the inability to tackle the task of interpretation sensitively.

.....
As we have already indicated, there is a literalist approach to the Bible which is overcurious about details, and unwelcoming to honest reason. It tends to quote again rather than interpret. Unable to distinguish form and content, it implies that the swaddling-clothes, as it were, are as important as the baby, and that is a confusion against which both reason and faith protest.²⁶

In refutation of this objection, the reader is referred to earlier material presented under the rationalistic method. Here it may be noted that Blackman is guilty of using a prejudicial term in the word "Fundamentalist."²⁷ Also, the distorted view that Blackman gives appears to be a straw man as far as the grammatical-cultural-inductive method is accurately understood in its nature and function. The straw man is the representation of the grammatical-cultural method as a wooden literalism or a letterism insensitive to the various figures of speech used, the symbolic language, the cultural setting, and its meaning for man now. Certainly, this is not the character of the method as it is set forth by competent users of it. It is just as sensible and sensitive in the interpretation of the scripture as any other method that has been proposed. Blackman is guilty of trying to make the method responsible for some of the excesses or failures which some *interpreters* have wrought. If all of the results to the grammatico-critical method were of that variety, he might have some legitimate argument.

Blackman himself admits that it is necessary for one to use the literal method some of the time:

It is time to indicate more positively the principles on which we would have the Bible expounded. We do so in terms of the old distinction of the different senses of Scripture. Honest search for the literal sense, i.e., the meaning originally intended by the author

addressing his own contemporaries, is an indispensable preliminary. . . . The function of critical study is to make possible the discovery of the literal sense.²⁸

There are limits which reason will not overstep, and we have insisted on the primacy of the literal meaning for this purpose. There can be no inward or spiritual or allegorical meaning which is not compatible with, and in fact does not arise out of, the basic literal meaning.²⁹

Blackman, contending against a caricature of the literal method, still finds it necessary to use a basic literal approach.

Blackman has not overthrown the correct method in its best statement or form; and if he could even seriously damage it, it would not make his neo-orthodox method correct. There are more difficulties with the neo-orthodox method than with the correct method. The neo-orthodox interpreter is "free" to pick and choose what his rationalistic presuppositions determine for him in the scripture. This has proved to be a reductionistic approach that ends up with less and less reality concerning God, the historical Jesus, and any permanent truth. The neo-orthodox do not agree among themselves as to the size of the sieve through which scripture must be put by the reason of sinful, finite man. Thus, their interpretations do not in many cases agree except in their repudiation of the supernatural content and character of divine revelation.

No evidence is brought forward to substantiate the accusation that the follower of the philological method is unable to distinguish between form and content. No evidence is given that the users of the correct method do not know the difference between the baby and the swaddling clothes. The philological interpreter is not concerned with swaddling clothes but the dismembering of the baby of needed limbs and vital organs. The objections thrown up by the neo-orthodox and rationalistic interpreters do not disprove the correctness of the method which ties the interpreter to the text instead of his imagination, that allows the cultural imagery and adaptation without injury to the truth of God and that requires critical argumentation before rejecting the obvious meaning of scripture merely because twentieth century philosophical presuppositions seem to demand it. It has been pointed out that a good deal of the work of the negative critics of the Bible such as Bultmann is centered in a *nineteenth* century naturalism along with a mythology of evolutionism.

Again, it is of interest to note the self-refuting nature of the neo-orthodox interpreter in that he expects his statements to be taken in a literal sense while he proposes to reinterpret statements of scripture attributed to the inspiration of God in some other than their philological sense to suit his own construction of what took place or what he thinks is allowable for God to do. If his own words should be interpreted existentially as he wants the words of the Bible interpreted, then it would be all right for men to understand Blackman and others to be saying that the critical method is a disclosure of God's truth to the critic in a mystical fashion that guarantees the truth of his assertions. The neo-orthodox interpreter faces the destruction of the historical truthfulness of Christianity by rationalistic scholarship and can only maintain articles of faith by credulity, through a leap of faith into an unproved and uncritical meaning.

Furthermore, the neo-orthodox approach to scripture destroys any hope of an authoritative theology or message and puts one on a shifting sand of human thinking. Every man becomes a law unto himself. In spite of the numerous defects in Barth's approach to the scripture, Bonhoeffer is said to have been in sharp disagreement with Barth for holding too rigidly to a scriptural basis. Ramm declares that "Bonhoeffer accused Barth of holding a dated revelational positivism. This means that Barth took the New Testament as it is and permitted no critical assessment of the text to challenge its complete normative authority in theology."³⁰

This will not suit the rationalistic mind that is determined to eviscerate scripture of all that is objectionable to "man who has come of age." The latter phrase can only beget ironical laughter in the view of the disastrous conditions in the world today which have been largely wrought by such men. Those who go the route of neo-orthodoxy should be aware of its fatal results to the scripture in trying to ascertain final truth and authority for any teaching concerning Christ or the will of God. The emasculated and questionable word that men of this persuasion often teach and preach should warn all that this is the way of death for Christianity. There is no good news in it as it ends in skepticism and despair.

Carl Henry believes that there is an increasing recognition of this failure of the neo-orthodox-existential hermeneutic with its subjectivism and destructive tendencies.

Hence a wholesome reaction is now underway against associating hermeneutics primarily with the subjective process of understanding, or with the present relevance of the text to an interpreter. The primary task of hermeneutics lies in umpiring competitive meaning-possibilities and identifying the author's intention. The determination of the verbal meaning of the biblical or any other text does not depend upon Twentieth Century historical understanding shaped by Heideggerian ontology, phenomenology, and contemporary language-theory. Evangelical scholarship should deplore the confusion that results from the hermeneutical tendency of identifying verbal-meaning with personal significance. There is no better rule for interpreting the Bible or any other literary work than to find out what the author meant.³¹

After examining the critical review of the grammatical-cultural method by Morris Ashcraft, Henry gives this telling reply which ably summarizes the position taken in this book:

My alternative imposes no intolerable yoke. If textual exegesis merely yields an older text, and not the truth of revelation, who but antiquarians will long pursue textual genealogy? Dr. Ashcraft's view offers no escape from hermeneutical subjectivism except by an act of will. Since a proposition is the minimal unit of meaning and truth, the denial that revelation is propositional forfeits the objective intelligibility and truth of divine disclosure. Where then is "genuine interpretation"? I consider erroneous any hermeneutical presupposition that implies that the biblical writers bear false witness when they preface what they say by "thus saith the Lord."³²

Advantages

A number of advantages and recommendations for the method here proposed can be found. Some of these have been dealt with in the earlier section upon the choice of the correct method. There it was pointed out that this is the actual literary method that is pursued by workers in the field of literature of all kinds. How does one interpret a history book, a philosophy book, or a cook book? Naturally, it is by a literal or philological method. It is really the only way minds are made to operate except when they are deliberately twisted into distortions by perverse reason seeking to obscure or to get away from the plain meaning of the words.

Again, it is a method that is used in jurisprudence and in all the commercial activities of life. It is the method that is used by the

lawyers as well as by the man who reads the newspaper or the business man who signs the contract. The highest validation and recommendation of this method was shown to be the implied approval of Jesus Christ and the apostles by their use of its basic approach and principles.

Again, this method of interpretation commends itself to thoughtful men when they see the reasonable and widely agreed upon results of its use. The exegetical results obtained by the grammatical-cultural method have stood the test of time far beyond those obtained by any other methodology. It gives results which can be critically analyzed and objectively tested. The objectivity of the interpretation rising above the subjectivity of the interpreter is the strong recommendation for escaping the morass of humanistic pride and the changeableness of fickle man.

Still another strength of this method, which has been acclaimed as correct, is the fact that the interpretation is grounded in the actual wording of the text and forces the interpreter to lay aside as much as possible his own desires and preconceived notions about what it should say. The scripture is not a piece of spaghetti to be twisted into all kinds of configurations which please the palate of man. The scripture does not have many meanings for many different minds, all of them equally valid and true. The text has one and only one meaning, and this must be sought for within its words, context, and through the use of the Law of Harmony. Dr. Montgomery declares, when he was a reporter at the German Kirchentag at Hannover,

I was appalled to see Biblical passages relating to salvation through Christ's blood transmuted into proof texts for humanistic social action (Ephesians 1 was seriously employed as an argument for increasing the use of fertilizer in underdeveloped areas). . . .³³

Finally, the literal or philological method is admitted to give a clear and understandable meaning in any literature including the Bible. The liberals know that it gives orthodox theology. Since they have made up their minds to repudiate all orthodox tenets, they have no other choice but to repudiate the philological method of interpretation. This was honestly admitted in the last century by a Unitarian, Dr. George E. Ellis. His declaration to the Unitarian Club in Boston, November, 1882, has been preserved by A.H. Strong as follows:

Fifty years of study, thought and reading given largely to the Bible and to the literature which peculiarly relates to it, have

brought me to this conclusion, that the book — taken with the especial divine quality and character claimed for it, and so extensively assigned to it, as inspired and infallible as a whole, and in all its contents — is an Orthodox book. It yields what is called the Orthodox creed. The vast majority of its readers, following its letter, its obvious sense, its natural meaning, and yielding to the impression which some of its emphatic texts make upon them, find in it Orthodoxy. Only that kind of ingenious, special, discriminative, and in candor I must add, forced treatment which it receives from us liberals can make the book teach anything but Orthodoxy. The evangelical sects, so called, are clearly right in maintaining that their view of Scripture and of its doctrines draws a deep and wide division of creed between them and ourselves. In that earnest controversy by pamphlet warfare between Drs. Channing and Ware, Unitarians on the one side, and Drs. Worcester and Woods and Professor Stuart on the other — a controversy which wrought up the people of our community sixty years ago more than did our recent political campaign — I am fully convinced that the liberal contestants were worsted. Scripture exegesis, logic and argument were clearly on the side of the Orthodox contestants. And this was so, mainly because the liberal party put themselves on the same plane with the Orthodox in their way of regarding and dealing with Scripture texts in their bearing upon the controversy. Liberalism cannot vanquish Orthodoxy, if it yields to the latter in its own way of regarding and treating the whole Bible. Martin Luther said that the Papists burned the Bible because it was not on their side. Now I am not about to attack the Bible because it is not on my side; but I am about to object as emphatically as I can against a character and quality assigned to the Bible, which it does not claim for itself, which cannot be certified for it: and on the origin and growth and intensity of the fond and superstitious influences resulting in that view we trace distinctly to agencies accounting for, but not warranting the current belief. Orthodoxy cannot readjust its creeds till it readjusts its estimate of the Scriptures. The only relief which one who professes the Orthodox creed can find is either by forcing his ingenuity into the prooftexts or indulging his liberty outside of them.³⁴

Thus we see the advantages of the correct method far outweigh any apparent disadvantages and that it is superior to any of its competitors.

Abuses or Limitations

There are certain abuses or limitations of this method which have existed. Any theory can be abused and even a good theory

cannot prevent misuse by the uninformed or the careless. Some have declared that the grammatical-cultural approach is dry, lifeless, pedantic, and insulated from the dynamic of the Logos.

Yet, this is not an integral part of the nature of the correct method. Nothing in it requires the interpreter to be lifeless or to interpret without dynamic meaning. The spiritual element of the correct method as outlined deeply involves the interpreter in life and application of the scripture to the needs of life. No interpreter following the correct method, however, needs to become a book-worm or a dried up, dusty scholar. That it does happen to some cannot be denied.

D.M. Lloyd-Jones remarks that there is a real danger to the Christian in developing "a purely academic and theoretical interest in theology." He goes on to say,

It is the simplest thing in the world to be interested in the body of Christian truth, in doctrine as such, merely as an intellectual matter; and it is a particular danger to some of us. . . . A man can be so absorbed in the intellectual apprehension that he forgets that he is alive, and forgets other people. . . . As I look back across some thirty years and more in the Christian ministry I have seen many instances of that. I have watched such people, and have seen a kind of intellectual pride, a pride of knowledge coming in. I have seen the tendency to compromise on the ethical and moral side, I have seen the note of urgency disappearing from their prayers. Though the original interest was right and good, gradually it mastered them. They lost their balance and became intellectualists who were no longer concerned about the idea of holiness and the pursuit of a true and living knowledge of God.³⁵

Again, Lloyd-Jones makes this discerning comment:

All Christians should believe in reading the Bible and in studying it diligently and regularly. And yet even the Bible, unless we are very careful, can become a danger and a snare in our spiritual lives. . . . If you ever find yourself approaching the Bible in an intellectual rather than a spiritual manner, you are already on the wrong road. To approach the Bible in a purely intellectual manner, to take it as a textbook, to divide up its chapters exactly as if you were analyzing a play by Shakespeare, is a very interesting pursuit. Indeed, nothing can be more exciting to a certain type of person. And yet if you once begin to approach it intellectually only, and not spiritually, it can become the cause of your damnation. The Bible is God's Book and a Book of Life. It is a Book that speaks to us a word from God. If, therefore, you find yourself looking

down at the Bible instead of looking up at it, you had better examine yourself urgently.³⁶

Adding his own word of warning, Philip E. Hughes cautioned against a misuse of the correct method:

All too often Scripture is treated anatomically, like a corpse in pickle to be dissected. It has become the preserve of the expert in the laboratory. Warned that trespassing is prohibited, the ordinary man is advised that he is not competent to understand and interpret the meaning of the Bible. . . . What is to be deplored is the loss of the mystery of Holy Scripture as dynamic and God-given, and therefore vital, and the removal of the Bible from the hands of the ordinary Christian who can make no claims to theological or technological expertise.

This is indeed a grievous loss, and it cannot be viewed with complacency because the survival of a whole way of life is at stake. While we believe that sound biblical exegesis requires both spiritual discernment and historical understanding, we dispute the assertion of some that the modern reader cannot understand, and knows he cannot understand, what the writers of the Bible are saying because his knowledge of the historical background is inadequate. Over and over again in the past, and still today in the present, the experience of any humble man or woman with the spiritual insight of faith proves that through the pages of the Bible, Jeremiah and St. Paul speak the message of God with power and meaning to the believing heart. In other words, apprehension of the message of Scripture requires spiritual insight; it does not wait on the acquisition of historical understanding, much though that is to be prized as an adjunct of spiritual insight.

The message of Scripture is addressed to everyman, and its focus is the person and work of Christ, who came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15).³⁷

The exposition of the words, the interpretation of the scripture in its fullness is one of the most vital and marvelous activities afforded any intelligent person. The earnest Christian will not resist the Holy Spirit in the application of the word to his life and to the lives of others. He will not grieve the Holy Spirit by mishandling the word of God and making of it a mere book of sermon texts. He will never allow himself to be drawn into the technical and academic meaning of the text apart from its living message as the word of life. The better interpreter that a man becomes, the more dangerous is this desire to be the master of the text. Such pride can lead to rationalism or to a cold and

impersonal presentation of the scripture. Yet, the fault when it is committed is not within the method but within the man who is doing the interpreting.

Another supposed limitation of the correct method is that it cannot adequately handle the figurative and symbolic features of the scripture. This is a failure to discriminate between the correct method as called literal and the false literalistic method. Of course, the correct method requires the interpreter to interpret every passage of scripture according to its own nature. This means that they will be interpreted normally according to their own literary character. Parables will be interpreted parabolically. Allegories will be interpreted allegorically, while symbols will be interpreted symbolically. In doing this the interpreter is simply following through the correct method of philological interpretation. No interpreter is forced to ignore the rich poetical and figurative passages within the Bible.

Finally, it is a frequent declaration today among sophisticated moderns that the grammatical-cultural method is damaged if not destroyed by the recent theories concerning language coming out of the linguistic analysis schools of philosophy. Capable defenders of the correct method are well aware of these technical theories and do not feel that they are destructive of man's ability to understand communications literally. Indeed, the very users of linguistic analysis with negative application to meaningful communication, especially spiritual terms, are forced to employ the philological method to argue their case.

Those who deny the possibility of human language being used for supernatural truth communication are right only in the *horizontal* plane. It is true that man would never be able to certainly and with assurance use terrestrial vocabulary to describe celestial truth. The Christian with his clear understanding of God the Father who loves to communicate with His children, finds no problem here. God the Father is completely able to use human language in coming to man with *His revelation* and giving meaningful truth in human vocabulary. The field is too complicated and difficult for most of the reading public to make sense out of it. It will not be considered here but in an appendix for those who might be interested in the area. In the meantime there seems to be no legitimate reason at all for forsaking the correct method which has been argued as the only method which is logical and which is universally applicable to all communication among mankind.

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QUESTIONS

1. T F Hermeneutical principles are coeval with man's creation like logic.
2. T F The grammatical-cultural method is warmly endorsed by outstanding Bible-believing Protestant scholars.
3. T F In modern times the grammatical-cultural method has not been the dominant method.
4. T F The objection to the correct method based on the term "mystery" in the scriptures is removed when the term is properly defined as meaning something that has to be disclosed by God, a secret.
5. T F The teaching of 2 Corinthians 3:6 is that we must not press the literal interpretation but just seek a "spiritual" meaning.
6. T F The failures and limitations of the correct method are just inherent in the method and have to be put up with.
7. Doedes gives a vivid description of the correct method in two words, _____.

8. The way to avoid the Scylla and the Charybdis of false interpretation is to follow the _____ method.

9. In Ensign's allegory of the well, the bucket of _____, suspended from the many-stranded rope of _____ is dropped into the water of the _____ which is kept pure by the walls of the _____ and _____. The action of exegesis is accomplished by the windlass of the _____ factor turned by the handle of the _____ factor.

10. As an illustration of the inductive process, Ensign shows that the identity of the "angel of Jehovah" in the Old Testament as the _____ is inductively sound.

11. Write out a paragraph of several sentences explaining in clear terms so that an ordinary person would understand each of the five factors of the correct method, a paragraph for each.

12. List the five steps in the inductive technique.

13. List four definite points which refute the neo-orthodox attack on the correct method.

14. State five advantages of using the correct method.

15. Do an inductive study of the meaning of the word mystery in the New Covenant writings to determine if the meaning is that scripture is mysterious and can have one meaning as well as another.

16. Write a paragraph showing that the basic factors in this chapter will not permit the meaning commonly assigned to 2 Corinthians 3:6 and state the correct meaning.

17. What did Carl F.H. Henry consider the "primary task of hermeneutics" to be? Do you agree? What Law that you have studied is the expression of this primary task?

18. What did Carl F.H. Henry declare would be the result of a denial "that revelation is propositional"? Why did he take this stand? Do you agree with him? If not, state your reasons.

19. What was Dr. Ellis' testimony as to the validity of the "Orthodox creed" (historic Christian theology) as founded in the Bible as it stands?

20. Why is Dr. Ellis' testimony especially valuable considering his theological position?

21. What was Dr. Ellis' only hope for removing the "Orthodox creed" from its Biblical foundation?

22. What system has been mentioned as exactly following Dr. Ellis' advice?

23. If Dr. Ellis came back after almost 100 years, would you suppose that he would be: a) dismayed at the hold of the Bible on people; b) puzzled by what is going on in Biblical studies; c) delighted with the success that his thought in 1882 has had in this day?

24. Have you ever personally sensed the danger that D.M. Lloyd-Jones states (p. 225) in regard to your approach to the Bible?

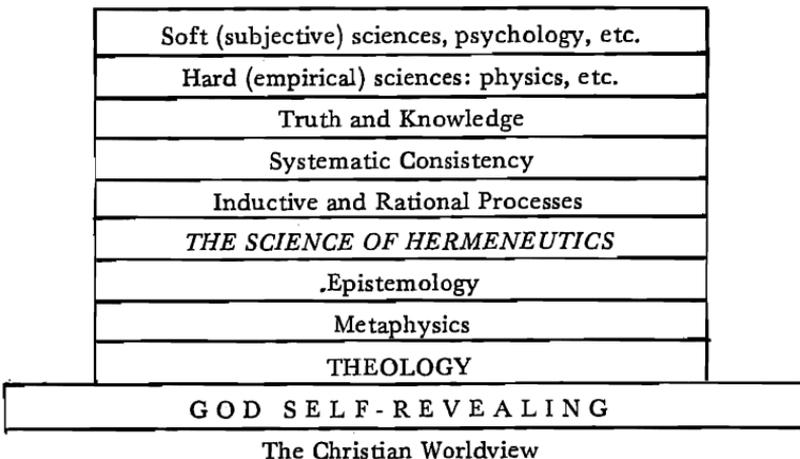
25. By this time in the study of this text have you come to a firm conviction and satisfying joy that *you* can understand the Bible?

26. If you believe that God wants and expects you to understand His written revelation, and if your eternal salvation depends upon your obedience of faith to the gospel, what attitude and action are you now holding relative to the earnest study of God's Word?

EXCURSUS

At this point in their studies, students often have questioned the objectivity and philosophical validity of that which has been presented as the scientific and correct method of interpreting scriptures. Some have a suspicion that this is all just a sectarian viewpoint or a discipline without philosophical grounding, "Just one of those things that Christians think up to protect themselves from the real world."

To answer these inquiries in an elementary yet adequate way, the author has used the following diagram (on an overhead projector). It sets forth the rationale for hermeneutics and locates it in the structure of the Christian worldview which is what Christians accept. This is our philosophy of life, and we believe it will not only stand critical testing but will prove to be the only true worldview in the end. The diagram should be read from the bottom up, line by line, as a ladder. All truth and reality rests upon the Absolute Ultimate Reality, God Self-Revealing. From this ultimate truth (presupposition) the whole of reality can be explained as flowing from the Infinite Mind of God in His written revelation and in His created world revelation. Without the ground on which this ladder rests, there can be no truth, knowledge, or science validated and authenticated. You will note that our subject of Hermeneutics is a mental science which would be *studied* after epistemology but which must be used along with logic as inherent mental processes to understand the word of God giving rise to theology.



The Place and Function of Language

The matter of religious language is one of the heaviest problems under discussion today, and there will be no attempt to take up the philosophical questions that might be raised in regard to the use of human language for transhuman or spiritual meaning. It is assumed that language has been provided by God as a means of communication among mankind, and today it is still useful and effectual. A variety of solutions are offered to the question of the use of language ranging from the opinion that religious language is non-sensical or false or literal. It is the purpose of the following statements to enable the interpreter of the scripture to recognize five particular attributes of religious language as it relates to the study of the Bible. The things that are uppermost in mind are the various descriptions of the Bible language. Some of these are drawn from the material in Donald Walhout's book, *Interpreting Religion*.¹

I. DESCRIPTIONS OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

Revelational

Accepting the Bible's own teaching, the Bible language must be described as revelational. It originates with the mind of God, for it is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16 NIV). The scripture declares that it is a verbal disclosure of the divine nature and the divine will. The revelational character of the scripture means that it is the truth of God and is to be taken with the utmost seriousness. Man is not the judge of the truth of God's revelation for it is superior to anything that man can suppose or know of himself. It supersedes man's ability to know. The scripture is the truth concerning God which is undiscoverable by man, yet it is not exhaustive of the nature of God. The interpreter needs to realize that the language he is interpreting originates from the divine author.

Literal

A second description of the language found in the Bible is literal. Charles Hartshorne has affirmed that language about God is to be taken literally.² Walhout believes that it would be better stated that statements about God have a literal base or a core of literalness. At any rate, the Bible-believing interpreter agrees that the Bible statements about God are very real and that God is the ultimate truth of all propositions concerning Him. An illustration is given of the word *wise* as used of man with various limitations and qualifications whereas with God the word *wise* is unlimited and absolute. Thus, in the scripture readers find the theological language concerning God to be firmly based in literal or real meaning. God is not just a spirit; but God is Spirit, the ultimate and absolute Spirit. Again, God is good; and He is the one who gives meaning and validity to goodness as that term is used among human beings because He is absolute goodness.

This affirmation is particularly connected with theological propositions and does not come into consideration in what is often referred to as devotional language. In devotional language, while there is truth presented, it is given in figurative and analogical ways. Assertions in the scripture concerning God that He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are literal statements or literal truth. That Jesus is the Son of God and One with the Father is a literal though metaphysical truth. The validity of the literal meaning of these metaphysical terms is found in the earlier

assertion that the language of the Bible is revelational. The interpreter must consider all such terms as literal unless strong reasons dictate otherwise.

Parabolic

Parabolic or figurative is the third description of language found in the Bible. This language is found especially in the devotional statements of scripture in poetic form, especially in the Psalms. When it is said that God makes the psalmist to lie down in green pastures, to lead him by still waters, and to protect him with his rod and staff, the proper classification would be parabolic. All types of figurative and metaphorical language would be included. The interpreter realizes that a comparison or a similarity with something else known to him is being established for the sake of communicating a truth. At the same time he realizes that it is not an exact, physical or literalistically true statement. It does seem clear that God has chosen to use parabolic and figurative language to teach lessons in a very vivid and helpful way. One has but to recall the parables of Jesus to see the value of this type of language.

Analogical

A fourth description of language used of God or by God is designated analogical. The principle of analogy has been widely used by the Roman Catholic scholars since the time of Thomas Aquinas. Analogy depends upon some factor which is common to two different subjects. Thus, it can be said that God loves His children, and a human father loves his children. In the word *love* is contained an analogous meaning, though the perfect and infinite love of God is far greater than the finite, imperfect love of the human father. There is a connecting link between two widely different subjects, and this connecting link carries a meaning from the one subject to another enabling the reader to grasp a better concept of the new or different subject, in this case, God. It can be said that God creates and that man creates. The creatorship of man is analogous to the creatorship of God, though it is obvious to all that there is enormous difference between the divine creatorship and the limited human creatorship.

A number of concepts expressed in human language in regard to man are capable of transfer by analogy to God. Such things as goodness and wisdom are found among men and by analogy are

predicated of God in a perfect and absolute sense. Being is a reality among men and by analogy is predicated of God as absolute and unconditioned Being. Geisler declares that those characteristics of the finite creation which can apply to the infinite God without qualification are subjects of analogy. But those which cause a contradiction are not analogous.

An infinite "rock" is a contradiction. Hence, "rock" may be said of God only *metaphorically* and not *metaphysically*. Only those terms whose univocal conception can be appropriately qualified, without being totally negated, for an application to the infinite can be *actually* predicated of God's essence. Everything else which flows from God can at best be applied to Him only symbolically.³

While the use of religious language is not exclusively analogical, yet analogical statements are a valuable characterization of religious language especially about God. It is particularly useful in formal theological propositions. Analogous language transfers a similarity between God and man while recognizing the great difference in the nature of God.

A good example of the use of analogy in the scripture to convey spiritual truth is Paul's use of marriage in Ephesians 5:22-33. While this is a teaching upon marriage and the interrelationship of the husband and the wife, yet Paul declares that it is grounded in the higher and more meaningful relationship of Christ and the church which is His bride. So He declares after indicating the human relationship, "This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32). Marriage in the human experience enables the human interpreter to understand the higher reality and spiritual meaning of the union of Christ and His bride.

Historical

Historical is the fifth descriptive term concerning religious language. The scriptures state certain matters in terms of literalness which indicates that they happened in time and space exactly that way. God is not removed from the world in His relationship to mankind and has given His revelation in conjunction with man. The religious statement, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4), is to be taken as an historical fact. Again, it is stated, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt

among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Thus did the Son of God become one with man through the incarnation. This truth, stated by God, is to be understood historically and literally.

Christian truth is grounded in the historical action of God in time and space for the purposes of redemption. Biblical Christianity is grounded in these historical events which for the most part were ordinary but in some cases were extraordinary or miraculous. The extraordinary disclosure of God's will and action in history as recorded in the scripture is to be accepted historically and not as a myth or mere symbolic expressions of something beyond the earthly meaning. It has not been established that there are myths within the scripture as a literary device of communication. The creation of the world by God — "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" — is a truth of history and to be taken at face value. That man fell into sin through eating the fruit of the forbidden tree is an historical report of what took place though it has profound theological significance for man and is basic to all biblical teaching. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave on the third day is one of the greatest truths of scripture and actually happened in time and space. It is not to be declared a fiction or a myth as some moderns seek to do.

From this discussion of the various kinds of religious language the interpreter begins to see the great value and necessity of understanding language. The various kinds of language play an important part in the communication of God's truth. This survey should give the Bible student a starting point in considering the use and understanding of religious statements as over against some of the false views that are propagated today. Scriptural truth is revelational in its origin and nature. The language is to be taken seriously and as truthful. Some statements are literally or metaphysically true while others are grounded in the historical-factual activity of God in the world and are historically true. Other statements are to be interpreted parabolically or figuratively and still others by analogy. These working designations should enable the interpreter to keep close to the meaning of the scripture as intended by God and as given through the human authors.⁴

II. THE LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

The interpreter has been encouraged to do all the work that he possibly can in the original languages of the scriptures. Even when he is not a reader of these languages, he may know a good deal about them and be able to refer to certain reference works that are based on the original language. It is quite helpful for the student of the scripture to be aware of the characteristics of the various languages used in recording the word of God.

Aramaic

The Old Covenant scriptures are written in Hebrew with the exception of a few passages in Aramaic. Two words of Aramaic occur in Genesis 31:47, one verse in Jeremiah 10:11, a longer passage in Daniel 2:4-7:28, and two sections in Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26. The passages in the Aramaic are witnesses to the cultural involvement with the principal language that covered a great area of the Near East. Aramaic became the dominant language throughout Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine, especially after the advent of the Persian empire. During the first century when Christ lived, the Aramaic had become a very strong language in the culture. Many scholars feel that Christ and the majority of the people in the Near East spoke Aramaic.

Hebrew

The Hebrew alphabet is made up of twenty-two letters, and the words are based on a three-consonantal verb root. That is, prefixes and suffixes have to be added to the basic three letters whether verbs or nouns. Originally the Hebrews did not have vowel letters other than possibly *waw* and *yodh*. The Hebrews supplied various vowel sounds to the consonants that appeared in the text. This may seem strange to modern readers, but with practice it can be done; and where a consonant structure could receive different vowel sounds, the context is used to determine the correct reading. This is much more indefinite than the Indo-European languages which have vowel letters used in the composing of words.

The Masoretes were Jewish scholars who particularly worked after the seventh century and who were concerned to preserve the historical reading of the text as it had been handed down from antiquity. They invented vowel signs or points to go along with

the consonants attempting to safeguard the ancient reading and meaning of the text. Since these vowel points were added into the text at a much later date, they are subject to critical question beyond that which would be proper for the consonants which go back to the original *inspired* words given through men. From the fact that only consonants were used in the original text there is the possibility of different meanings being given to the same set of consonants to a much greater degree than in the Greek of the New Testament scriptures. Yet, at the same time, this is not as extensive as might be supposed.

The English language is classified as an analytical type of language because it involves a specific order of words. The grammar is construed from the arrangement of the words in a sentence. In like manner, the Hebrew language is analytical and involves the order of the words for its grammatical sense.

Terry points out in a fine way the very dissimilar tense system of the Hebrew verb from that which is familiar to westerners. (For a detailed consideration of the tense-system, the reader is referred to pages 82-85 in M.S. Terry's book, *Biblical Hermeneutics*.) Hobart Freeman gives a good summary of the aspect of tense particularly in regard to what is called the prophetic perfect.

In classical Hebrew there are no tenses indicating time. The time of a verb is determined from the context. Instead of tenses there are two states, designated as "perfect" and "imperfect", indicating completed or incompleting action respectively. However, since the Hebrew perfect state indicates completed action, usually it is used to describe action or events in the past. The imperfect, expressing incompleting action, is normally used to express future events which obviously are incomplete, not yet having occurred. Nevertheless, the perfect, which indicates completed action, could also be used in future time when the speaker or writer wished to express confidence in the certainty of an event which was yet to take place. This is usually called a "perfect of confidence" or "perfect of certainty," as in Genesis 30:13: "And Leah said [upon the birth of a second son to Jacob], happy am I! for the daughters *will call* me happy" (cf. Num. 17:12; Gen. 28:11). The verb in this verse translated in the future tense as "will call" is actually a perfect indicating the event which has not yet occurred, as completed. The confidence of the speaker that the daughters would call her blessed was such that she spoke of it as having already taken place. This use of the perfect state occurs most frequently in prophetic language and is called the prophetic perfect. . . . This is because from the

standpoint of the unfailing divine purposes, the fulfillment of these events was regarded as so certain it could be spoken of by the prophet as perfected or completed as surely as if it had already occurred.⁵

Greek

The New Covenant scriptures were written in the Greek language. The Greek language has a history of some 3,000 years. The particular kind of Greek that the interpreter of the New Testament is concerned with is called *Koine*. This form extended from around 300 B.C. to 500 A.D. *Koine* means the common language and was a simplified version of the classical Greek. So the language of the New Testament was drawn from the use of the language in everyday life and commerce and was not the more formal, technical language of the schoolmen and grammarians. Perhaps this underscores the grand truth that the gospel of Christ, the New Covenant, is universal and for the people of the world to know and appreciate.

Friedrick Bleek declares:

It would have been impossible to give expression to all the religious conceptions and Christian ideas of the New Testament, had the writers strictly confined themselves to the words and phrases in use among the Greeks, and with the significations usually attached to them. These Christian ideas were quite unknown to the Greeks, and they had never formed phrases suitable to give expression to them. On the other hand, most of these ideas and conceptions already existed in germ in the Old Testament, and were more or less familiar to the Jews by means of appropriate designations. Hence they would be best expressed for Greek-speaking Jews in the words by which they had been rendered in the Septuagint.⁶

Greek is described as a synthetic language in which the word order is not as important as the word-endings. This is referred to as inflection. The Greek is different from the analytical English which Americans are familiar with and may be one of the reasons it is difficult to learn. The inflection is complicated, and this enables a greater precision of expression to be obtained. The German language is synthetic and more like the Greek.

Terry calls attention to the use of the Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew as the language used by God's inspired authors and declares their use is no mere accident of history but divine providence.

The fact that they have all ceased to be living languages since the inspired records they embody came to be recognized as a sacred trust, is truly significant. The means of ascertaining and illustrating the sense of these records are ample; and the divine oracles thus abide, sanctified and set apart in well-known forms of speech which can never again be disturbed by linguistic changes or the revolutions of empire. The Hebrew, like the temple at Jerusalem, will be studied as a wonder of the world. The temple's great and costly stones, its unique architecture, and divine plan and purpose — in all essentials a copy of the pattern shown to Moses in the mount of God (Exod. xxv, 40) — held notable analogy with the unique and expressive forms of Hebrew speech, in which words stand forth as sacred symbols, and grammatical constructions are made to suggest profoundest conceptions of the holiness of God and the redemption of mankind. . . . The Greek language, like the famous Parthenon at Athens, breathes a marvelous expressiveness, and abounds in models of beauty. But in its Hellenistic style and New Testament form we admire the divine wisdom, the deep philosophy, and the practical judgment, which appropriated the common dialect of a world-wide civilization, and consecrated its potent formulas of thought to preserve and perpetuate the Gospel.⁷

The importance of a good understanding of language is well stated by Mickelsen in his chapter entitled "Language."

The purpose of this chapter is to acquaint the interpreter with the basic elements in language. If he does not understand these elements and take them into account as he interprets, he may miss the real meaning of the Biblical passage. . . . If he understands how these Biblical languages are put together, the English equivalents in the more literal English translations will take on new significance. For the reader with some formal study in the Biblical languages, this survey may remind him of his need to be constantly aware of these building blocks of thought. True language consciousness on the part of the interpreter is essential.⁸

III. LEXICOLOGY

The great concern of the interpreter in regard to language is to understand the meaning of the words and the sentences in which the author has expressed his thought. This means that careful study must be made of what is called lexicology or the meaning of the words. There are many valuable resource books that have now been published on the Greek and Hebrew words of the Bible so that the careful interpreter has a number of splendid helps

especially if he is able to work in the original languages. For those who do not have a command of the original language, the exhaustive concordances by Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, or James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, are available with excellent help. W.E. Vine's work, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, and *The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament* are valuable tools.

Etymology

Under the study of words, the interpreter will consider the etymology of the word or words that he is investigating. Etymology is the study of the original form of the word or what is often referred to as the root. It involves a study of derivation from that primitive or radical form. Etymology is a significant beginning point for the study of words and, when properly done, may throw some light upon its meaning in its various derivations. Thus, the root *bapto* gives rise to a number of significant words such as *baptizo*, *baptisma*, *baptismos*, *baptistes*. It is widely agreed that the root has within it the idea of immersion, dipping, or plunging. Thus, by looking into the composition of the word as developed from a root or stem plus prefixes or suffixes, the interpreter is able to get a clue as to the meaning of the word.

Hermeneutical writers are agreed that the study of the etymological meaning of a word has limited value because it takes an expert knowledge in linguistics to do a thorough job and one that can be critically maintained. The origin of many words is in doubt and often debated among the scholars themselves. For example, the word for prophet used in the Old Testament, *nabhi'*, is assigned to four different roots by differing groups of scholars. Some find it stemming from an Arabic root, others from a Hebrew root, still others from an Akkadian root, and still others from an unknown Semitic root. The determination of the meaning of the word cannot be made from the questionable views concerning the root, and the interpreter has to go to the usage in the text to find the meaning. This is true of a number of etymological reconstructions. A popular but false etymology is often given of the word *news* as coming from the four points of the compass — north, east, west, and south. Thus *news* comes from all directions or from all over the world. This is ingenious but without support, for the word actually comes from something new ("What's new?") and goes back through the Latin *novus* to the Greek *neos*, something new in time.

Mickelsen says,

Ultimate etymological origin is usually wrapped in vague shadows. . . . Hence the interpreter must never consider etymology apart from usage. Since usage is so important, a safe rule for the interpreter is to leave etymology in the hands of the experts and to apply himself diligently to context and usage.⁹

There is a danger in the hands of the beginner in supposing that the etymological meaning will establish the correct meaning — that if he can only trace back the word to its root, he will have “proved” the actual meaning of the word. This is far from being true because words often have changed their meaning drastically over a period of time.

Terry gives an interesting illustration of seeking to determine the meaning of a term from its possible root. The word *epiousion* occurs in the prayer which the Lord taught the disciples (Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:3). Two possible derivations have been suggested,

One from *epi* and *ienai*, or the participle of *epeimi*, to go toward or approach; according to which the meaning would be, “give us our coming bread,” that is, bread for the coming day; tomorrow’s bread. This is etymologically possible, and, on the ground of analogy, has much in its favor. But this meaning does not accord with *semeron*, *this day* occurring in the same verse nor with our Lord’s teaching in verse 34 of the same chapter. The other derivation is from *epi* and *ousia*, *existence*, *subsistence* (from *eimi*, to be), and means that which is necessary for existence, “our essential bread.” This latter seems by far the more appropriate meaning.¹⁰

Ramm points out that the etymological study of prefixes and suffixes can be quite valuable in determining the meaning of controversial words. The example that he uses is the word inspired, *theopneustos* in the Greek, (2 Timothy 3:16) and is translated in most versions “inspired of God.” The question is raised as to what the ending *tos* does to a word.

German scholarship has put the emphasis upon the internal state of the prophet: he is an inspired man. After comprehensive research into the words ending with *-tos*, Warfield came to the conclusion that it emphasizes an inspired product, the Holy Scriptures. Thus *theopneustos* is not about man being inspired by God but God producing a Book.¹¹

Careful research into the etymology of a word helps one to understand compound words. It is helpful to realize that the word *church* comes from the Greek *ecclesia*. It is derived from the

word *ek* which means *out of* and *kalein* which means *to call or summon*. It was used in the Greek society to designate an assembly of the citizens of that community. It was a group gathered out from the crowd and was called properly or legally. This basic idea seems to carry over into the New Testament usage, for Christ's people make up an elect citizenry who meet in assembly according to the will of God and to glorify God.

Thus, it is clear that the study of etymology has some value for the interpreter but is more the field of the expert and actually gives only a measure of help in interpreting the words as actually used in any one context. A good summary on the use of etymological interpretation is offered by Mickelsen:

Beware of all etymological pronouncements that are not well supported by contemporary usage. Etymology used as a preface to a discussion on usage is helpful. But etymology is of no value when used to "prove" a particular meaning of a word in a particular context apart from usage. If usage is mentioned but the main stress is on etymology, the interpreter should still be wary. Etymology may sound erudite but when wrongly handled it leads to mistakes.¹²

A useful volume for the interpreter who is not a linguistic expert is the *Analytical Greek Lexicon* originally published by Samuel Bagster and Sons of England and printed in the United States by Harper and Brothers. This gives an alphabetical arrangement of every word in the Greek New Testament scriptures with a grammatical analysis of each word and indicating the root or stem from which it has been derived. This assists the student with at least a basic knowledge of Greek to get at some of the meanings of the word and something of the etymology.

IV. USAGE (USUS LOQUENDI)

Designation

The interpreter does have the assistance of various resource books in regard to the meaning of the words such as lexicons or dictionaries that offer definitions of words. These are based on research in the actual use of the language in the literature under investigation as well as the literature of the era or culture in which it is written. The dictionary definitions are useful, and yet the interpreter needs to be able to do some of his own checking on the definitions as well as getting at the meaning of the passage which

he is exegeting with his own critical mind. Thus Berkof comments:

The current signification of a word is of far more importance for the interpreter than its etymological meaning. In order to interpret the Bible correctly he must be acquainted with the significations which the words acquired in the course of time and with the sense in which the Biblical authors used them. This is the important point to be settled. Now it may be thought that this is easily done by consulting some good Lexicon, which generally gives both the original and the derivative meanings of the words, and generally designates in what sense they are employed in particular passages. And in most cases this is perfectly true. At the same time it is necessary to bear in mind that the Lexicons are not absolutely reliable, and that they are least so, when they descend to particulars.

.....
 If the interpreter has any reason to doubt the meaning of a word, as given by the Lexicon, he will have to investigate for himself. Such labors are undoubtedly very fruitful, but they are also extremely difficult.¹³

The older term for the investigation of the usage in its contextual and cultural setting was the Latin phrase *usus loquendi* which simply means the use in speaking. It involves the actual use of the language among individuals in a certain period of time. It is the observation of the way an author expresses himself and how the language is used in general use by the society of that time. The Latin phrase is now often replaced with the term *designation*. The meaning is the same in that the actual use of the language in communication is being determined by an inductive investigation of the examples which are available for study.

Terry is the most thorough of any of the recent writers in regard to the study of designation and the determination of the meaning of words. He rightly points out that the designation of words must be gathered from the context and the use of the language by many authors in any period of time. Many words change their meaning over the years. Terry calls attention to the fact that the word *sincere* was originally applied to honey which was "without wax," *sine cera* in the Latin.¹⁴ Again, the word *cunning* has moved from the original idea of knowledge or skill to have a bad connotation of deceptive trickery. The verb *let* has gone to the opposite meaning that it originally had — to hinder or obstruct something — and now means to give permission for something to take place. The word *prevent* that meant to go before

hand or prepare the way has changed its meaning to that of obstruction or interception. Thus, the interpreter realizes that the determination of the words that he is reading must be related to the time and culture of the author, his designation.

Ways to Determine Designation

Terry lists the following rules to determine the way authors express themselves and the meaning of words in particular writings at particular times.

Author's definition. The first way is to check to see if the author has defined his terms. In 2 Timothy 3:17 the word *artios* (perfect, complete) occurs, and it is the only place in the scripture where it is used. The rest of the sentence indicates the definition of the word, "that the man of God may be perfect, that is, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (KJV).

Another word for perfect or complete is the word *teleioi*. This is defined by the author of Hebrews as "those who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). Thus, the reference is to those who are mature Christians, who have grown up in the Lord; and the word is translated in the New American Standard by the term *mature*.

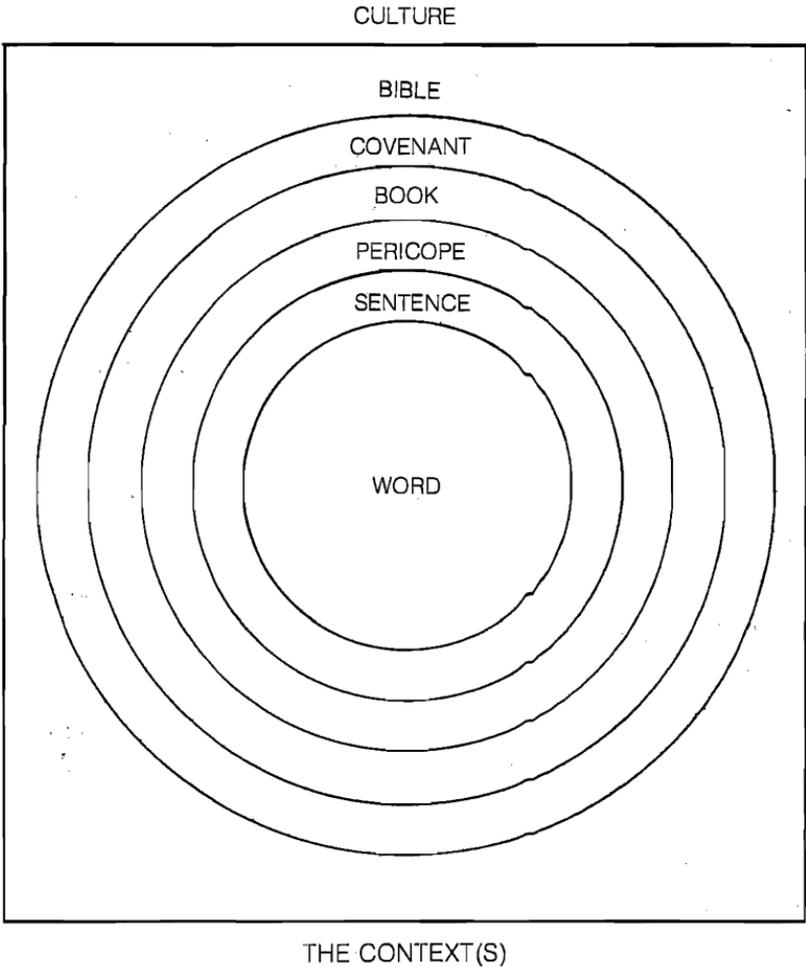
John warns Christians against the antichrist and defines his meaning, "one who denies the Father and the Son" (John 2:22). The definitions are given by Paul in Romans 2:28-29 as to the genuine Jew and the genuine circumcision:

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

From this statement one can realize the spiritual nature of the new person in God who is a Christian as over against the religious person, like the Jew, who emphasizes external ceremonies and forms. The writer of Hebrews 11:1 gives a statement of faith as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." He then goes on to give a denotative definition by calling attention to the great examples of faith to be found in the history of God's dealing with His people. So the interpreter should in every possible case seek to find out if the author defined his significant words or illustrated them.

Context. The second most important contribution to the understanding of an author's words will be the context. The

context naturally has great influence upon the meaning developed by the author within the paragraph or pericope. The matter of context has to be filled out because there is more than one context. (Note the following illustration.)



Beginning on the outer dimension of context stands *the culture* or the cultures in which the whole Bible text has been given through the centuries. This cultural context must not be ignored, and it is why cultural information was a major factor in the description of the correct method. This does not mean that culture is more important than the revelation of God through the cultural

vocabulary and historical circumstance. It only calls attention to the fact that the human, social, living aspect cannot be ignored in seeking the meaning of the terms that are employed.

Next, *the Bible* is the context in which all of the interpretation of particular words and sentences must be governed and defined. Any one passage of scripture must be interpreted in the light of all scripture. This is the actual intent of the statement so frequently made as a basic hermeneutical rule, scripture must interpret scripture.

Then, the wise interpreter realizes that the Biblical revelation is divided into different *covenants* or institutions of God's particular will for particular people. The scripture is not one will of God without discrimination. A person has to learn under what covenant he is living to find out the particulars of the will of God for him. Those living under the Abrahamic covenant had a distinctness and some conditions which were not applicable to those living under the Mosaic or Christian covenants. (A later chapter will deal with the matter of covenants because they are extremely important.) The question must always be asked of a passage of scripture as it is interpreted, under what covenant or particular constitution of God was this written and to whom does it refer? Grave errors are often made because people do not pay attention to the covenantal divisions and do not realize that everything listed in a former covenant is not necessarily binding upon the church today.

Coming closer to the sentence under investigation, the context is *the book* or the writing. Usually this will be a unit within itself with a well-defined purpose and a fairly clear outline of the contents so that particular words will be used in a way which fits in with the purpose of the author. The greater one's knowledge of the entire writing which is being studied is, the greater his ability to determine particular emphases and meanings that find expression in the author's words. This is why Adler strongly encourages a person to read through an entire book at once and as quickly as possible to get an over-view of the entire subject matter and purpose of the writing.

Then comes the consideration of the immediate context or *the pericope*. This is the most significant of all the contexts for the basic study of the word or the sentence that is being interpreted. The paragraph is a recognized unit of thought which is supposed to be in good authors a coherent and adequate exposition of a central thought or theme. Terry illustrates the great value of a clear

knowledge of the context of the pericope by referring to the meanings of the word *pneuma* as "wind" or "spirit." *Pneuma* is used in the New Testament to denote:

. . . the wind (John 3:8), the vital breath (Revelation 11:11), the natural disposition of temper of mind (Luke 9:55, Galatians 6:1), the life principle or immortal nature of man (John 6:63), the perfected spirit of a saint in the heavenly life (Heb. 12:23), the unclean spirits of demons (Matthew 10:1, Luke 4:36), and the Holy Spirit of God (John 4:24; Matthew 28:29; Romans 8:9-11).¹⁵

One can quickly determine from the immediate paragraph surrounding a sentence whether or not the *Holy Spirit* is being spoken of or an evil spirit. Sometimes the words evil and holy are adjoined to the word *pneuma* to enable the interpreter to more quickly identify the meaning. Even in the cases where this is not true, the context will usually identify the most obvious meaning. Sometimes it may be difficult to determine if the subject is the *pneuma* of a man or the *pneuma* of God. Close attention to the thought of the paragraph should resolve most of these questions satisfactorily. Other passages using the same word may throw light upon a controverted meaning.

One final definition of context is *the sentence* surrounding the word under consideration. This actually is more involved in the grammar of the word, its construction; yet the other words have meaning which does something to the meaning of the primary word under consideration. A word only has meaning as it stands in relationship to other words in a sentence. All of the words of a sentence would presumably have some reason for being there and carry some weight in the development of the thought of that sentence.

Thus, the word and the sentence which is studied for its meaning will be studied in an enlarging area of context through the pericope, book, covenant, Bible, and culture. The value of the contextual study is that it makes the interpreter face up to the guiding thought and design of the author. It cuts down the possibility of inserting one's own thought into words or sentences. As noted earlier, this has to do with the Law of Frame of Reference as derived from the context. In that discussion it was noted that an enormous amount of false interpretation was brought about by ignoring the frame of reference of the author. Thus, the context is a powerful guardian of the meaning of the author against unlawful intrusion of thought by the interpreter.

Great care should be taken to determine the true value and

significance of the context in all of its enlarging aspect. In connection with the use of the word *pneuma*, it is worthwhile to note that in Romans 7:6 the term *pneuma* is used; and the context is quite important in the determination of the word. Paul declares, "But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter." The subject in the context has to do with the law of Moses and the freedom from that law which Christians have obtained through Christ. The letter would refer to this Old Covenant, and the spirit would refer to the New Covenant under which Christians live. A question can be raised about capitalizing the spirit as in the *New American Standard Bible*. This may very well have the value of involving, on the one level, the spirit of the individual, emphasizing the inwardness of the New Covenant relationship with the personal Savior. It would not necessarily exclude the implication of the Holy Spirit who is given by the New Covenant to dwell within the Christian and to enable him to fulfill the new life granted by God. This thought is brought out more clearly in 2 Corinthians 3:3, 6, 8, 17.

Frame of reference. Another useful means of determining the particular usage or meaning of a word is to consider the author's frame of reference. This has already been pointed out as such a vital rule to correct interpretation that it was called a generic law. The subject that is under consideration will limit the possible meanings of a word in that context. A good example often cited is found in 2 Corinthians 5:1-4 where Paul is speaking about the present physical body and the fact that it will be dissolved or will perish. Nevertheless, he declares that Christians are going to have a building from God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. It has been supposed by some that Paul is speaking here of heaven and that the building from God is heaven itself. This is made less than plausible by the fact that the human body is being discussed under the figure of a tabernacle or tent which is upon the earth. It is, therefore, wise to see if the heavenly or eternal building is not also a tent-like covering which is given to the saints after this life. The body of the person, a Christian, is the continuing subject of this passage.

The interpreter must make a careful study to determine the primary subject or frame of reference of the passage to determine the exact value of the terms and the imagery being used in connection with that subject. This is an essential principle to be followed if there is to be any sound interpretation of the

passage. Another illustration of this principle is found in the meaning of "unfruitful works of darkness" (Ephesians 5:11). There are those who interpret this passage to mean that faithful Christians must not accept, share with, or associate with people who are teaching misinterpretations of the scripture, who are in "doctrinal error." The "unfruitful works of darkness" are assumed to be erroneous views of scripture or practices which are considered by some to be unscriptural. Yet, when the frame of reference is gathered from the context, it shows that the apostle has been talking about sinful practices carried on by the pagans in the society in which Christians had to live. Christians are being warned not to be partakers of these sins because Christians are of the Spirit and are righteous. Paul says in verse 12, "It is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret." Again, in verse 15 he says, "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise." Thus, the subject in this passage rules out the possible understanding of this as enjoining Christians not to associate with other Christians simply because they have some erroneous ideas about some teaching of scripture.

A further illustration of the value of this rule is found in regard to assertions made about John's use of the term "walking in the light" which is found in the first epistle of John. John declares, "If we walk as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). There are those who try to make this mean that a Christian dare not walk (associate) with anybody who is unenlightened in the word of God or who has doctrinal error. It is asserted that Christians must be doctrinally pure, that is having the light, if there is to be any association among them.

The obvious fact that no Christians have absolute certainty and complete agreement upon *every* teaching of scripture makes such an interpretation illogical. A consideration of the use of the term "the light" by John in this context will indicate that he is not talking primarily of doctrinal purity but about the nature of God as pure and holy. In verse 5 he declares that "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." John makes a number of contrasts between those who are in the light and those who are in the darkness. It becomes clear that to be in the light is to be in God, in relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ. The emphasis, especially in chapter 3, is far more upon Christian lives and practices than upon particular doctrinal beliefs and

agreement. While doctrine is not to be minimized as a very important aspect of Christian life and growth, yet John is emphasizing the higher and vital relationship of children of God to the Father in the pureness and holiness of God's nature.

Contrast. Contrast or antithesis can help in determining the meaning of the words. This simply means to consider whether in the context the author has not provided some comparisons to establish the meaning which he has wanted to convey and by showing opposites to clarify his meaning. Such a case is found in Romans 8:1-13 where Paul is contrasting the flesh and the spirit, the old man and the new man relative to the life which is now in Christ. By considering the contrast which Paul establishes throughout these verses, it is quite clear that the life of the Christian is to be one lived in the Holy Spirit and to be a godly and holy life surrendered to God whereas the flesh is the living in an unregenerate condition contrary to God's will and not knowing His righteousness. The "flesh" is not the *soma* or body because Christians continue to live in a body and to have a fleshly body. The Christian does not live according to a flesh *principle* which is the antithesis of living in the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul indicates in Romans 5:12-21 seven contrasts between what took place under Adam's transgression and Christ's redemptive act. The interpreter can make two columns of contrasting figures which issued from the action of Adam and Christ. The same thing can be done in 2 Corinthians 3 where the apostle is giving the contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant. Two columns of comparisons may be made between the descriptions of the old and the new covenants beginning especially at verse 6.

Another example of learning from antithesis or contrast is found in Paul's contrast between the old and the new covenants under the figures of Hagar and Sarah (Galatians 4:21ff). These are developed in sharp antithesis so that one can learn from the opposite meaning as well as the synonymous meaning of the terms used to describe one covenant or the other.

Parallelism. The meaning of words, especially in the Hebrew scripture, is often defined by the use of parallelism. The Hebrews did not have the modern form of poetry with rhyme and meter but depended upon a mental construction in which thoughts were placed parallel to each other. This is especially true of synonymous parallelism where the same thought is repeated in different words and of antithetical parallelism where an opposite

or contrasting thought is placed against the first statement. An illustration of this is Lamech's sword-song to his wives,

Adah and Zillah, listen to my voice,
 You wives of Lamech, give heed to my speech,
 For I have killed a man for wounding me;
 And a boy for striking me; (Genesis 4:23)

This is an example of synonymous parallelism in that Adah and Zillah addressed in the first line are identified in the second line as being the wives of Lamech. The last two lines are also synonymous and indicate that Lamech did not kill two men but only one who is more distinctly identified in the second clause as a young man.

There are many examples of synonymous parallelism in the book of Psalms. Psalm 83:1-3, for example, declares:

O God, do not remain quiet;
 Do not be silent, and, O God, do not be still.
 For, behold, Thine enemies make an uproar;
 And those who hate Thee have exalted themselves.
 They make shrewd plans against Thy people,
 And conspire together against Thy treasured ones.

A brief consideration of these lines, especially when written in a parallel poetic form, indicate how one line explains the other and how words used in one line are defined more particularly in another line. Scholars who have studied the words used in parallelism have found that very often the author will use a common word or general word which is then followed by a more difficult or unusual word. The enemies in verse 2 are further identified in the parallel line as those that hate God.

Another example of this informative parallelism is found in Psalm 18:6.

In my distress I called upon Jehovah
 And cried to my God for help;
 He heard my voice out of His temple.
 And my cry for help before Him came into His ears.

In this parallelism God is identified by His covenant name Jehovah. The call of distress upon Jehovah is then defined as a cry. Thus, there is a reinforcement of the thought.

In the book of Proverbs, there are a number of cases of both synonymous and antithetical parallelism often indicated by the conjunction *but*. Some good examples of this are found in Proverbs 12:1-5.

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
But he who hates reproof is stupid.
A good man will obtain favor from the Lord,
But He will condemn a man who devises evil.
A man will not be established by wickedness,
But the root of the righteous will not be moved.
An excellent wife is the crown of her husband,
But she who shames *him* is as rottenness in his bones.
The thoughts of the righteous are just,
But the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.

It does not take a great deal of effort to see how by antithesis in the parallel thought the words are sharpened in their meaning. The good man who is favored of the Lord is the opposite of the man of wicked devices. The good man is a man of uprightness, honesty, and openness. In verse 4, the virtuous woman is a crown to her husband, and her opposite number is described as one that makes ashamed, that lives an immoral or a disgraceful life which brings rottenness to the bones of her husband.

Still another example is found in Proverbs 10:1-5.

The proverbs of Solomon.
A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.
Ill-gotten gains do not profit,
But righteousness delivers from death.
The Lord will not allow the righteous to hunger,
But He will thrust *aside* the craving of the wicked.
Poor is he who works with a negligent hand,
But the hand of the diligent makes rich.
He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely,
But he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.

An example of synonymous parallelism would be Psalm 22:27:

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord,
And all the families of the nations will worship before Thee.

The ends of the earth here are identified as the nations or the Gentiles out over the earth. Psalm 104:6 declares, "Thou didst cover it with the deep as with a garment;" and the following line identifies it as "The waters were standing above the mountains," and this became the covering for the earth, probably referring to the flood.

In the New Testament there are examples of parallelism even in the instruction of Jesus that was not poetic in its form. In John 6:35, Jesus declares, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me

shall not hunger." This coming to the Lord Jesus is then identified more sharply in the next parallel, "And he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

Again, Jesus declares in John 6:44, "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." From this verse alone it has been assumed by some that God has to do some miraculous work of grace upon the heart of the unbeliever to enable him to come to Him. However, the continuing thought is expressed in a parallelism in verse 45, "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Every one who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me." Thus the drawing power of God is expressed through the word of God and to people willing to listen to the voice of God.

Another parallelism is detectable in Jesus' statement in John 10:1-3:

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.

But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.

To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.

Subject and predicate. Another way to determine how words are being used and with what meaning, given by Terry, is to see how subject and predicate serve to explain one another. In Matthew 5:13, where it is stated that "if the salt has become tasteless," the meaning of the verb *moranthe* is determined by the subject *halas* which is salt. However, the very same verb changes its meaning with a change of subject in Romans 1:22 when it is said, "professing to be wise they became foolish," for it would not make good sense to translate this "tasteless." Thus a consideration of the grammatical subject and the verbs, adjectives, and adverbs used with it will help to give the interpreter a correct view of the use of the word.

Parallel passages. It has already been pointed out under the generic Law of Harmony that no interpretation of scripture can be legitimately done without reference to all that God's revelation discloses upon a subject. The interpreter must collate all of the relevant statements of scripture upon his particular subject of inquiry and in the light of that total witness determine the meaning of the word within its immediate context.

Of first significance in this collation of usage in the scripture will be the author's own use of the terms in other portions of his writing. This will enable the interpreter to see how the author used the word in other places besides the one under immediate investigation. The apostle Paul uses the word "grace" a great many times, and it is a key term with him. A collation of Paul's usage and a careful analysis of the meaning will establish the Pauline *usus loquendi* of the term. This will form a basis for comparison with other writers who also use the word "grace."

John uses the word "love" extensively, and by a careful examination of all the passages where John uses "love" the exegete is able to know what John means by "love." A comparison of the use of "love" by John will indicate a strong similarity to Paul's use of the word "grace."

When the apostle Paul in Romans 13:12 exhorts Christians to put on the armor of light — "let us put on the armor of light," — he is indicating a difference in what Christians are to be clothed in — not the garments of darkness which are called the "works of darkness." Upon examination, the scripture discloses that Paul used this same imagery in regard to the Ephesian Christians. In writing to them he declares, "Take up the whole armor of God" and then proceeds to describe in detail the equipment that the Christian is to wear for his protection and his service as a soldier of God (Ephesians 6:13-17).

It is within this connection of the Law of Harmony and the use of parallel passages that the long-standing principle of Biblical interpretation that the scripture is its own best interpreter is to be applied. By no means does this declare that other resources of knowledge should not be utilized, but it does say that the revelation of God is a thorough-going disclosure of God and His truth for man. The Biblical statements and the Biblical interpretations of previous revelation by God are always the final meaning of such statements. Man must not intrude his own thinking as superior to the judgment of the Bible. The wise exegete always goes to the Bible first to gather inductively the total revelation given by God on the subject matter. This is always the beginning point, and the Bible must be allowed to speak fully its truth upon the subject before man begins to propose any modification or interpretation of the subject.

There are different types of parallels that are recognized in the

scripture. There are *verbal parallels* where the very same words are used. The words can be the same word in the original language, or they may be different in the original and be translated by the same English word. The word "love" is an English word which comes from either one of two Greek words, *agapao* or *phileo*. There are distinctions within these synonyms; and while they both mean love in a general sense, the thorough-going interpreter is going to allow the particular nuance or emphasis of the word to be made clear and have its full effect.

At the same time the exegete must be cautious in assuming that the same word will always have the same meaning. Words have different meanings in different contexts. The same word will be used over and over again with varying force and significance. Thus, the word "spirit" does not always appear to be a true parallel though in the original it will be the Greek word *pneuma*. In some cases the word *pneuma* is simply translated "wind" while in other cases it is translated "spirit." The context will often have to be examined to learn whether *pneuma* refers to the wind, the spirit of man, the spirit of God, or the spirit of demons.

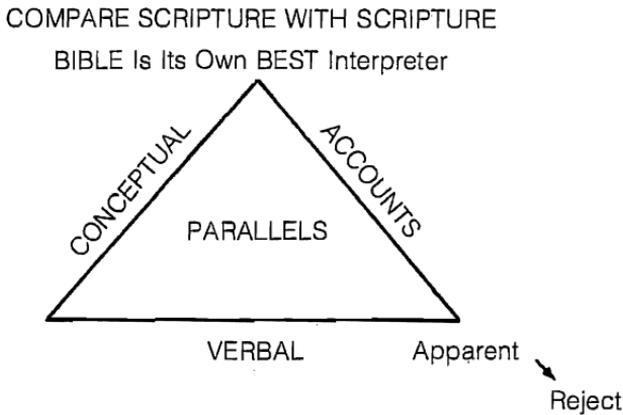
The careful student of the scripture will examine each verbal parallel to be certain that it is real and not just apparent. *Apparent* parallels are superficial and are not identical with the original word being investigated. This is why under the inductive method it was stated that each datum of information must be analyzed to be sure that it is relevant and an actual part of that particular subject. A mere list of enumeration of all similar sounding terms gives rise to false conclusions.

A second kind of parallels is *conceptual (thought) parallels*. The same words are not used, but the thought is very similar and supplements or complements the information derived from other statements. The teaching of the Bible on the deity of Christ, the Christian life, or the church will not be found in one place nor be given in the identical terms but will be a composite, harmonious thought when assembled. Again, it is necessary to establish the relevance of the parallel thought before admitting it to the inductive process.

A third kind of parallel is that of *parallel accounts* or that which records the same basic information. This does not have to be verbal in its parallelism, but it will be the same event being reported or a statement of a teaching which is very close to that

found in other scripture. The most familiar example of parallel accounts to every reader of the New Testament is the synoptic gospels — Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The word synoptic indicates that they see with the same eye. Thus, they are reporting many of the same teachings of Jesus and many of the same events in the life of Jesus. By reading the accounts as found in two or more of the synoptics (and sometimes even found in John as a fourth parallel account), the exegete is able to have a fullness and a depth of understanding that would be impossible with a single account. The serious exegete will want to have a harmony of the gospel accounts for study. One of the best in English is *A New Harmony of the Gospels* by Albert C. Wieand.¹⁶

In the Old Testament the book of Kings is parallel in historical material to the book of Chronicles. However, they are dissimilar



in the purposes for which they were written. It is held by many scholars that Kings was written by a prophet while Chronicles was written by one not holding the office of prophet, perhaps a priest. A useful harmony of these historical parallels is found in Crockett's, *A Harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles*.¹⁷

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is given three times in the book of Acts. In Acts 9 it is recounted by Luke while in Acts 22 and Acts 26 Paul himself reports the experience. These are similar accounts of the same event; but there are differences in them which, when put together, indicate both the authenticity of the historical event and enable the student to have a fullness of understanding.

Thus, the appeal to parallels, whether they be verbal, conceptual, or of accounts, furnishes the interpreter with a valuable means of getting at the actual meaning of words and sentences as found in other places. It is a common sense rule that has been reiterated many times that the clearer and more elaborate discussion of any topic will illuminate and be used to explain the more obscure or doubtful passage.

Ancient versions. Almost ranking as another type of parallel is the valuable contribution to the understanding of the meaning of terms as set forth in translations of the scripture. The most ancient translation of the scripture extant is the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, accomplished around 250 B.C. in Alexandria. This translation enables the interpreter of the Hebrew text to have an appreciation of the meaning of the terms as understood by the Jewish scholars of the third century B.C. The Latin Vulgate made by Jerome is valuable in interpreting the Old Testament, because Jerome reflects the understanding of Jewish scholars in the third century A.D.; and his use of Latin terms to translate the Hebrew terms is instructive as to the probable meaning.

In the New Testament text there are various translations into other languages which the interpreter who has command of these languages can appeal to for information. However, these versions never have a superiority to the language of the original, and there are many errors or misunderstandings which have crept into these versions in spite of their good intentions. If the Bible usage can be determined from the context or from other Biblical passages, the meaning is far more certain than the testimony of a number of versions.

V. SYNONYMS

The study of synonyms is similar to the study of conceptual parallels, only they are limited to terms instead of statements. Synonyms are a fascinating and useful study in coming to a better understanding of the intention of the author in his expression of thought. The scriptures are rich in the use of synonyms. For example, in the Old Testament there are eleven different Hebrew words for kindling a fire and seven synonyms for killing or putting to death. (In the commandment, "You shall not kill," the word is actually "murder.") The Hebrew writer had twelve different words to express various degrees or types of sin. In the

New Testament there are seven Greek words for prayer, three terms for new, two for love, three for life, and nine terms for sin.

Much effort has gone into the study of such terms with similar meanings. Girdlestone's book, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*,¹⁸ is a useful introduction to synonyms of the Old Testament, while Trench's text, *Synonyms of the New Testament*,¹⁹ is equally valuable for the New Testament. These are somewhat dated texts, and W.E. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*²⁰ is a most helpful supplement. Analytical concordances are valuable because they will list the various synonyms which have been translated with the same English word. Lexicons will often discuss synonymous terms. Kittel and Friedrich's massive work, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*,²¹ is the most authoritative source of information on both the meaning of words and their relationship to others including synonyms.

The chief value of the study of synonymous terms or expressions is that the author communicates to the reader a far more effective understanding of his mind in the matter. Synonyms naturally give an elaboration of the thought.

The use of synonyms by different authors, such as the synoptic writers, frequently clears up an obscurity or misunderstanding that may develop over a difficult expression. There are those interpreters who attempt to make a sharp distinction between the use of the "kingdom of heaven" by Matthew and the "kingdom of God" by Mark and Luke. This does not seem to be at all supported by a consideration of the passages in the Greek text of the synoptics in which terms for the kingdom are used, either the word kingdom or synonymous expressions. While there may be some slight differentiations to be made between these various synonyms (for each presumably has some nuance of thought), still they are not to be set apart but harmonized, noting their complementary nature. Two examples which are found within the gospel illuminate this particular point. In Matthew 20:21 Christ is said to be seated "in His kingdom" whereas in the parallel verse in Mark 10:37 He is spoken of as seated "in His glory." This would indicate that glory and kingdom are interchangeable for the purpose of expressing the power and majesty of Christ in His reign. Again, in Matthew 18:9 the words are spoken of those who "enter into life" while in Mark 9:47 the expression is "to enter into the kingdom of God." From this the reader learns that to have life is the same thing as being in the kingdom of God.

One of the very valuable and interesting examples of synonyms

in the New Testament is found in regard to the two words for new, *neos*, and *kainos*. While these terms have some marked similarity indicating newness and both are applied to the new man in Christ and the New Covenant, yet a discriminating examination of usage indicates that *kainos* denotes newness in quality, nature, and kind. *Neos* indicates that which is new in regard to time, something fresh or young. This is borne out in Matthew 9:17, "They put new (*neon*) wine into new (*kainous*) skins." The new wine is that which has been freshly made from the grapes of the harvest and is not a strange or different kind of wine, but the wineskins are those that have never been put to this use. The skin bottles are new to this liquid that is being put into them.

The New Covenant is called by the word *kainos* almost always instead of *neos* because the covenant of the Lord Jesus Christ is new in character and quality, not a mere outgrowth of the Old Covenant or a remodeling of an old covenant. It is wholly new in its features and essential characteristics as is beautifully and thoroughly brought out in the book of Hebrews.

In regard to Christ's promise to be with His people in an exceptional and spiritual way through the Lord's Supper, He indicates in Matthew 26:29 that He will drink a *kainos* wine with them. "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new (*kainon*) with you in My Father's kingdom." This would indicate a higher and remarkable character imparted to that fruit of the vine, beyond that even of the passover feast which Jesus used to institute the Lord's Supper.

It is instructive to observe Ramm's commendation of synonyms and also his warning:

There is not only exegetical clarity introduced by noting what words are synonyms and what expressions or even passages are synonymous, but there is a warning about the manner in which we understand theology. If the New Testament shows a flexibility in its vocabulary then our theology ought to reflect this flexibility. Or stated in another way, if we pack too much meaning into one specific word in scripture we will then be embarrassed when confronted with synonyms of that word which in turn undermines the theology we have tried to pack into that one word.²²

It is useful for the student of scripture to consider synonyms and synonymous expressions but with the realization that they are not to be exalted out of proportion to their actual contribution to the meaning. Mickelsen warns against making too fine

distinctions in synonyms not supported by the context. The many "ingenious insights" which some believe they find in a study of the synonyms are not fairly implied in the text itself. "The fine distinctions then become only human cleverness and are actually rationalism in a spiritual guise. Such practices deceive many into accepting interpretations that have no basis except in some interpreter's imagination."²³ If the ordinary meaning or simple meaning of the terms within the context is adequate, there is no reason for reading into the terms some mystical meaning or hair-splitting distinctions. By all means, learn as much as you can about synonyms and allow them their due force; but do not exaggerate them into heavily loaded theological concepts which they do not normally imply.

VI. GRAMMAR

All the teachers of hermeneutics have been in agreement that the better grammarian a student is the better the interpretation he can give. It will have more strength and depth because of careful consideration of the syntax. The importance of this study cannot be overemphasized, but the limitations of space will prevent extensive treatment of it in this book. It is a life-time study and involves a great deal of research and application. The finest brief source for consideration of biblical grammar is found in Mickelsen's book, *Interpreting the Bible*, pages 129-158. He goes into a thorough treatment of the verbs, nouns, and clauses in both the Greek and the Hebrew. The student who is working in the original languages will be helped by this excellent and scholarly survey of the relationship of words.

Without becoming too technical or giving extensive treatment, it is desirable for the student to be familiar with the involvement of grammar in the correct understanding of the meaning intended by the author. The selection of his words and the organization of his thoughts in grammatical forms is obviously an important part of his communication. The exegete's understanding of all that is involved in this composition will contribute to a more accurate appreciation of the author's thought.

Definitions

The word *grammar* is a word indicating the study of language in its various inflections, relationships, and functions within a sentence. It broadly covers all the matters of relationship of words

to each other. The term *syntax* is used with a more specific meaning and studies the arrangement of the word forms in the sentence, indicating more of the thought relationships. Mickelsen says,

Syntax is a study of thought relations. These elements in thought cannot be analyzed as the various chemicals in hard water are analyzed. But syntactical categories (if they are not treated mechanically) enable us to penetrate thought to a degree impossible to one unacquainted with syntactical procedures.²⁴

Thus the study of the *grammatical* use of language will involve the formation of words, their sound, and their construction, while the word *syntax* more technically involves the construction or arrangement of the words for the purpose of conveying thought.

Biblical Grammar

The Bible writers present the basic elements for the grammar or their use of grammar. The interpreter must consider the biblical usage above the mere academic and theoretical usage. Davidson brings this out when he says,

... the laws of language as observed by the writers of scripture should be mainly attended to by the sacred interpreter, even though the philosophical grammarian may not admit them all to be correct. It is the *usus loquendi* of the inspired authors which forms the subject of the grammatical principles recognized and followed by the expositor. The grammar he adapts is deduced from the use of the language employed in the Bible.²⁵

With these distinctions in mind between the general and broader term *grammar* as over against the stricter term *syntax*, the reader is reminded that several parts of investigation of *usus loquendi* had a bearing upon the grammatical meaning of the scripture. Some of those principles will be utilized in a grammatical investigation. The purpose is to see the author's thought in its grammatical connections of subject, predicate, and clauses. The failure to realize these interacting elements hinders the understanding of the author's thought. Terry reminds the interpreter:

The position of words and clauses, and peculiarities of grammatical structure, may often serve to emphasize important thoughts and statements. The special usage of the genitive, the dative, or the accusative case, or of the active, middle, or passive voice, often conveys a notable significance. The same is also true of

conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions. These serve to indicate peculiar shades of meaning, and delicate and suggestive relations of words and sentences, without a nice apprehension of which the real sense of a passage may be lost to the reader.²⁶

The interpreter who is able to work in the original languages will find a number of valuable tools in the scholarly grammars that have been developed and to which constant reference is required. The student of the scripture in the English should use one of the very literal translations such as Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*, *The American Standard Version* (1901), or the *New American Standard Bible*. By observing the grammatical construction in these literal translations, the interpreter can discern a number of these relationships which existed in the original syntax.

For the interpreter who only knows the basics of the Hebrew or Greek languages, there are some tools which provide help in regard to the construction of the grammar or the influence of it in regard to the meaning of the words which in many cases is considerable. A resource available for parsing all of the verbs of the New Testament and enabling the beginning student to determine some of the grammatical forms involved is *A Parsing Guide to the Greek New Testament* by Nathan E. Han.²⁷ It is very useful for the student who has some basic grasp of the original language to have scholarly, exegetical commentaries which will indicate the syntactical relations and discuss the meaning of the basis of these relationships. The superior interpreter will always be studying his grammars and seeking to secure the most accurate understanding that is possible from the syntax employed by the author.

A particularly significant and valuable element of the grammar is found within the tenses of the verbs especially in Greek. Charles B. Williams' translation of the New Testament is highly recommended as an outstanding translation as far as the tenses are concerned.²⁸ For the English reader it is of great help in getting the full thrust of the tenses of the verbs. Winer, a famous German grammarian, comments:

With regard to the tenses of the verb, New Testament grammarians and expositors have been guilty of the greatest mistakes. In general the tenses are employed in the New Testament exactly in the same manner as in Greek authors. The aorist marks simply the past (merely occurrence at some former time — viewed, too, as momentary), and is the tense employed in

narration; the imperfect and pluperfect always have reference to secondary events connected in respect to time with the principal event (as relative tenses); the perfect brings the past into connection with the present, representing an action in reference to the present as concluded. None of these tenses, strictly and properly taken, can stand for another, as commentators often would have us believe.²⁹

As an example of the contribution of tenses to the thought of an author, Terry indicates how the *King James Version* often obscures the aorist tense such as found in 2 Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (KJV).

The *if* is now allowed to be in error in the text and should be omitted. The verse should then be translated: "For the love of Christ constrains us, having judged this, that one died for all; therefore the all died." The first verb, *constrains* (*sunechei*), is in the present tense, and denotes the then present experience of the apostle at the time of his writing: The love of Christ (Christ's love for man) now constrains us ("holds us in bounds" — Meyer); and this is the ever-present and abiding experience of all like the apostle. *Having judged* (*krinantas*) is the aorist participle, and points to a definite judgement which he had formed at some past time — probably at, or soon after, his conversion. The statement that one *died* (*apethanen*, aorist singular) for all, points to that great historic event which above every other, exhibited the love of Christ for men. *Ara hoi pantes apethanon, therefore the all died* — "the all," who meet the condition specified in the next verse, and "live unto him who for their sakes died and rose again," are conceived as having died with Christ. They were crucified with Christ, united with him by the likeness of his death (Rom. vi, 5, 6). Compare also Col. iii, 3: "For ye died (not ye are dead), and your life is hidden (*hekruptai, has become hidden*) with Christ in God." That is, ye died at the time ye became united with Christ by faith, and as a consequence of that death ye now have a spiritual life in Christ.³⁰

Terry adds this insightful footnote on the subject of the union with Christ in His death:

When Christ died the redeeming death for all, all died, in respect of their fleshly life, with him; this *objective* matter of fact which Paul here affirms has its *subjective* realization in the faith of the individuals, through which they have *entered into* that death-fellowship with Christ *given* through his death for all, so that they have now, by means of baptism, become buried with him (Col. ii, 12). — Meyer, in loco.³¹

The serious student of language will derive considerable help from the surveys of syntax which are offered by Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (pages 91-99) and from Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (pages 131-58). Even more elaborate instruction is available in the technical grammars. A warm and encouraging note of commendation to the exegete is offered by Mickelsen,

A few examples will show that syntactical labels are not dry categories of embalmed thought. Rather, they describe vital possibilities of living thought. Not only was the language of the Bible spoken, but it still speaks. God is conveying His thoughts to us through this language. He does not use some ethereal language, but Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. He uses the thought patterns of His chosen servants. Hence syntax is indispensable for our understanding of ideas.³²

VII. GENRE OR LITERARY PATTERN

The French word *genre* has been found useful to describe an important area of literary usage which is not properly found under the area of grammar. The word *genre* points toward the literary character or style of the writing. It has the meaning of genus, style, or pattern. Ramm pays much more attention to the area of classification and understanding of this type of material in its stylistic expression than any of the other writers. He is correct when he declares that it is indispensable for the correct understanding of the thought of the author whether of scripture or other writings.

This is a very large and significant consideration because much depends upon the classification of the material in its literary pattern as to how it is to be interpreted. Is a writing poetry as Milton's *Paradise Lost* or is it prose like this particular book you are reading? Is it history or fiction? How did the author intend for his message to be understood?

When one begins to read John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, he is informed on the title page about the nature of the writing — The Pilgrim's Progress from this world to that which is to come delivered under the similitude of a dream. This is brought into sharper focus when Bunyan says in "The Author's Apology for his Book," "And thus it was: I writing of the way/ And race of saints, in this our gospel-day/ Fell suddenly into an allegory/ About their journey, and the way to glory . . ." ³³ Thus the reader

is prepared to read this work as an allegory and to understand much more of it.

C.S. Lewis wrote a remarkable book entitled *Till We Have Faces*.³⁴ A subtitle informs the reader about the genre of the work, "A Myth Retold," and the reader is ready to understand this story as not a factual story but a fictitious story told to teach valuable lessons.

Many writings do not have the subtitles that these works have, and the reader is often required to determine the genre of a writing from a close study of the contents and how it has been interpreted by competent readers. When one is reading the Psalms, it is not too difficult to realize that this is poetic expression, while in reading Philippians one is struck by the prose in a letter form. But what is the genre of the book of Jonah? Is it to be understood as history, myth, allegory, parable, or some other literary form? A great many moderns refuse to accept it as historical, but it has been understood as historical material from ancient times and was so interpreted by the Lord Jesus Christ. His use of it as a prophetic sign or type of His own resurrection seems to underscore its literal and historical character. Many moderns do not allow any supernatural action by God and so classify Jonah as a parable, an allegory, or a myth. Naturally, such a view will affect the reading and use of the material.

Again, a great deal of argumentation has been held over the genre of the gospel accounts. Some scholars contend that they are pre-literary compositions, simply a compilation of various sayings and teachings of Jesus, a reporting of His activities as they supposedly happened. Others contend that the gospels are literary compositions but are unique in the material content and in the way they develop this in literary form. Today the documents are not called biographies because they have been adjudged to lack the basic elements of anything approaching a complete biography of a life. Many modern scholars attempt to make the gospels to be faith elaborations of the early church which are basically nonhistorical.

The uniqueness of the gospel genre is that it is a tremendous form for delivering the truth in a very succinct way as the testimony of witnesses. The gospel accounts have been called the memoirs of the apostles, their testimony concerning Christ. The modern term applied to this view is *kerygmatic* material or the preached word. No doubt much of the material may be properly classified under this heading without doing any damage to the

literal meaning as historical and true. It is the belief of this author that the gospel accounts are to be taken as literal, historical reporting and yet as literary compositions in a unique form of presenting the truth as the good news through selective writing.

Ramm declares:

The genre of a passage or book of the holy scripture sets the mood or the stance from which all the rest of the book is seen. As for sheer number of divergence interpretations, the *Song of Songs* is the most controversial book in the scriptures.³⁵

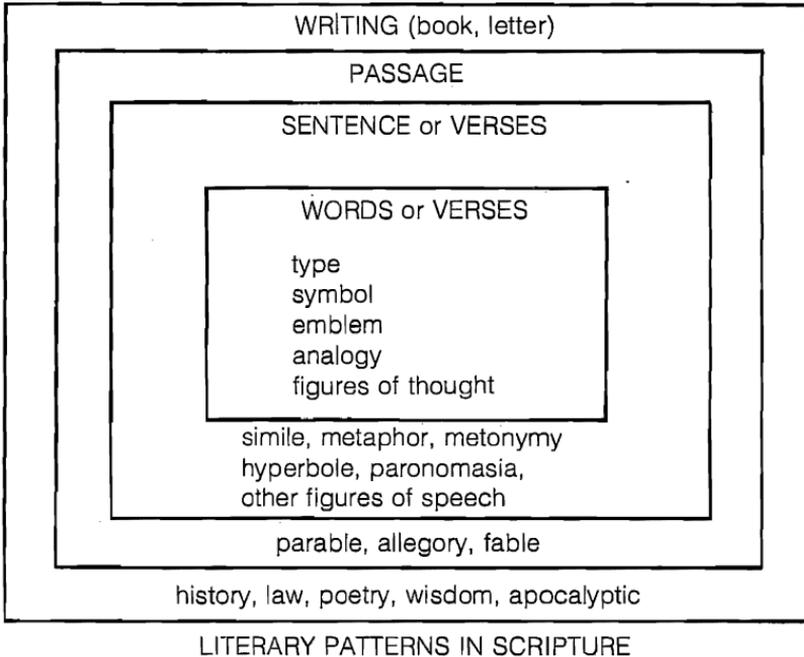
Two main classifications of the book seem to have compelling force in their favor. It may be an allegorical representation of the relationship of God's love and man's love for God on the basis of experienced human love. The other view is that it is to be taken as a statement of God's approval of human love and sexuality, teaching God's people to celebrate the greatness of their creation as sexual beings who can live in the depth and purity of their married relationship. It is very likely that this latter view is to be preferred while at the same time the typological or analogous spiritual application to God and man, Christ and the church, is fairly implied.

It seems adequate and acceptable to say that there are four distinct areas of literary patterns to be found within the scripture. The reader is invited to consider these areas as illustrated on the accompanying diagram. The first textual area of classification is called figures of thought as distinguished from figures of speech. This textual material often involves the smallest compass of words or verses in presenting the meaning. Figures of thought involve the use of symbol, emblem, type, and analogy. These are special usages of language to convey a message. They will be defined and discussed in a later section of the book.

The second level of classification of genre would involve the short figures of speech and are confined to a verse or a sentence for the most part. Here one would find the figures of simile, metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, paronomasia, and a number of other specialized forms.

The third area would encompass a number of verses and would be an extended figure of speech often involving narration. These figures are classified as parable, allegory, or fable. Some would strongly contend that myth and legend must be put in this area, but such terms are loaded with negative meaning so that they are basically false when applied to the word of God. The genre of myth and legend are not used to convey God's revelation to

man.³⁶ It is most probable that the inspired writers knew the myths of their pagan neighbors, and these may have given rise to some use of the imagery familiar to their readers or listeners. Yet, as far as the author can determine, myths and legend are not used of God to convey spiritual truth in the scripture.



Finally, the largest area to be classified according to genre is the entire writing, letter, or book. These writings, as already indicated, may be classified under the headings of history, law, poetry, wisdom, or apocalyptic literature. The interpreter needs to know these various literary forms and be able to critically apply them to various portions of the word of God in an accurate way. He needs to be able to distinguish between the various figures of speech, be able to recognize them, and be able to interpret them according to their nature. This will be a major consideration in the fourth part of this book.

Some examples, particularly the classification of the writings or books, will be taken up at this point and not treated later on; as they do not require detailed examination for the purpose of this book. Earlier Adler was noted as calling this the first rule for intelligent reading, to be able to classify a book as to the kind of book it is. If one supposed, for example, that Acts of Apostles is a

work of fiction composed by several different individuals working to present a cleverly contrived apologetic for early Christianity, he is going to read Acts with a very different view from the individual who classifies the book as history genre and reliable history at that.

The book of Job, as is true of some other writings, is not too seriously affected in its interpretation by the possibility of a variety of suggested genre. Some would call it a drama, while others would classify it as a dramatic poem. Some would designate it as history, and others would declare it is a theological debate. All such suggestions need to be carefully analyzed for the most accurate answer, for it does have some bearing upon the interpretation. It is probably best to classify Job as a dramatic poem with didactic purposes.

The book of Revelation and the book of Daniel are classified as a special type of prophetic literature called apocalyptic since they employ many remarkable symbols, images, and visions in a special way concerning future events. The reader is reminded that to classify the book according to its genre, even that of apocalyptic, does not mean that it is false information or is not to be trusted as reliable information. Apocalyptic is not to be confused with the word apocryphal which does mean spurious, hidden, and non-canonical.

There is little disagreement over the literary pattern of the Psalms as poetry, but there is much debate over classifying the first chapter of Genesis as poetry. It has by no means been established that this is not history, and its use in the scriptures by inspired men would support the argument for its being historical. The writing is so remarkable, succinct, and dramatic that it pulsates with the thrill of the poetic. Great prose writing can assimilate much of the dynamic vibrancy of poetry.

The Song of Songs has been referred to earlier as being a controversial work as far as its genre; but its form is clearly poetic, as is the book of Lamentations. These works are classified as gnomic or wisdom literature. This also applies to the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, and Psalms.

Thus the study of the genre of the biblical books is of significant value and may have vital influence upon the interpretation of a particular book. The serious interpreter of scripture will make this subject a continuing matter of study that he may truly understand the literary form being used. Ramm correctly observes,

There is no *inherent* harm in a literary genre; there is only harm or damage in how a scholar may use such genre against a document. If such a genre plays a *positive* role in the communication of revelation and is seen as a part of the organism of all of scripture we should not shy away from it.³⁷

CONCLUSION

In this chapter of the use of language in regard to correct interpretation seven areas have been explored. First, religious language was described in its various usages, especially in regard to the use by God through inspired men in writing the scripture. These five designations of religious language introduced the reader to this complex area under discussion today. At the same time, it has been contended that these five descriptive definitions of the nature of religious language as used by *God* are valid and are to be earnestly applied by the interpreter who is true to the supernatural character of the scripture.

The languages used by the inspired writers in the composition of the scripture have been discussed, and the interpreter who wants to make the greatest strides in understanding the meaning of the text has been encouraged to learn the original languages and to utilize all the value that inheres in such a knowledge. The interpreter who feels that he is limited to only an acquaintanceship with the original languages is encouraged to make the most of the valuable helps that are available to the English reader concerning the original languages. Certainly the earnest student of the scripture will go as far as he possibly can in this area of language study.

Closely related to this, the area of lexicology or the definition of the words of scripture has been investigated with consideration of the etymology of words. The careful exegete is advised to consider etymology whenever it is available yet with due caution that the etymology of many words has not been established with certainty. It must be borne in mind that, even if the interpreter is relatively certain of the etymology of a word, yet that does not mean that its original or root meaning *now* is the meaning of the derivative.

The very important area of the designation of words by the various authors of scripture has been pointed out under the section on usage or *usus loquendi*. Eight significant ways of working toward a clear and accurate understanding of the usage of a term or statement of scripture have been noted, and the

reader is encouraged to continually apply himself to this study which penetrates into the actual meaning of the word in an author as well as in scripture in general.

Still another subject of interest and value to the serious interpreter is the study of synonyms. The biblical languages are rich in synonyms, and an understanding of them as used in the scripture can enlighten the interpreter as to the precise meaning and a fullness of the meaning of God's word. Every student of scripture will be rewarded by a consideration of synonyms as he encounters them in the scripture or as he may study the writings of scholars in this area of language study.

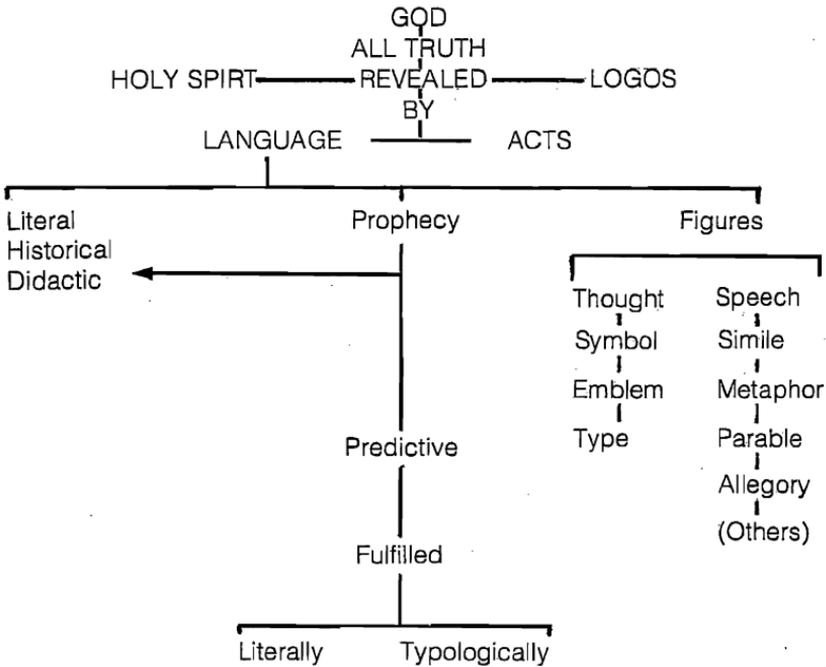
Then the matter of grammar and syntax with all of its profound involvement in the construction of the terms being used and their thought relationships has been presented in a brief form. Again, this is a very large study that can easily require a separate treatment in a book or a course of study. No exegete should underestimate the value and the helpfulness of this study of grammar and syntax. The superior interpreter will make a life-long study in this area.

Finally, the valuable contribution of knowing the genre of a writing has been indicated along with the various examples. Four major types of genre to be found within the word of God have been outlined. The reader will encounter detailed explanation and illustration of these areas of genre in the scripture in the succeeding part of the book.

It is abundantly clear that the interpreter is deeply involved with the study of language and all of its varied aspects as being essential to the understanding of any author's communication.

LANGUAGE AND ITS USAGES IN SCRIPTURE

To help the student of the scripture have an integrated grasp of the various usages of language in the scripture this diagram is provided. It seeks to relate all the various kinds of communication of God's truth in the Bible and to show how they are coordinated. God is the ultimate reality from whom all creation, thought, and truth proceed. God is the truth and the origin of truth in His intelligent creation. God reveals the truth; and this is accomplished through the work of the Second Person and the Third Person of the Godhead, the Logos and the Holy Spirit. This revelation is accomplished by means of language and acts. The acts are interpreted by inspired men in human language. Language may be designated in its nature as literal and in its



contents as historical or didactic. Prophecy may be considered as a separate type of language because of its particular function. The majority of prophecy is literal with historical and didactic objectives. However, predictive prophecy often partakes of the character of figurative language and may be literally fulfilled or typologically fulfilled. Tropical language may be divided into figures of thought which encompass the items of symbol, emblem, and type. Figures of speech embrace the forms designated simile, metaphor, parable, allegory, and many others. It is this overview of language that has been dealt with in this chapter, and the various parts of it will be discussed in later chapters.

NOTES: THE PLACE AND FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE

1. Donald Walhout, *Interpreting Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Incorporated, 1963).
2. Charles Hartshorne, "The Literalness of Theism" from *The Divine Relativity*, cited by Walhout, *ibid.*, p. 121.
3. Norman L. Geisler, "Analogy: The Only Answer to the Problem of Religious Language," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Summer, 1973), 177.

4. For those who are interested in pursuing this subject in greater depth, they are referred to the appendix of language and the books that are referred to there.

5. Hobart Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), pp. 122-23.

6. Freidrick Bleek, *Introduction to the New Testament*, English translation by Urwick, pp. 72-73. Quoted by M.S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1883), p. 124.

7. M.S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1883), p. 128.

8. A.B. Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), p. 114.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-21.

10. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

11. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), p. 130.

12. Mickelsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-29.

13. L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), pp. 68-69.

14. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

16. Albert C. Wicand, *A New Harmony of the Gospels* (revised edition; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950).

17. William D. Crockett, *A Harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1951).

18. R.B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951, reprint).

19. R.C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948, reprint).

20. W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966).

21. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964-1974).

22. Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

23. Mickelsen, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Samuel Davidson, *Sacred Hermeneutics*, pp. 225-26. Quoted by Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

26. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

27. Nathan E. Han, *A Parsing Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1971).

28. Charles B. Williams, *The New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1937).

29. Georg B. Winer, *New Testament Grammar*, p. 264. Quoted by Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

30. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 208-9.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 209, footnote 1.
32. Mickelsen, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
33. John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), p. 5.
34. C.S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* (London: Godfrey Bles, 1956).
35. Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 145.
36. The Greek term *mythos* is found only five times in the New Covenant scriptures (1 Timothy 1:4; 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:4; Titus 1:14; 1 Peter 1:16) and in every case is with a negative meaning, something opposed to the truth. The term, often translated by the KJV as *fable*, indicates spurious stories, false ideas, and fictitious tales. Thus, the term scripturally and historically is marred, identified with that which is false, and not factual. Contemporary usage by some theologians tries to redeem the word and use it in a positive or "good" sense, but this seems unnecessary and not helpful.
37. Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

QUESTIONS

1. List the five descriptions of Biblical language.
2. How does the "literal" use of language differ from the "historical?"
3. Name the two main languages of the Bible.
4. List in order the six contexts of a word.
5. List three proper parallels to be appealed to.
6. What does *usus loquendi* mean hermeneutically?
7. List eight ways to determine *usus loquendi*.
8. What is the chief value of studying synonyms?
9. List four classes of *genre* as found in Scripture.
10. T F English and Greek are similar languages in form, both described as synthetic.
11. T F By etymology of a word we mean the study of its original or root meaning.
12. T F The etymological meaning will be the most valuable means of determining the meaning of a word in a context.
13. T F *Usus loquendi* is also called *designation*.
14. T F *Genre* refers to the literary character or pattern of writing.
15. T F There is not much help in being able to determine the *genre* of a writing.
16. T F One of the valuable results of grammatical study, especially in the original languages, is to get a sharper, clearer definition of tenses.

The Covenants and Their Value for Correct Interpretation

I. THE VALUE OF THE STUDY OF COVENANTS

One does not have to read in the scripture very long before he encounters the word *covenant*, for the first reference is found in Genesis 6:18. The term covenant appears many times throughout the Old Testament books and thirty-three times in the New Covenant writings. It is evident that an important concept is communicated through the use of this term.

As one turns to commentaries and books of theology, he is impressed by the fact that consideration of covenants plays a critical part in determining one's understanding of the scriptures. It is surprising that, on the one hand, a great number of interpreters ignore entirely the importance of determining the answer to the question, "Under what covenant is this being spoken or written?" On the other hand, some greatly exaggerate the place of covenants, especially in so-called prophetic teaching. As noted earlier on the diagram concerning contexts, a very

important context to be determined before interpreting any passage is the context of covenant.

It is unfortunate that so little is found in most hermeneutical texts today in regard to covenants and their significant role in the correct apprehension of the author's meaning. The question of the covenants is closely connected with the question that has been widely recognized as essential to answer if correct interpretation is to be attained, "To *whom* was this spoken or written?"

Because of ignorance or mistaken views concerning the teaching of the Bible about covenants, a number of errors have been developed and propagated by men. Some have viewed the scripture from Genesis to the Apocalypse as equally valid for man today and binding upon him. No distinction is drawn between the various covenants in their limitations pertaining to circumstances, individuals, and purposes. J. Barton Payne declares in his preface to his text on Old Testament theology that the Old Testament "teachings are binding upon Christian faith and practice."¹

This seems difficult to reconcile with the teaching of the New Covenant scripture that Christians "are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14), as well as the statements in Hebrews that the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses, has been replaced by the better covenant of Jesus Christ. "When he said, A *new* covenant, he has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear" (Hebrews 8:13). It seems better to recognize the perfect will of God, disclosed in what the writer of Hebrews calls "many portions and in many ways" (Hebrews 1:1), has been realized in the final and perfect covenant instituted by the Son of God Himself. There are many problems that confront anyone who does not see a clear line of demarcation between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, especially as to commands and practices that are bound upon the individual who teaches this position.

The confusion and misunderstanding about the covenants has given rise to at least two major deviations from Bible teaching. First, Covenant Theology, arising from Calvinism and coming to its full stature in Puritanism, maintained the idea of one everlasting covenant with only two lesser covenants interacting with it, a covenant of works and a covenant of grace. All other divine covenants were reduced to either shadows, confirmations, or administrations of these two. This approach does not seem to allow proper force to the replacement of the Old Covenant of

Moses by the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant in Jesus Christ and the New Covenant which He instituted. It complicates matters beyond that which is necessary on an exegetical basis. It is a rather abstract theology and seems to premise a rather cut and dried action of God and Christ before the foundation of the world which undermines personal responsibility. Adam becomes the representative and federal head of the sinful race of man in rebellion against God, while Jesus becomes the representative head through whom the righteous enter into eternal life.

Much of this Covenant Theology has been diluted or abandoned by many modern-day theologians. It would be held by only a few "high Calvinists" as Arthur Pink calls them. Back in 1816, Alexander Campbell preached a revolutionary "Sermon on the Law" to the Redstone Baptist Association. This caused a furor among the Calvinistic Baptists of that day who were strong for Covenant Theology. This sermon by Campbell is well worth studying for more than historical reasons, for in it he pointed out the strong exegetical grounds for the conclusion that Christians are not bound by the Old Covenant today.² While there is the one perfect will of God in operation from eternity to eternity with the goal of the redemption of mankind by the grace of God and through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, yet it seems more in harmony with the scripture itself to note the distinct covenants that were given to particular people for particular purposes over a period of time until these had prepared the way for the climax in the final New Covenant instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ.

When it is said that the Old Covenant is not binding on Christians today, it does not mean that the Old Covenant scriptures are not the word of God and have no value for the people of God under the New Covenant. It does mean that the word of God in the Old Covenant was preparatory for the final accomplishment of the redemption of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The scriptures delineate and define an Old Covenant and a New Covenant. The apostle Paul is very clear that Christians do not become Jews and do not follow the Old Covenant's legalistic principle of work-righteousness for their salvation. Christians are not under the Old Covenant as a *codification* of law or as the one constitution of the kingdom. The Old Covenant institution was for the Jews. The New Covenant in Jesus Christ is for the whole world. The moral character of God does not change; and the moral truth, the principles of divine ethics for mankind, does not change. The obligations of the

moral life are found within the New Covenant scriptures as the authoritative rule of faith and practice. The Old Testament underscores these, gives great examples and illustration; and, insofar as the principles are reiterated in the New Covenant scripture, they are binding upon Christians today.

Perhaps the Sabbath or keeping the seventh day of the week holy would illustrate this. Clearly the commandment in Exodus 20:8 — “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” — bound all the descendants of Abraham (who were under the Mosaic covenant) to keep sacred and in a very restricted fashion the seventh day or Saturday. In the New Covenant of Christ there is no such rule for the Christian, for the seventh day command is never bound upon Christians either by the Apostolic Conference in Jerusalem (Acts 15) or in any of the letters to the churches. The commands against murder, stealing, lying, etc. are found within the writings of the New Covenant and are mandatory for Christians today (Acts 14:15; 1 John 5:21; James 5:12; Ephesians 6:1; Romans 13:9; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 4:28; Colossians 3:9). To replace the seventh day, the Holy Spirit led the apostles to the observance of the first day of the week as a particular day of assembly to honor and glorify God in corporate worship through the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10).

A second major deviation from Biblical teaching on covenants is found in Dispensationalism, which finds seven or even eight covenants. Dispensational teaching goes back especially to J.N. Darby as noted earlier and has been popularized through the *Scofield Reference Bible* and popular “prophetic teachers.” A strong Calvinistic, covenant theologian like Arthur W. Pink is very much opposed to the excesses of multiple dispensations, and in this the author would agree with him. Pink declares that the old teaching (Covenant Theology) fell into general neglect except for “a few high Calvinists” and that

... this made it easier for certain men to impose upon them their crudities and vagaries and made their poor dupes believe a wonderful discovery had been made in the “rightly dividing of the word of truth.” These men shuffled scripture until they arranged the passages treating of the “covenants” to arbitrarily divide time into “seven dispensations” and partitioned off the Bible accordingly. How dreadfully superficial and faulty their “findings” are appear from the popular (far too popular to be of much value — Luke 16:15!) Scofield Bible, where no less than eight covenants are noticed and yet *nothing* is said about the “everlasting covenant”!³

The correct position would seem to be here somewhere between the excess of dispensationalism with its seven or eight covenants and the singularity of the Covenant Theology which disregards the vital difference between the Old Covenant as a temporary institution of God and the new, better, and final covenant in Christ. Perhaps there was a mistaken fear that this was doing injury to God's word and that whatever God's word has spoken to certain people must ever remain in force upon *all* mankind regardless of changes in God's own action toward man or His commands to man.

The Covenant theologians surely would limit the Noachic covenant to Noah and would not require anyone today to build an ark to the saving of his house. This indicates that they realize the necessity of discriminating between covenants which are limited and which continue. At the same time, the conclusion of the Noachic covenant has an abiding force since God has promised in that covenant not to destroy the world again by a flood. Also, the covenant in regard to the diet that man was able to eat (including meat) and the prohibition of murder, which was to be punished by the death of the one committing the murder, are binding words of God for all time.

Again, in regard to the Law given at Mount Sinai, most of the Covenant theologians would attempt to get rid of the requirements under that covenant which involved a Palestinian location for worship at Jerusalem and the so-called ceremonial aspects of the law. The difficulty here is that the Bible does not make the distinction in the law between the ceremonial, the moral, or the spiritual. The law is the system and entire body of the Law; and what is mistaken here is that trying to preserve the moral truth which God has indicated in the law, men have neglected to see that as a *codification* of law binding upon Christians under the New Covenant, the Law has been abrogated. This does not mean that Christians are not under the moral law of God, for Paul declares that he is not under the law, but he is under the law of *Christ* — the teaching of the New Covenant scriptures (1 Corinthians 9:21).

Another clear indication of the vital importance of a correct knowledge of the covenants and which covenant a man is living under is found in the teaching of cults such as the Seventh Day Adventists and the Armstrongs' Worldwide Church of God.⁴ The indiscriminate application of scripture under the Old Covenant as binding upon Christians today results in a modern day

Judaizing which is clearly condemned within the New Covenant scriptures. One has only to read Galatians, Romans, and Hebrews to see the folly of attempting to bind a work-righteousness system of justification on to the gospel with its free gift of salvation through the justification of Jesus Christ by unmerited favor.

Of course, the Christian is very much concerned to do everything in keeping with the divine institution which God has given him. The will of God has been laid down for the *ecclesia* in specific terms as a framework within which all Christians are to work. The divine will has been clearly outlined governing the *ecclesia* of Christ as to the inclusion of those who may be counted as members, the organization of the congregation, the regulation of the life of the members of the body, and the exclusion of those who sin and will not repent, who deny the authority of the head of the church. These principles are binding upon all of those who are seeking to please God, but it is obvious that all the *details* have not been given; and many decisions of implementing the will of God are left to the judicious, God-fearing believers. Yet, all things must be done within the divine framework and in such a way as to please God and not violate the divine principles.

It is necessary to observe that there may be a number of things in each covenant which are common to other covenants but do not make the covenants identical. It is quite easy to mistake similarity for identity. Remission of sins by blood is found in all the covenants from Adam through Christ. Faith and obedience to God are necessary for salvation in every covenant. Worship with prayer, praise, and sacrifice is common to all; and the list could be extended. Salvation is by grace, the unmerited loving-kindness of God, and is conditionally offered in each covenant.

Furthermore, it is necessary, while distinguishing *between* covenants, to discriminate *within* a covenant itself. Noah was living under the earlier covenant with Adam, and yet he received a special covenant from God to build an ark. This was not binding upon any others living at that time though others were involved in the outworking of this covenant. As noted above, the results of the Noachic covenant in the promises of God are still binding.

In the Apostolic age, extraordinary or miraculous spiritual gifts were given for the temporary purpose of building up the body of Christ in its infancy and before it had the *written* word of God. Therefore, the apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian congregation, had to lay down specific rules in regard to the use of the extraordinary gifts to prevent their abuse (1 Corinthians

14). These rules do not apply to congregations today in the same way that they did in the first century congregations when the extraordinary gifts were manifested.

It is the position of the author that these are not manifested today with the power of *God* nor with His approval; but what is being manifested is basically a psychological, experiential, and emotional excitement. Certainly in any congregation in which the miraculous gifts of prophesying, speaking in tongues, etc., were assumed to be manifested, these rules would still be applicable.

Even though the specific rules in regard to the miraculous gifts are not applicable in most situations today where people are thoroughly grounded in New Covenant scriptures, yet the general principles and guidelines are still very sound and useful. Certainly, in everything that is done today the principle of doing it for "the edification of all" is valid. Again, when it is stated, ". . . let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner" (1 Corinthians 14:40), this is a binding principle upon every Christian congregation today.

From these introductory remarks, it becomes evident why space must be given to a careful study of the meaning of covenants and their function so the exegete can arrive at a correct understanding of the scripture.

II. DEFINITION OF COVENANT

The Terms Used

Since a correct concept of covenant is significant to a correct interpretation of the Bible, so a definition of the meaning of the term is needed. Two words in the original language are involved in the English word *covenant*. The Hebrews used the word *berith*, and this word is translated over three hundred times in the Old Covenant writings as covenant. In the New Covenant writings the word *diatheke* is used thirty-three times and is translated in the *King James Version* as either testament or covenant. Both of these English words are inadequate to do full justice to the biblical concept. The ordinary meaning of covenant today is simply a mutual contract or agreement between two parties in which certain conditions and promises are stated. This meaning is found in the Old Testament use in a non-theological sense as describing the covenant between David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 23:18).

But the usual use of the term is with theological significance

indicating the relationship of God to His people. Since this involves the infinite God and finite man, the covenant in the scripture is something that is offered by God and accepted by man without a mutual bargaining between both parties. Also, God is true to His word and does not have to give guarantees that He will keep His covenant. In spite of this, the writer of Hebrews declares that God is so good to man, so willing to help sinful man to appreciate the covenant relationship that He takes an oath; Jehovah swears by Himself since He can swear by none greater that the covenant of Christ will endure forever (Hebrews 6:13-20). Thus the children of God have the strongest kind of assurance that can be given by a loving heavenly Father.

The Hebrew word *berith*' is translated regularly by the word *covenant*. Its etymology is uncertain. Some scholars have traced it back to the root *bara* meaning *to cut*. It is believed that this term might have been derived from the usual practice of sacrificing animals in connection with ratifying a covenant (Genesis 15; Jeremiah 34:18-19). Other scholars believe that it is more likely that the word came through the Akkadian word *baru* which means *to bind*. Still others derive the word from *bara* which means *to eat* and referring to a meal in connection with a covenant. The idea of all these suggestions centers in an agreement which may be a legal or quasi-legal bond with sacred involvement. The word *covenant* is perhaps the best term to describe this relationship even though, in regard to *God's* covenants, it is more a declaration of His will for man into which man enters voluntarily.

The translators of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, the Septuagint, uniformly used the word *diatheke* to translate *berith*'; and *diatheke* is the word used in the New Testament. In the classic Greek language the word *diatheke* usually referred to a last will and testament, a legal document of a person.⁵ Moulton and Milligan indicate that *diatheke* means disposition or an arrangement "made by one party with plenary power, which the other party may accept or reject but cannot alter."⁶ Behm declares,

"Disposition," "declaration of the divine will," "the divine will self-revealed in history and establishing religion" — this is the religious concept of *diatheke* in the LXX and it represents a significant development of the Hebrew term even while preserving its essential content.⁷

He rejects the idea of testament and declares that it is an alien thought that obscures the proper understanding of *diatheke* in the

scriptures. This view would be held by most scholars, though J.B. Payne argues strongly for the testamentary character of the covenants of God as the most correct meaning.⁸ There is some of the thought of a last will and testament within the word covenant, for Behm comments on Galatians 3:15ff as a legal use of the term with the meaning of a will which cannot be added to or altered.

Behm summarizes the meaning and definition of the word *diatheke* as having the form and content of the Old Testament term and that there is:

. . . not a transformation of the covenant concept to include that of a testament. Neither "covenant" nor "testament" reproduces the true religious sense of the term *diatheke* in the Greek Bible. *Diatheke* is from first to last the "disposition" of God, the mighty declaration of the sovereign will of God in history, by which He orders the relation between himself and man according to His own saving purpose, and which carries with it the authoritative divine ordering, the one order of things which is in accordance with it.⁹

It is this meaning of covenant that will be used in the discussion that follows. The word *covenant* is a profound and rich concept to be grasped in the interpretation of the word of God.

The only place in the New Covenant scriptures where *diatheke* probably should be used in the sense of *testament* is in Hebrews 9:16-17. A number of scholars believe that the author is using paronomasia (a play upon the meaning of words) and brings in the secondary sense of *testament*. In this way he was able to point out the necessity of the death of Jesus Christ before His New Covenant went into effect. There are scholars who contend that the translation of the same word should be consistent throughout and maintain that the word covenant can actually be kept in this passage. This author thinks that the scholars who see the writer of Hebrews using a secondary meaning here of will or testament are more correct. A number of modern translators are using the word *will* or *testament* in this passage indicating their belief that this is the true meaning. This appears to be the only place in the New Covenant writings where the word *diatheke* must be given the meaning *testament* or *will* in the special and restricted force of that word in English usage now.

The Elements of a Covenant

Four distinct factors. Four distinct elements have been identified in the giving and accepting of a covenant. Not all of these are specifically mentioned in every covenant, but they were probably

present in each one. First, there was a statement of the particulars of the covenant, its terms of promise or agreement. This is clearly indicated in Genesis 26:29 and 31:50-52. The parties were made aware of the things that were involved or required. Next, there was an oath in which the man or party accepted the covenant and swore to uphold it. An example of this is Genesis 26:31 and 31:48-53. A solemn oath was binding upon the parties to the covenant.

Frequently this was followed by a curse or a penalty provision. It strengthened the serious nature of the agreement and involved the religious and moral aspect of faithfulness to the covenant under threat of some punishment. The clearest example is found in Deuteronomy 26:15-26 when Moses charged the people entering the Promised Land to stand upon Mount Ebal and others upon Mount Gerizim. Those who stood on Mount Ebal were to pronounce the curses, " 'Cursed is the man who makes an idol or a molten image, an abomination to the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsmen, and sets it up in secret.' And all the people shall answer and say 'Amen.' " The people accepted the penalty or the curse by saying, "Amen, *so be it.*"

Finally, a fourth part of the covenant was the formal ratification through sacrifice or the shedding of blood. In Exodus 24:4, after the writing of the words of the Lord, the covenant with Israel at Sinai, Moses had the young men offer burnt offerings and sacrifice bulls as a peace offering. Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins. With the other half of the blood he sprinkled the altar. After the reading of the book of the Covenant, the people gave their agreement, "all that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" (verse 7). Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people signifying that they had accepted a solemn and sacred obligation to keep the Covenant.

The author of Hebrews comments upon this action of Moses and declares that he sprinkled the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the Covenant which God commanded you" (Hebrews 9:19-20). He proves the higher obligation under the New Covenant by saying,

Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the Covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of Grace?" (Hebrews 10:28-29).

Surely before the mind of the believer would come the scene in the upper room on the night in which Christ was betrayed when He took the cup and said, "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20). The acceptance of the Covenant is finalized by a solemn act of ratification involving the shedding of blood.¹⁰

Conditionality. The question of the conditionality of the divine covenants must be considered, for some declare that they are unconditional with Israel while others believe that all were conditional. Since God gave His promises and solemnly bound Himself, even by oath, to the fulfilling of the covenant, what is admissible as to the possibility of failure if man does not keep the covenant? Archer has answered this briefly and adequately by indicating that the promises of God in His covenant will transpire in spite of the rebellion and unfaithfulness of man. God will keep His word! Israel was promised the land of Palestine, conditioned upon their faithfulness to God; and they were warned that unfaithfulness would bring about the loss of the land. This was exactly fulfilled and over a period of time Israel lost the land and the rights to it under the covenant. That covenant has been abrogated, and the superior covenant of Christ, which includes heaven rather than the physical land of Palestine, has superseded it. God will bring about His redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ in spite of all circumstances and opposition. The promises made to Abraham that God would be with him, make him a great nation, and in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed was accomplished in the coming of Christ and the establishment of the New Covenant.

On the other hand, the promises of blessing were offered to those who would be faithful on an individual basis and only those who were faithful received these promises. God could work His will through others if those who were first chosen proved to be disobedient. Thus it was said,

Now then, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenants, then you shall be my own possession among all the nations of the peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:5-6).

The promise of God would stand secure, but only those persons who conscientiously fulfilled the obligation of faithful adherence to the will of God would receive the benefits. Archer says,

In other words, God will see to it His plan of redemption will be

carried out in history, but He will also see to it that none partake of the eternal benefits of the Covenant in violation of the demands of holiness. No child of the Covenant who presents to Him a faithless and insincere heart shall be included in its blessings.¹¹

The fact of conditions attached to a divine covenant does not indicate any failure on God's part in fulfilling the covenant. It is always man's fault if he fails to meet the conditions. Man is the one who suffers loss when he refuses to be faithful to the covenant that he has received from God. God is always able to secure His eternal purposes. The apostasy and failure of the Jewish people in regard to the Old Covenant did not frustrate God's purpose to redeem a people for His own possession, a kingdom of priests.

The Old Covenant

In this entire discussion the term Old Covenant is used a great deal, which makes it necessary to define this term. By the *Old Covenant* is meant the Mosaic Covenant, the Covenant of the Law, which was a legal system of justification. It required perfect obedience to God's law, all the requirements for one's salvation. It did not take away from the *promises* of the Adamic or Noachic Covenants.

The Old Covenant stands related to the Abrahamic Covenant in that it was given with a temporal aspect for the Jewish nation which later was governed by the institution of the Mosaic Covenant. It also had a promised future aspect which would only be fulfilled in Jesus Christ and His *ecclesia*. The Abrahamic Covenant does not stand apart from the covenant of Jesus Christ but has been completed and satisfied within the New Covenant of Christ. Most of the Old Testament writings are to be classified as the expression of God's will for the Old Covenant (Law) with Israel. The land promised to Abraham was fulfilled by the occupation of Palestine by the Israelites and fulfilled completely in the expansion of Solomon's empire (Exodus 23:30-31; Deuteronomy 1:8; Joshua 23:14-16; 21:43,45; Nehemiah 9:7-8; 1 Kings 4:24-25).

Thus, the term Old Covenant is synonymous with the Law of Moses, the Sinaitic Covenant with Israel which was superseded by the perfect covenant of Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham. Two major covenants are under consideration in most of the scripture, the Law of Moses or the Sinaitic Covenant, the Old Covenant (Exodus to Acts) and the Gospel of Christ, the New Covenant, the kingdom of God (Matthew to John in anticipation, Acts to

Revelation in actuality). The Abrahamic Covenant was fulfilled temporally and physically under the Law of Moses and spiritually and ultimately in the New Covenant of Jesus Christ.

III. THE OLD COVENANT IS SUPERSEDED BY THE NEW COVENANT

As one begins to speak about the abrogation of a covenant, it often unsettles people's minds as to why God would establish an order and then take it away or having once instituted a way of relating to man and saving him He would lay this aside. Was God fickle, uncertain, or did His plan fail? Certainly no such implication is to be drawn from the fact that God decided in His all-wisdom to give man in the childhood of man's moral development a partial revelation of Himself which culminated in a perfect revelation in Jesus Christ and to require of a limited segment of the human race a way of life which was not destined for universal application and which was temporary in its purpose. The word of God clearly answers the question of men as to the purpose in giving the Old Covenant as He did.

The Purpose of the Old Covenant

New constitution needed. The new revelation of God given at Mt. Sinai brought about a new constitution for the people of God. God enacted the Old Covenant because He was ready to work with men in a new plan of revelation and spiritual development.

For world-wide redemption. The Old Covenant was given in the interest of the world-wide redemptive plan of Jehovah. The Jews were to serve as God's messengers to the world and to be the vehicle of revelation and redemption through Jesus Christ. The Jews, like a lot of Christians today, perverted this favorable priority into a snobbish superiority and preferential position. So as Jonah demonstrated, it was thought that God's covenant was only for the redemption of good people — Jews.

Civil and religious government. The Lord planned to establish a theocracy in which He would govern a nation as King. This required civil and religious forms of government for the organization and conduct of theocratic affairs.

Preparatory. The Lord in His wisdom used the Old Covenant for a preparatory and instructive work. Various things had to be made clear and established before the coming of the New Covenant. The sinfulness of sin had to be demonstrated, and the rebelliousness of man had to be placed beyond question. The Old

Covenant emphasized the holiness of God and God's requirement of holiness in His people, but it also showed man's inability to improve himself or to willingly conform to that demand of God. People began to see the need for a new covenant; a strong expectancy was created for it because of their own failure under the Old Covenant.

Added because of transgressions. Paul states that the Old Covenant was added because of transgressions (Galatians 3:19). This verse has been understood in three possible ways, none of which in itself would be false: It means to detect or identify transgression, to expose it (Romans 7:7), to restrain sin, and to increase sin in men's minds as a dreadful reality which none could escape by himself (Romans 5:20). The Law specified the moral offences against God, repressed them by fear of God's wrath, and showed the greatness of sin.

Child-leader to Christ. Again, Paul is clear that a significant purpose of the Old Covenant was to bring men to Christ as a child-leader, a pedagogue (Galatians 3:24). In the culture of the first century, well-to-do families had slaves who were appointed over the children as their instructors and disciplinarians to develop them into mature adults. Upon arriving at full legal age, the child who had been under the domination and instruction of a pedagogue then became free and no longer under the former supervision. Even so, the Old Covenant, says Paul, served a valuable purpose in instructing men in essential truth that prepared them both by felt need and by prophetic promise to receive the Lord Jesus Christ and His new covenant when He came. Having completed its assigned task, the Old Covenant no longer held sway over God's people.

Develop a nomenclature. A significant contribution of the Old Covenant was to develop a nomenclature or a semi-technical vocabulary for use in the New Covenant in higher and spiritual terms. It is quite clear through the New Covenant scriptures that the word imagery is heavily dependent upon the Old Testament development. For example, consider the teaching in 1 and 2 Peter concerning the atonement of Christ and the sacrifice that He made. Again, consider John the Baptizer's identification of Jesus as "the Lamb of God." Note the use by the apostle Paul writing even to the Corinthian Christians, of whom the greater part were Gentiles, that Christ "our Passover" has been sacrificed and that they are to eat the "unleavened bread" of sincerity and truth.

Evidential value. There is a grand apologetical force in the

teaching of the Old Covenant as it looks forward to its fulfillment in the New. The prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus Christ (some three hundred of them were fulfilled in His first coming), indicate the mind of the divine author who alone controls the future. The remarkable types and antitypes cannot be explained apart from the divine knowledge. The evidential thrust of the Old Covenant as pointedly fulfilled in the New Covenant is a valuable testimony to any sincere questioner of the divine inspiration of the Bible.

Witness to Gentiles. Finally, the Old Covenant served as a witness to the Gentiles that there was a God in heaven and that He had a will for man upon the earth. Even though the Jews lost sight of their responsibility to bear witness to others for God's redemptive purposes, still various Gentiles heard of Jehovah, the God of heaven, and accepted Him, even being assimilated in many cases into the theocracy as was the case of Ruth, the Moabitess, who became an ancestress of Jesus Christ in the flesh. A significant number of the proselytes of the gate, the God-fearers, who were converted by the apostle Paul on his evangelizing journeys proved the vital witness of the Old Covenant revelation to the other nations who were without the covenant of promises.

The Unique Nature of the New Covenant

Kainos. The New Covenant is *sui generis* (only one of its kind) as seen in its character, its mediator, and the very term *new* which describes it. Earlier attention was given (under the consideration of Designation) to the main Greek terms of new, *neos* and *kainos*. These terms have specific meaning in regard to the newness of that which they describe. The term *neos* has reference to that which is fresh or recent in time. It is used to show newness as to time in Hebrews 12:24 when Christ is spoken of as the mediator of the new (*neos*) covenant in contrast to the 1400 year old covenant of Moses.

In the word *kainos* there is no reference to time and novelty but to quality, nature, and character. When *kainos* is used, an entirely new type of thing is referred to. Thus, in using *neos* a person might say that he had a new bicycle, having traded in his kiddie bike for a ten-speed Columbia. On the other hand, if someone said, "I have a new vehicle for transportation. I traded in my ten-speed bike for a Rolls-Royce," then the word *kainos* would be appropriate; for it represents a vast difference in the quality of transportation. It would represent a new genus.

An even stronger illustration of this use of *kainos* in regard to the unique character of the New Covenant in contrast to the Old would be comparing the Old to a fruit tree and the New to the fruit on the tree. The New Covenant differs in quality from the Old as chewing on a branch of a peach tree differs from consuming the delicious peaches. In both cases, one might be said to be eating "peach", but what a difference!

Christ. The New Covenant is so much better; and this is the grand argument of the letter to the Hebrews. A better covenant is not just a renovated Old Covenant but something far superior from the Old — a new nature and form. Certainly, the most significant differentiation between the Old Covenant and the New is Christ Jesus Himself. Christ is in the Old Covenant as the word of God, the angel of Jehovah, and the subject of predictive prophecy. But in the New Covenant the living Lord is available for personal relationship with every born-again child of God. How much better this is! Now men and women are intimately identified with the Lord Jesus Christ through their death, burial, and resurrection in Christ. The Holy Spirit takes up residence within the life and body of the believer making each Christian a temple of the Holy Spirit. Christians are the Body of Christ upon earth who continue His redemptive work through preaching the gospel to the whole creation.

Ethics. The ethics of Jesus Christ are different, not so much because what He taught was entirely new (*kainos*); for some of it is definitely found in the Old Covenant scriptures. The amazing newness (*kainos*) of the ethics of Jesus is the fact of His own perfect example. Christ is His ethics even as He is the truth. He is not like the other teachers of ethics, pointing to moral virtues and precepts, for Christ points to Himself and says become like me (Matthew 11:29; 1 Corinthians 11:1; John 13:15; 14:6; 1 Peter 2:21).

The ethics of Jesus are extremely personal. Jesus taught His followers to love persons, and so the great concern of Christians is for persons rather than for things. The Old Covenant had a great deal to do with external things though not exclusively. Yet the shift is very obvious in emphasis when one considers the Old Covenant and the New. In the New Covenant there are no sacred structures or temples made of stone, for the temple of God is now made up of living stones, Christians. There are no sacred places to which Christians go as Israel of old went to Jerusalem, for every place is holy unto the Lord.

Under the New Covenant all Christians are priests, but the Christian priesthood is not as restricted as under the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant prescribed special and particular garments for the priests, but none is laid down for the priests in the New Covenant. Again, under the Old Covenant very exact and detailed ritual was prescribed for sacrifice and worship while under the New Covenant the children of God have a great deal of freedom to use the few requirements of corporate worship within the culture of the times and as expedient for the majority of believers in accomplishing the glory of God. Worship times together may take a great many different aspects of involvement and expression within the framework of glorifying God through the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week and participation in spiritual acts of singing, praying, and the study of the word of God.

Christians living under Law. The grave problem that confronts so many congregations today and is generally visible throughout the religious world is that people are living under Old Testament conditions and thought patterns. Many are bound by a legal work-righteousness system of justification which is now obsolete. Much of the vocabulary and concepts which are used comes from the Old Covenant rather than from the New Covenant.

It is easy for Christians to burden themselves with many practices which are peculiar to the Old Covenant rather than the New. A *law* of tithing is often strongly preached even in congregations trying to follow the Bible. It is often implied, if not stated, that those who do not tithe are not Christians or that they are committing sin against God. Yet, as one searches the New Covenant writings, it is difficult to find any such *law* of tithing. (Often those who seek to justify such law then fall back on "well, it works" — which is humanistic pragmatism.)

Often recourse is made to the Old Covenant writings and what is lacking in the New Covenant by the will of God is dragged into the New Covenant by men. Those that argue exegetically for a law of tithing from the Old Testament are no better off than many of the Sabbatarians who follow the very same process in "proving" the law of the Sabbath for Christians. Consistency would demand that those who bind a law of tithing from the Old Testament accept also the binding of Sabbath-keeping.

Actually, in the New Covenant there is no holy day of worship. There is a time of meeting for corporate worship; but Sunday is no more sacred in the sight of God than Monday, Wednesday, or

Saturday. To Christians it is peculiarly special and meaningful because the Lord's death is remembered through the Lord's Supper until He comes again (Luke 22:17-20; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:26). It is the day of the resurrection, and so there is a so-called "easter" *every* first day of the week. Indeed, the keeping of a special day called "Easter" smacks of the Old Covenant requirements of holy days, and not of the New Covenant fullness of life and sanctification of every day unto the Lord. Christians are to remember in particular every first day of the week the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before or after the cross? It is very important, as has been stated earlier, to always ask, "Under what covenant was this teaching given?" One way of stating this is, was this teaching given before the cross of Christ or after the cross? Does this apply to people before the cross or after the cross? It was only after the cross on the day of Pentecost that the New Covenant of Jesus Christ was inaugurated through the Holy Spirit by the apostles, who were the executors of Christ's covenant. It is true that there are things in the teaching of Christ that anticipated doctrines or practices in the New Covenant. Jesus was preparing for the New Covenant in much of His teaching and pointing to some practices that were to be integral to the New Covenant. There is teaching about baptism and the Lord's Supper that antedates the cross of Christ, but this teaching is taken up and elaborated in the New Covenant by the apostles.

In counter distinction to the matter of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the footwashing that took place at the last supper (reported by John in chapter 13) is not taken up in the writings of the apostles after the day of Pentecost. It is never bound upon the congregations, and thus it is recognized that it is not an ordinance of the Lord for the church. Even if it was practiced as an optional act by those of a congregation who chose to do it, it would not be an ordinance of Christ and would not be binding on anyone.

Also, there is a *principle* of giving that is laid down in the Old Testament, and a principle is found in the New Covenant. The Old Testament set very specific proportions to be given and specific items that were to be tithed. The Old Covenant was a theocracy, and God was the King. This meant that some of their payments were often like taxes today that go to support the government. Church and state are separated now by the will of God and are not identical. Yet the principle of giving is taught in

the New Covenant scripture as involving the total life of the worshiper. It is not adequate to give great offerings without a heart of love for God, without doing it for the glory of God. The emphasis in the New Testament is not upon the amount or even the percentage. The emphasis is upon motivation and upon the Christian's total commitment of all his life and resources to glorifying God.

The examples in the apostolic church that are held up for Christians to follow are like those in Antioch, "and in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea" (Acts 11:29). This was a free-will offering according to a person's ability. In writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul commends the example of the Macedonian Christians who gave out of their deep poverty:

For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God (2 Corinthians 8:3-5).

It is of vital importance to see that Christians are under a new (*kainos*) constitution which is complete, perfect, and final in itself. The similarities are to be recognized between the teachings of God in the Old Covenant and those of Christ in the New Covenant. Yet disciples of Christ are bound by that which is in the New Covenant scriptures which teach all that God requires of His people today. The Old Testament is of immense value for examples, supplementary reinforcement of New Covenant principles, and for predictive prophecy; but nothing in the Old Covenant scripture is bound as a *rule* of life upon Christians because it is found in the Old Covenant. Christians are under a far superior, amazingly wonderful covenant.

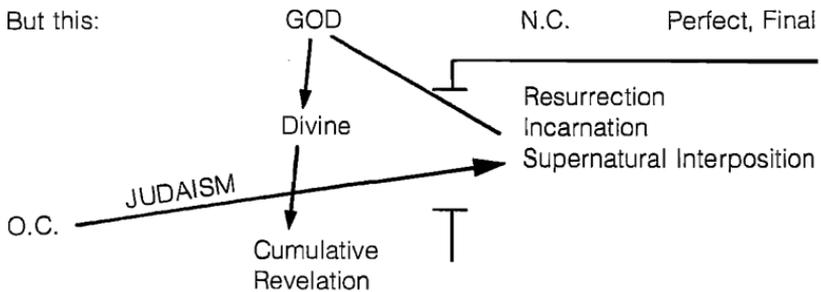
Supernaturally given and complete. The New Covenant is not just a natural, and certainly not an evolutionary, development out of the Old Covenant with Israel. It is a wholly New Covenant and through Jesus Christ is perfect and final, never needing addition or revision. A diagram will help you to grasp this more clearly.

The new covenant is a new, unique, and supernatural propagation.¹²

Not this:



But this:



Discriminating Contrasts Between the Law and the Gospel

Because of the difficulties that men have brought to interpretation of scripture by failing to understand the distinct nature of the covenants and the fact that Christians are not under the Law or Old Covenant, a list of twenty-three contrasts between the Old and the New Covenants is shown.

OLD COVENANT

1. Mt. Sinai
2. Moses
3. Israel
4. National
5. Flesh
6. State
7. On stone
8. Death (2 Cor. 3:7ff)
9. Condemnation
10. The letter
11. Animal blood
12. On earth
13. Did not remove sin
14. Faulty
15. 3,000 died (Ex. 32)
16. Hagar
17. Canaan,
earthly blessing
18. Gospel in shadow
19. Glorious (2 Cor. 3:9)
20. Was done away,
temporary
21. Aaronic
22. Merit
23. Works (Rom. 4:2)

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Established at | |
| Mediator | |
| For | |
| Character | |
| Basis | |
| Supreme body | |
| Written | |
| Ministration | |
| Ministration | |
| Called | |
| Dedicated | |
| Dedicated | |
| As to sin | |
| Represented by | |
| Secured | |
| Exhibited | |
| Duration | |
| Priesthood | |
| Ground of salvation | |
| Principle | |

NEW COVENANT

1. Mt. Zion
2. Christ
3. World
4. Personal
5. Spiritual
6. Church
7. Hearts
8. Life
9. Righteousness
10. The Spirit
11. Christ's blood
12. In Heaven
13. Removes all sin
14. Faultless (Heb. 8:7)
15. 3,000 lived
16. Sarah (Gal. 4:24)
17. Heaven, heavenly
18. In reality
19. Surpassing glory
20. Is forever, final
21. Melchizedek
22. Grace
23. Faith (Rom. 4:5)

Mediator. Many of these contrasts are immediately clear and do not require any elaboration. Several are of such significance that it is worthwhile to note some additional details. The Old Covenant differed from the New Covenant in regard to its mediator as is brought out in a great way by the writer of Hebrews. As Moses was only a servant in God's house, Christ is the Son over His house, His people (Hebrews 3:5-6). Moses was only a man, and Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God.

Likewise, the priesthood is directly involved with the constitution which is in effect. The author of Hebrews points out perfection did not come through the Levitical priesthood and that it was changed from the Levitical order to the order of Melchizedek. At this point the change of priesthood necessitated a change also of law or covenant (Hebrews 7:11-12). The priesthood of Christ is solitary and final, far exceeding anything that sinful, mortal priests could perform under the Law. Christ is prophet, priest, and king, holding in His own person the three great functions needed for government and salvation. Thus it is said, "Hence also He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Promises. The New Covenant is designed for universality including all nations and is not limited to Israel or the Jewish people alone (Matthew 28:19ff). Furthermore, the promises are vastly different. Primarily, the Old Covenant promised physical blessings while in the New Covenant the emphasis is upon spiritual blessings. While both promised heaven, yet sinless perfection was demanded under the Law. That left no hope of any sinner arriving there. The promise of Canaan did not depend on the sinless perfection of the people, and that land would have remained theirs if they had repented of idolatry and obeyed God. The certainty of the Christian's salvation through the grace of Jesus Christ apart from any merit assures the individual that as long as he remains in Christ Jesus by faith, he has the promise of salvation. This is more than anyone under the Old Covenant could realize since he was continually conscious of his own failure and sin.

Under the New Covenant, which is called by the term the *Spirit*, the children of God become members of the covenant by the action of the Holy Spirit leading to a new birth of water and the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:6; John 3:5). The Christian has the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit immediately upon his

obedience to Christ, and this was not available to the saints under the Old Covenant. Again, a tremendous promise of the New Covenant that was never realized under the Old is that sin will be remembered no more; it is completely done away by the blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:3-4; Jeremiah 31:31). The blood of Christ keeps on cleansing Christians throughout their lives as they are walking in fellowship with Him (1 John 1:7).

No infants. An interesting inference appears in the distinction of the New Covenant from the Old Covenant in respect to those who are included. Infants were included in the Old Covenant from the fact of their physical birth into the nation of Israel, but in the New Covenant infants are excluded from membership in the kingdom of God until they are able to become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and voluntarily accept Him as Lord and Savior. This fact is brought out by Jeremiah in his prediction of the coming of the New Covenant when the Lord says,

I will put my law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more (Jeremiah 31:33b-34).

This indicates that a member of the New Covenant knows about sin, the conditions upon which forgiveness was granted to him; and he does not have to be taught to know the Lord because he cannot become a member without that knowledge. This fits in perfectly with the commission which Christ gave before His ascension in which He commanded His apostles to go into all the world and teach (or make disciples) of all peoples and then baptize those who accept the teaching into the covenant name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Establishment of the New Covenant

The New Covenant of Christ, predicted especially by Jeremiah and involved in all the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament beginning from Genesis 3:15, was established at a specific historical time. Various scriptures pointed to the time and place of the beginning of the kingdom of God, which is equivalent to the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. The *ecclesia* of Christ is the beginning and earthly part of the glorious kingdom which is going to be consummated in the future. The kingdom militant

will become the kingdom triumphant upon the return of Jesus Christ.

Not before Christ's resurrection. The New Covenant could not have been established before the days of Jeremiah since he, speaking by the inspiration of God, declared that the New Covenant was to be established in the future. The apostles themselves knew of no establishment of the kingdom before the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for Luke records in Acts 1:6 that the apostles asked Him, "Lord, is it at this time that you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

Not yet future. On the other hand, there is a current, popular opinion that the kingdom has *not* come, that the New Covenant has not been instituted, and that there is a future millennial kingdom to be set up upon the earth *after* the return of Christ. This view seems to have some major difficulties to overcome in the word of God. After the day of Pentecost the kingdom is spoken of in terms that indicate its present reality and actual existence on earth. Beginning on the day of Pentecost, it is declared by the inspired Peter that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). Christ was resurrected to sit and reign upon David's throne, and there is no indication that there was some great length of time to transpire before He did that (Acts 2:30-33). 1 Corinthians 15:25-26 declares "for He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death." The resurrection of the dead will take place at the return of Jesus Christ; and if this is the teaching of scripture, then Christ is reigning *until* that time. He is the head of the church and thus rules over His people. Within the term *Lord*, sovereignty and rulership are necessarily involved.

Again, in the teaching of Philip at Samaria he is said to have been ". . . preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12). When the word *basileia* is more clearly translated as reign, many of the false, materialistic ideas associated with the term kingdom are eliminated. Philip was preaching the good news about the reign of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Another very clear scripture is found in Paul's writing to the Colossians when he declares that Christians should thank God "who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:12-14). Here the past tense of the verb indicates completed

action, and Christians are out of the reign of the devil and under the reign of Jesus Christ.

John is clear in his statement concerning the position of Christians in the kingdom at the present time; for writing in Revelation he says, "I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus . . ." (Revelation 1:9). John declares concerning Jesus Christ, ". . . To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever" (Revelation 1:5b-6). Christians are both priests and a royal priesthood under the reign of Jesus Christ now though a more glorious consummation is in prospect. Israel failed to be that kingdom of priests, but the Body of Christ has fulfilled the will of God.

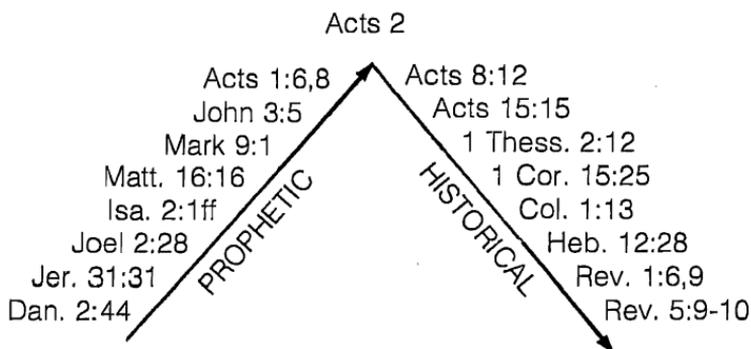
In Revelation 5:9-10 (ASV) John states:

And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.

Dusterdieck correctly interprets this passage:

Three things are here expressed: first, that those purchased to be God's property have been made into a *basileia*, viz., of God, i.e., they are gathered as God's property into God's kingdom; immediately afterwards (*kai*) that they are made priests; finally (*kai*) they themselves have been invested with regal authority. . . . The last, expressed in an independent member of the sentence, and so far distinguished from the two predicates *basileian* and *'iepeis*, has its justification in the meaning of 1:9; and it is a perversion to change the present *basileuousin* into a future, or to take it in the sense of a future. It is especially appropriate that the heavenly beings into whose mouths the song of praise, vv. 9-10 is placed, should recognize in the contending and persecuting [sic but wrong, persecuted] church the kings of the earth.¹³

Prophecy and history intersect. The accompanying diagram should help you see how the prophecies and statements about the coming kingdom were accomplished and fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, 30 A.D. in Jerusalem. The first line carries a series of prophetic statements concerning the kingdom and its establishment to Pentecost and Jerusalem. The second line moving from Pentecost indicates the historical, actual existence of



the kingdom in the statements of the inspired writers. The intersecting points of predictions and history confirm that the New Covenant, the kingdom of God, was founded at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, 30 A.D.

This is indirectly supported by the statement of the apostle Peter when he spoke to the brethren in Jerusalem concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the household of Cornelius, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as *He did* upon us at the *beginning*" (Acts 11:15). The beginning that Peter refers to must have been that historic, wonderful day when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and endowed them with power and authority from God as recorded by Luke in Acts 2.

Matthew 11:11 would establish that the kingdom was not in force at the time of John the Baptizer, because, though he is the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, the least in the kingdom is greater than John. John, therefore, was not in the kingdom *per se*. He prepared the way for it and pointed out the king.

This is a subject of much-debated scripture, but it seems to be clear to many that the apostles taught that the kingdom was established and is to be recognized in the church over which Jesus reigns. Christ taught the apostles that His kingdom was to come in the lifetime of the apostles, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste of death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power" (Mark 9:1). On the day of Pentecost only Judas out of the apostles was absent, having committed suicide for betraying Christ. This verse in the light of the harmony of other scriptures (the parallel passages) makes it plain that the kingdom has already come and is not a future kingdom that has been delayed over nineteen hundred years.

Debated passages. There are several passages of scripture that

have to be dealt with as they appear to challenge the validity of this conclusion.

1. Luke 16:16 is often appealed to as indicating that the kingdom of God is a present reality, for people were forcing their way into it. Yet it is probable that this simply indicates that the good news concerning the reign of Jesus Christ was being announced and that men were trying to prematurely force their way into it, even force Christ to be the King after their own desire. A reference to the parallel in Matthew 11:12 indicates that the kingdom was suffering violence as men tried to forcibly take it over. It is possible to see in this verse the idea that the kingdom of heaven is approaching as manifestations of the power of God took place. This is supported by Matthew 12:28 when Jesus declares, "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come upon you."

2. According to Matthew 21:5, Jesus rode into Jerusalem in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah, "behold your King is coming to you." It is true that Jesus was the King and yet was unrecognized and rejected of men. He was not yet seated upon the throne of David. This is similar to a president who is elected but not yet inaugurated. He may be referred to as the president but with the understanding that he does not yet have the authority. It was *after* the resurrection that Christ sat upon His throne (Acts 2:36).

3. The statement in Matthew 21:31 does not prove that the kingdom was in existence at that very time but that the harlots and tax gatherers were going in the direction of the kingdom; they were preparing their hearts for the reception of the king by submitting to the baptism of John and eagerly drinking in the teaching of Jesus. They were getting ready for the kingdom of God when it was established, qualifying themselves to be candidates in the kingdom.

4. The idea that the kingdom was established before the day of Pentecost is frequently supported by the appeal to Matthew 23:13, "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men, for you do not enter in yourselves; nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." While this speaks of the action of the religious leaders in opposing the teaching of Christ as shutting men out of the kingdom, it is to be noted that the kingdom of heaven was the great theme of discussion in that day, especially after John the Baptizer had declared that the kingdom of heaven was "at hand",

and Jesus was also teaching about the near approach of the kingdom. The language is applicable to a kingdom under discussion, the idea of the kingdom being proclaimed and not yet an established reality. As reported in Matthew 21:31, the people were divided among those who were willing to learn about the kingdom, to enter into the reign of God as soon as it was established, and the Pharisees and scribes who were opposing the teaching of Christ on the kingdom and trying to keep men from following Christ. The verse itself cannot be taken without reference to the other statements concerning the kingdom and its establishment on the day of Pentecost.

5. Another scripture that is frequently appealed to for proof that the kingdom was established before the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is Luke 17:21: "nor will they say 'Look, here *it is!*' or 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." This is a very difficult passage to interpret, and scholars are divided on how it should be translated. The *New American Standard Bible* gives the translation "the kingdom of God is *in your midst*" while the American Standard (1901) gives "the kingdom of God *is within you.*" Scholars are about equally divided in their arguments in support of these two translations. The strength of the translation "with you" is that it points to the spiritual nature of the kingdom. The drawback of this translation is that it is addressed to the Pharisees who had no interest or qualification in the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ. Thus, it may be best to translate the phrase, "the kingdom of God is among you," in the person of Jesus Christ; and if the Pharisees had opened their eyes, they would have seen the spiritual power demonstrated by the Messiah.

Meyer prefers this interpretation as he states:

... *in the midst of them* the Messianic kingdom was, so far as He, the *Messiah*, was and worked . . . among them. . . . For where He was and worked, He, the legitimate King and Bearer of the kingdom, ordained thereto of the Father (22:29), there was the Messianic kingdom (which was to be formally and completely established at the *Parousia*) in its temporal development. . . .¹⁴

Again, Meyer comments that:

... the coming is *aparatereton* — it develops itself *unnoticed*. This statement, however, does not deny that the kingdom *is a thing of the future* (Ewald: "as something which should first come in the future, as a wonderful occurrence, and for which men must first be on the watch"), but only that in its approach it *will meet the eye*.¹⁵

J.S. Lamar comments:

. . . while it is true that Christ reigns in the hearts of His people, it is clear that He was not thus reigning in the hearts of the Pharisees, and hence the kingdom of God was not *within them*. It was, however, *in the midst of them*, in that its king was there proclaiming its laws and swaying His authority over some (His disciples) who were standing among them.¹⁶

It is not absolutely settled as to the exact meaning of the statement of Christ to the Pharisees, but regardless of which interpretation is accepted, it cannot be used to establish definitively that the kingdom was actually in force at that particular time. Most writers seem to agree with Plummer when he declares,

The meaning will then be, "so far from coming with external signs which will attract attention, the kingdom is already in the midst of you (in the person of Christ and of His disciples), and you do not perceive it."¹⁷

6. One text that is used to support the idea that the kingdom of God is yet in the *future* and has not been established to date is the parable Jesus told recorded in Luke 19:11-27:

And while they were listening to these things, He went on to tell a parable because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. He said therefore, a certain nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and *then* return (Luke 19:11-12).

These verses do not indicate that the kingdom is not going to come for 2,000 years or more. They were spoken specifically to people who were over anxious about the kingdom of God in its material appearance. They jumped to the conclusion that because Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem and was working miracles as He went, that He must be ready to establish the kingdom as soon as He entered Jerusalem. This was not true, and Jesus dampened their over-enthusiastic anticipation by the parable which indicated a lapse of time was to occur. A tremendous length of time is not indicated. It would rather point to the fact that the kingdom was going to come in God's way and in God's time and not by the pressure and the will of the disciples.

These passages which are brought into debate on the time of the establishment of the kingdom have been shown to neither teach conclusively that the kingdom was established *before* the day of Pentecost nor to teach that the kingdom has *not* been

established yet, that it is a future millennial, physical kingdom upon earth.

An analogy of the establishment of the kingdom of God. A very interesting analogy between the establishment of a real estate claim in the early days of pioneer settlers and the establishment of the claims of Jesus, the King, to His full inheritance was pointed out by Z. T. Williams.

Z. T. Williams, of Columbia, Ky., makes the following application of a story he tells of the pioneer days when what is now Tennessee was a part of North Carolina. A Carolinian extended the frontier line into what is now a part of central Tennessee. He marked out his claim in the customary manner of the time. It was some years after his death before his heirs came to claim the property. Meantime, many other settlers had arrived. With an accurate description of how the trees were blazed and how the lines ran, the heirs were not able to identify the property. Search was continued, through open country, through settlements [sic], and through the wilderness for the old beginning corner. Finally, after cutting out underbrush and tearing down ivy vines the old oak-tree, that had served as the old beginning corner, was located, and was identified by the original marks it contained which had been chipped on it by the pioneer. With this as the beginning-point, guide in hand, the original lines were easily traced. But, lo! other occupants were in possession! The line ran through one man's house, another's barn, another's orchard, another's pasture. Opposition arose, but the original claim was established.

The church of Christ with certain characteristics was set up in Jerusalem on Pentecost, 33 A.D., under the authority of Christ, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by the apostles. This was the old beginning-corner with certain marks, from which well-defined lines were run. Later, the great apostasy came. In time a Roman Catholic corner was set up in Rome by Justinian in 606. Later, a Church of England corner was set up in London by Henry the Eighth in 1535, then a Presbyterian corner in Scotland by John Knox in 1537; then a Baptist corner in Germany by reformers of the seventeenth century, a Methodist corner in Oxford by the Wesleys in 1729, and many others too numerous to mention.

Then came the restorationists of the nineteenth century with their cry "back to Christ," and with their search for the "original claim." They cut out the undergrowth of error and substitution, and tore down the vines of the traditions and commandments of men, and located the old beginning corner at Jerusalem on Pentecost 33 A.D. There they found the identification marks.

Jerusalem, the place [Isaiah 2:3; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:1]; the Holy Spirit, the guide [Joel 2:28; Acts 2:4]; the apostles, the executives [Matthew 28:18; Acts 1:8]; Peter, the spokesman [Matthew 16:19; Acts 2:14]; remission of sins, the theme [Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38]; the first full gospel sermon — faith, repentance, and baptism — the conditions of remission. From this old beginning corner, with guide book (the New Testament) in hand, they had little difficulty in tracing the lines of the original claim. But the lines ran through the fences of other occupants, cut into their claims, and opposition arose. And this should not surprise us. So long as we press the claims of Jesus Christ to the full possession of His church and so long as we press His claim to the right to name the conditions of entering into, and living within His territory, just so long will *religious squatters* howl and protest. Any one who hesitates to press His claim is disloyal to Him. The Restoration plea is a plea for the full claim and full authority of Jesus Christ; creeds, doctrines, traditions, ecclesiastical courts, substitutes and compromises of men to the contrary notwithstanding.

The Restoration plea for the authority of Christ when responded to, does not result in the organizing of another denomination or schism in the church, nor in a new church, nor in a "Campbellite" church; but, being organized after the ancient pattern, the result is simply the restoration of the original, divinely authorized church of Christ.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to give the interpreter of scripture an adequate though brief consideration of the heavy force of the Bible teaching on covenants as it relates to correct interpretation. It is anticipated that the reader at least has come to recognize the value of such a study and the care with which the question must be asked regularly of any portion of God's word which is being read: "Under what covenant was this spoken and for what group of people was it intended for their obedience?"

The definition of *covenant* shows that it is an important and rich word pointing to God's gracious and redemptive arrangement, His sovereign disposition of all things with an end to the salvation of man through the kingdom of God. God has seen fit to use various institutions for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose, and each of these covenants has been useful in preparing and leading mankind toward the perfect covenant of which Jesus Christ is the mediator.

Since almost all of the Old Testament has to do with the Law of

Moses, the Sinaitic Covenant, the term *Old Covenant* is appropriately attached to the writings found in the Old Testament scriptures. The New Covenant refers to the teaching of Jesus Christ as it was instituted by the Holy Spirit through the apostles on the day of Pentecost and as elaborated upon in the writings of the New Covenant particularly from Acts through Revelation.

The purpose of the Old Covenant has been set forth in some detail, and the attention of the interpreter directed to the significant use of the term *kainos* as describing the New Covenant in its unique character and peculiar nature. The sharp contrasts between the Old Covenant and the New were set forth so that the Christian today can appreciate the tremendous value, the unique newness of the covenant instituted by Jesus Christ under which the disciples of the Lord live.

Finally, the debated question of the time of the establishment of the kingdom of God was presented. An inductive consideration of the relevant scriptures points to the establishment of the kingdom on the day of Pentecost, 30 A.D., when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles. It was then and only then that the full gospel of Jesus Christ was preached — the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ — and men were invited to identify themselves as followers of the Savior. It was on that day that Jesus' words to Nicodemus were realized, for He had told Nicodemus ". . . unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). It is the conclusion of this writer that on the day of Pentecost that is precisely what happened and that Jesus Christ began to reign over men's hearts as both Lord and Christ as Peter declared. Christians can rejoice that they live under the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is coming back in the future not to set up a materialistic, physical reign upon this earth but to consummate His kingdom in its fullness and triumph. The great need today is a better understanding of the covenants in the interpretation of the scripture and the restoration of all that the King of the New Covenant has made possible for His people to realize.

NOTES: THE COVENANTS AND THEIR VALUE
FOR CORRECT INTERPRETATION

1. J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), no page given.

2. Alexander Campbell, "Sermon on the Law," *Millennial Harbinger*, 1846, p. 493.

3. Arthur W. Pink, *The Divine Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), p. 10.

These books have valuable information on this question:

Allis, O.T. *Prophecy and the Church*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1947.

Cox, William E. *An Examination of Dispensationalism*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1963. A good source of information about Darby, Scofield, and various doctrinal positions of dispensationalism.

MacPherson, Dave. *The Unbelievable Pre-Trib Origin*. Kansas City: Heart of American Bible Society, 1973. Discloses the origin of the Edward Irving (father of modern Pentecostalism) movement in England from an "inspired utterance" of Margaret Macdonald in 1830 and picked up by Darby.

4. Roger R. Chambers, *The Plain Truth about Armstrongism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972). For more information, refer to Canright, D.M. *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced*. Fourteenth edition. Nashville: B.C. Goodpasture, 1948.

5. Johannes Behm, "Diatheke," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, editors (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964-1974), II, 124.

6. James H. Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 148.

7. Behm, *op. cit.*, II, 127.

8. Payne, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-94.

9. Behm, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

10. George R. Berry, "Covenant in the Old Testament," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947), II, 727.

11. G.P.L. Archer, Jr. "Covenant," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, ed. E.F. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 143.

12. Albert Barnes, *Evidences of Christianity in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1868), p. 115ff.

13. Friedrich Dusterdiech, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Revelation of John* (in *Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. H.A.W. Meyer. New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1886), p. 214.

14. H.A.W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospels of Mark and Luke* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), p. 491.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 490.

16. J.S. Lamar, *The New Testament Commentary, Vol. II - Luke* (Des Moines, Iowa: Eugene S. Smith, Publisher, n.d. Reprint), p. 220.

17. Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Luke* (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1902), p. 406.

18. Quoted by Roy L. Porter, "The Restoration Plea," *Christian Standard*, LVII, No. 40 (August 12, 1922), 30 (3843).

QUESTIONS

1. T F It is important to know about covenants so as to be obedient to the one you are living under.
2. T F There is not just one eternal, inclusive covenant for all men for all time.
3. T F Campbell's sermon on the Law was valuable in getting people to see that Christians are not under the Old Covenant (Law).
4. T F Dispensationalists overdo the matter of covenants.
5. T F Many cults are confused in their teaching on covenants.
6. T F While one must discriminate between covenants, one does not have to discriminate within a covenant.
7. T F *Testament* is not the best translation of *diatheke* except in Hebrews 9:16-17.
8. T F Since God institutes the covenants and He is always faithful, there are no conditions attached.
9. T F The Abrahamic covenant was fulfilled physically under David and Solomon and spiritually fulfilled by the covenant of Christ.
10. T F The New Covenant is not a natural outgrowth of Judaism but a unique, supernatural propagation.
11. The Hebrew word for covenant is _____ while the Greek word is _____.
12. The Biblical use of covenant is that of an _____ establishing a _____ between God and people.
13. The unique, *sui generis* nature of the New Covenant is marked by the use of the Greek word _____ which means something that is _____.
14. The greatest difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is _____.
15. The ethics of the New Covenant are not so much different from the Old Covenant, but the New Covenant presents a _____.
16. From Jeremiah's teaching about the New Covenant, how do you know that infants are not included?
17. List the four distinct factors or parts of a covenant.
18. State nine reasons why the Old Covenant was given.
19. List eleven sharp contrasts between the Old and New Covenants.
20. List five clear scriptures predicting the establishment of the New Covenant (kingdom) at Pentecost, 30 A.D.
21. List five clear scriptures showing that the New Covenant (kingdom) is in effect after Acts 2.

Part Four
The Correct Method:
Its Principles,
Rules, and Application

The final part of this text will deal with the specific principles and rules as well as the application of various details of the correct method (as defined in Part Three) to the work of an exegete and teacher. Major attention will be given to specific rules for the interpretation of words, the interpretation of sentences, the interpretation of figurative language, and the interpretation of prophecy. Another chapter will take up some valuable principles which operate to vindicate the Bible against alleged mistakes and help solve objections that are brought against the scriptures as being contradictory or in error.

The rules and principles should enable the interpreter to exegete particularly difficult areas and to overcome special problems of interpretation. All of these will embrace the previous information given on the correct method and assume the application of those generic laws and basic qualities of the correct method which were explained earlier.

The Interpretation of Words

I. VARIOUS WAYS OF STUDYING WORDS

Lexical

In the former chapters attention has been given to four ways in which words need to be examined to find out their meaning in the most accurate manner possible. The first of these was lexical in which the definition of the word is determined especially by reference to the etymology of the word. This would be a study of the word in its origination and a seeking for its primary meaning as set forth in its most primitive form. The composition of a word in its development through various derivations is a significant and often logical starting point for studying a word. At the same time it has been emphasized that the etymological origin cannot always be determined or defined with precision. Thus, this form of word-study is limited though it has value wherever there is a clear definition by competent scholars. A large number of Greek meanings have been traced down by the assistance of Greek literature which is available outside of the scriptures in contrast to Hebrew words.

Author's Usage

The second most important area of study to determine the meaning of the word is through the way it is used by the author who is living at a particular period of time and working in a literary tradition. This comes under the heading of the cultural factor of the correct method when all the available evidence as to the actual use of the word in the society under consideration would be inductively studied. The designation (*usus loquendi*) of a particular writer of a particular word can be traced down by the help of concordances, and the valid definition of the term by a particular author can be constructed.

This actual use of the term by an author within his period of time and culture is extremely important to restrict the definition of the term, avoiding the fallacy of applying a meaning from another culture and time to that original designation. It is not at all a question of what people of a later culture meant by the term but what those addressed by the author understood by the term. Thus, it is impossible to determine the *biblical* meaning of baptism by studying any American dictionary which gives the meaning of baptism in American culture. The meaning of a term in medieval times may be quite removed from the meaning that the term has for Americans in the twentieth century, e.g. a youth was called a *knave* without prejudice but today the term is demeaning.

General Usage

A third valuable means of discerning the meaning of words is to consider the usage by other authors in the same period of time. Through the use of concordances the interpreter is able to collate all of the scripture citations for a particular word. By a careful exegesis of these passages a strong induction can be developed as to the explicit meaning of the term in scripture. This is important to keep one from supposing too narrow or rigid a meaning of any particular word in scripture.

Words are, to a marked degree, flexible until they are used within the context of a particular passage and of a particular writer. This undermines the assertion of some that once a word has been used in the scripture with a meaning, that must be its meaning throughout the entirety of scripture. This is treating words more as quantities than as qualities which expand and contract according to the usage of the author. While the Holy Spirit has used words with significant meaning, it does not follow

that there is only one *true* meaning of that word regardless of its context.

Synonyms

The study of synonyms has already been urged as a vital and stimulating part of the correct exegete's work. Synonyms often give a helpful commentary upon the meaning of the word in some other passage. A study of synonyms in the scripture will reveal ten different Hebrew words used in the Old Testament scriptures for prayer and seven Greek words in the New Testament. Seven Hebrew synonyms are used with different significations for death or killing; and in the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," the actual word used means murder. Twelve different words are used to express the idea of sin in the Hebrew scriptures and five synonyms in the Greek scriptures.

Valuable information can be gained concerning the nature of the deity in the Old Covenant scriptures because the names of God have different meanings and are used with significant distinction. The terms of God include Lord (*Adonai*), God (*El, Elah, Elim, Eloah, Elyon, Elohim*), the Almighty (*Shaddai*); and the great and peculiar name for God given particularly to seal the Mosaic Covenant is Jehovah (*Jahweh* or *Yahweh*). The study of such synonyms along with verbal parallels in all the scripture enables the interpreter to have a thoroughgoing appreciation of the great depth of meaning that God has revealed about Himself.

Grammatical

A fifth way to study a word (covered in a previous chapter) is to study it grammatically. This means to understand everything that one can from the construction of a sentence involving the word. Every contribution of syntax will be eagerly sought. The context of both sentence, pericope, and book will be studied with care. By this means the interpreter will have the use of the words in the most concrete fashion involving context as well as grammatical construction and the use of idioms, figures of speech, and other special usage.

II. THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING THE EXACT MEANING OF WORDS

All communication depends upon words. Words are small and yet have a most basic significance in communication as the

elementary units for constructing sentences. Words have many meanings and nuances of thought. It is both interesting and critically important to be able to discriminate these meanings. Unscrupulous persons who have a way with words can cleverly manipulate the minds of the audience by the choice of words. The propagandist is an expert in the use of words. The thinking person who wants to be honest in his assessment of communication and who is hopeful of arriving at truth must be aware of the possible manipulative use of words which can override the logic of the argument or presentation on any particular point.

Terms are loaded with meaning and sometimes can lead to a great deal of misunderstanding whether by deliberate intention or not. In 1952 Steffan Andrews of the North American Newspaper Alliance pointed out what was to him a serious failure in objective reporting on the 1952 Republican presidential nomination campaign. Senator Robert A. Taft, "Mr. Republican," was in line for the nomination as far as the conservative Republicans were concerned, but he was opposed by General Dwight Eisenhower; and a battle royal between the conservative and liberal Republicans took place. The majority of the newspapers were friendly to Eisenhower and negative toward Taft, said Andrews. As a result the language used about Taft was biased and slanted in a strongly prejudiced way while the words used of Eisenhower were cordial and favorable. Examples of this may be seen in the use of the word "steamroller" always associated with Taft; and when Eisenhower's prosperous forces swept to a 658-548 decision on a vote-rule change, that was only a "bandwagon." The Taft groups were always referred to as the "Taft Machine," and the Eisenhower forces were referred to as the "Ike Organization." Invariably Taft was pictured as "railroading" delegates or something while Ike was never doing anything more than "stampeding" them. Again, Taft forces were always reported as "ruthless," and the Eisenhower group was never anything worse than "determined." Even the word "skulduggery" was used of Taft, but the reporters could only find Ike developing "strategy." Finally, the Taft forces were often referred to as "rigging" the convention, but Eisenhower forces never did anything more dastardly than "maneuvering."¹

Obviously there is great power in words to lead people to certain views and convictions. Charles W. Ferguson has argued

that the male dominance of society can be detected in the language that is used in American culture. He declares:

Men, of course, made the rules that still govern the use of language, and they have had centuries of practice in making language obey their wishes. They have not missed a trick in the management of emotion. A rhyme in which only the first syllable is stressed (fashion passion) is a feminine rhyme. Men have long known to use verbs that picture action. It is more effective to say that a man throws himself on the couch than it is to say that he lies down on the couch.

.....
 Male influence through language shows up when words of strong emotion are often invoked in behalf of piety and good works. Hymns resound with battle language, making the past anomalously current. Find a single word that suggests kindness or compassion in *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*. The ancient foe doth seek our woe. His craft and power are great and he is armed with cruel hate. The emphasis falls upon evil and enemies — what men of action can understand.

Man words carry the oldest articulated feelings of the race. Those seeking to arouse men to good causes use man words naturally, whether they are appropriate or not, and thus fix the male image all the more solidly in the mores.²

Another interesting example of the critical nature of words is indicated by Professor Nelson, though he is actually refuting a false idea in regard to a claim to alternative logics:

... the claim to alternative logics amounts only to the statement "that we may, for aught anyone can stop us, give to the word 'implies' different meanings — now it is to mean one thing, now another. A mere misuse of words appears to be the magic wand for bringing forth alternative logics. . . . Indisputably true it is that if I decide to use the word 'women' now for females, and at another time for males, then, if I keep my mind sufficiently muddled, I may be able to delude myself into thinking that there are alternative systems of sex. But what we are interested in is logical structure — not words, but their meanings. Anyone can write a fake dictionary; but not even God Himself can make men into women by shifting words, or make what we call 'implies' symmetric by changing names."³

It is not difficult for each person to recall some instances when the sound of a word or its form misled him into a misinterpretation or at least a momentary confusion. The word

let, while having the same form (spelling), yet has two distinct and opposite meanings. The meaning given first in *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* is "1. A retarding; hindrance; obstacle — common in the phrase *without let or hindrance*." Then the familiar usage to tennis players of "let" is referred to, "An obstruction of the ball in some way specified in the rules. . . ." ⁴ This meaning of the word *let* is used in the King James translation in Isaiah 43:13, 2 Thessalonians 2:7, and Romans 1:13 — to hinder or restrain. The other word *let* while spelled the same way comes from a different root and carries a different meaning: to allow to be used, to permit or allow something to take place. This more usual meaning of the word spelled *let* is also found in the King James translation of 1611 indicating that both words with different meanings were current even as today.

All of these illustrations and others known to the reader indicate the overriding significance of words whether they have been well used or abused. With this critical problem in mind, the interpreter should be motivated to examine some specific rules that can help him to understand properly the intention and meaning of the author.

III. RULES FOR INTERPRETING WORDS

1. The function of language is the expressing of thought. ⁵ C.S. Lewis stated, "Language is an instrument for communication. The language which can with the greatest ease make the finest and most numerous distinctions of meaning is the best." ⁶ The greater a person's vocabulary is the greater the opportunity he has to express his thoughts clearly and thoroughly. It must be assumed by all that language is a trustworthy medium of communication, a system of symbols which actually work with a considerable degree of proficiency to communicate meaning. Any other position would be self-contradictory. A person cannot communicate his thought without the use of words or symbols, and his thought will be restricted by a limited vocabulary. Also, it is true that a person who may have a large vocabulary does not thereby acquire genuine insight into the thought of an author automatically.

Mortimer J. Adler pointed out that a reader must come to terms with the author, that is, understand his important words, the way he is using them. "Unless the reader comes to terms with the author, the communication of knowledge from one to the

other does not take place. A term . . . is the basic element of communicable knowledge."⁷ Furthermore, he says, "If language is used without thought nothing is being communicated. And thought or knowledge cannot be communicated without language."⁸

2. Every word has meaning, and words are capable of a number of meanings by reason of usage. Lewis describes it in the following characterization:

As everyone knows, words constantly take on new meanings. Since these do not necessarily, nor even usually, obliterate the old ones, we should picture this process not on the analogy of an insect undergoing metamorphoses but rather on that of a tree throwing out new branches, which themselves throw out subordinate branches; in fact, as ramification. The new branches sometimes overshadow and kill the old ones but by no means always. We shall again and again find the earliest senses of a word flourishing for centuries despite a vast overgrowth of later senses which might have been expected to kill them.⁹

It must be recognized that every language is limited in the number of words available, and yet these words must be used to describe an almost infinite number of items concerning man and his world. This means that a person must be aware of the various meanings that have been attached to a word. An unabridged dictionary is a necessity for this information, and even it cannot be kept completely contemporary. Extensive reading in writings of educated people is required if one is to keep up with the ramifications of the language.

It is a false idea to assume that a word will have only one real or correct meaning. No one can devise a system of language which would eliminate the multiple meanings of words by reason of their multiple usage. A word does not *have* a definition but takes a definition when the author uses it in context. Language is used by living people and, therefore, will be undergoing changes over a period of time. This is the reason why careful study must be given to the various words used in ancient literature such as the Bible and why extensive study in the ancient languages is of such a high priority. It is too easy to assume that a word used in an ancient text has the meaning which modern man places upon the word two thousand years later.

3. Each word will have but one meaning in each statement in a particular context. Out of the many possible meanings of a word as used by others or the author himself, the reader must receive

the assistance of the author in confining the significance of the word in his particular passage. This is done by means of the frame of reference as derived from the context. Lewis has stated that it is the insulating power of the context

. . . that enables speakers to give half a dozen different meanings to a single word with very little danger of confusion. . . . What seems to me certain is that in ordinary language the sense of a word is governed by the context and this sense normally excludes all others from the mind. When we see the notice "Wines and Spirits" we do not think about angels, devils, ghosts and fairies — nor about the "spirits" of the older medical theory. When someone speaks about the Stations of the Cross we do not think about railway stations nor about our station in life.¹⁰

It is recognized by both scholars and sensible men that a word can have only one particular and significant meaning in one and the same statement or connection of thought. Lamar declared:

Every word in a given passage has, in that place, one fixed meaning, and no more. If the reader will, for a moment suppose this axiom false, and will trace out the consequences of its falsity into all their issues, he will be led to the strongest possible conviction of its necessary truth and fundamental importance.¹¹

Ernesti is in clear agreement as he writes:

For there can be no certainty at all in respect to the interpretation of any passage, unless a kind of necessity compels us to affix a particular sense to a word; which sense, as I have said before, must be *one*; and, unless there are special reasons for a tropical meaning, it must be the literal sense.¹²

Indeed, without this principle all would be chaos, and all hope of objective truth would be destroyed. It is everywhere assumed that a writer will strive to communicate his meaning in as clear and precise manner as he possibly can to avoid misunderstanding.

The only apparent exception to this principle is when the figure of speech called paronomasia is used. This is a deliberately contrived play upon the different meanings of a word to stimulate thought such as in Matthew 8:22 when Jesus declared to a man, "Follow Me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead." Since this cannot literally take place, one of the words must be given some other meaning than the obvious, literal meaning of *dead*. The truth that Jesus is stating is that those who are spiritually dead, not caring for the kingdom of God, can bury

those who are physically dead. Such a figurative use of the language becomes obvious to a listener or a reader because of its startling change from the expected and two meanings are put in juxtaposition. (Predictive prophecy sometimes provides another exception to this principle, and this will be studied later in the chapter on prophecy.)

4. Usage alone determines the meaning of a word and not a formal definition that may be found in a dictionary. A dictionary can only summarize the meanings of a word as derived from its use in many contexts. Indeed, a dictionary can only report on the various meanings that are found in a number of contexts in the speech of a large number of people. Dictionaries do not establish meaning; they generalize the meanings attached to that word as found in historical use.

While the etymology of a word may prove a useful starting point for learning the significance of a word, etymologies are not all that secure and conclusive. Also, words change their meaning partially or entirely from the original or primary meaning. Thus, the word *vulgar* no longer means that which is common but for most people today has become a term describing that which is coarse or obscene. The King James translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:15 — “we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep” — has often caused bewilderment to Christians who do not realize how the word *prevent* has undergone an almost complete reversal of definition in modern English. In the vocabulary of the English in 1611 with a much stronger Latin base, the word was understood in its primary meaning of “to come before, to precede.” Today it is necessary for correct understanding to use the word *precede*, for the word *prevent* has changed its meaning to “hinder or obstruct some course of action.” Thus, it is of great importance to determine the designation of the word in its particular culture and in its usage by contemporaneous authors to get the actual meaning of the word for the author. A mere dictionary meaning will not be as valid a means of determining the use of the word.

5. Every word will have the meaning intended by its user. Predictive prophecy will often go deeper than the human author may have realized or may have expected as a fulfillment. This is borne out by the statement of Peter in his first epistle:

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was

indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow (1 Peter 1:10-11).

Yet it is essential to the proper interpretation of a word to know the author's vocabulary and his *usus loquendi* to the extent that this is available today.

Idioms of speech are literary forms which change from culture to culture, and what may sound like an easily interpreted statement to the Occidental may have a sharply different meaning to an Oriental. C.S. Lewis points out with his great knowledge of literature that the knowledge of the meanings of words in an earlier culture is necessary to avoid misunderstanding:

If we read an old poem with insufficient regard for change in the overtones, and even the dictionary meanings, of words since its date — if, in fact, we are content with whatever effect the words accidentally produce in our modern minds — then of course we do not read the poem the old writer intended.¹³

He goes on to quote a passage from *Julius Caesar* which was a part of an examination given to students in England:

Is Brutus sick and is it physical
To walk unbraced and suck up the humours
Of the dank morning

and one boy explained *physical* as "sensible, sane; the opposite of 'mental' or mad." It would be crass to laugh at that boy's ignorance without also admiring his extreme cleverness. The ignorance is laughable because it could have been avoided. But if that ignorance had been inevitable — as similar ignorances often are when we are dealing with an ancient book — if so much linguistic history were lost that we did not and could not know the sense "mad" for *mental* and the antithesis of *mental-physical* to be far later than Shakespeare's time, then his suggestion would deserve to be hailed as highly intelligent.¹⁴

This rule accounts for the difficulty that people have in understanding the "three days and three nights" in the sign of Jonah (used by Jesus Christ to refer to His resurrection) as being anything less than seventy-two hours (Matthew 12:40). Many cannot understand how Christ could be crucified on Friday and fulfill this prophecy as *they* think it should be fulfilled. The difficulty is in the failure to do an inductive word study on the Hebrew use of the numerals, both cardinals (1, 2, 3, etc.) and the ordinals (first, second, third, etc.). Such a study will reveal that the

Jews were loose in their use of cardinal figures but precise in regard to ordinals. Thus, "three days and three nights" in the Jewish idiom is a rather flexible term. When the Jewish writer was concerned to lend precision to a cardinal numeral, he would often use the word "whole" or "full" with it to indicate the definiteness of the period of time referred to. This is brought out in Acts 11:26 where Luke writes that Paul and Barnabas worked a *whole* year with the church at Antioch.

The definition of the "three days and three nights" must be ascertained by an inductive study of all the other passages on the resurrection and Jesus' statements as to when it would occur. When this is done, one may be surprised to find that the emphasis is upon the *third* day.¹⁵ Thus, the prediction was not for a resurrection after three *full* days but actually after two days and on the third day. Jewish idiom also allowed the counting of one part of time, a day or a year, as a whole or entire such period of time.

When these considerations are taken into account, there is no difficulty in recognizing that "on the third day" is the more exact meaning of the "three days and three nights" and that it is totally unfair to the gospel writers to force a literalistic, western meaning of seventy-two hours upon these terms. The Armstrong cult is guilty of this literalizing of the idiom in spite of the fact that nowhere in the scripture does any apostle ever seek to prove the resurrection or the deity of Christ by appealing to an exact seventy-two hours in the tomb. The emphasis is always upon the fact that He *was resurrected* from the dead and triumphant over death forever.

Every interpreter must exercise diligent care to find out the exact meaning of the terms as they were used by the *author*. The Law of Reproduction must be applied constantly to get the exact and precise thought which the author intended to convey by his words. This goal will be advanced by determining how his words were understood by those addressed. Every intelligent person will try to use the terms familiar to his audience, the meaning that they would most readily think of when they heard the words. This is what makes Kittel-Frédéric's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* such a valuable tool, because the scholars give an indepth study of the background of the words as they were used in the Septuagint, the classical Greek, the patristic works, and the New Testament itself.

6. The literal (ordinary and that which comes to the mind of

the intelligent person upon seeing the word) meaning must be accepted as the most probable meaning of the term unless imperative reasons to the contrary are found. The assumption is that a document will have a literal meaning rather than a secondary or figurative meaning, for the literal meaning is predominate. The *genre* of the writing will help to decide the question of the presence of tropical language. If the *genre* is established as a book of poetry, then beside the literal there would be a strong possibility of figurative language. This should not present a major problem to the careful interpreter. The literal interpretation will be sought always as the correct interpretation unless it becomes clear from the context that the literal meaning cannot be maintained.

Imperative reasons for abandoning the literal in favor of the figurative would be when such an interpretation would make nonsense out of the statements or render them false when the thrust of the context is taken into account. If the terms can be taken in their usual sense without making absurd meaning or contradicting other Bible teaching, they must be taken in this obvious sense. An example of the impossibility to take the terms in a literal sense is found in God's declaration to Jeremiah, "Now behold, I have made you today as a fortified city, and as a pillar of iron and as walls of bronze against the whole land, . . ." (Jeremiah 1:18 ASV). It is immediately clear to the intelligent reader that this is metaphorical language descriptive of the divine strengthening and defense of Jeremiah rather than a literal change of the man's body into metal substance.

Again, in Ezekiel the command is to

. . . eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll. And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your stomach, and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you." Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth (Ezekiel 3:1-3).

This appears in a series of visions given to Ezekiel in his call to be the prophet of God. It is not probable that this episode is to be taken literally and physically but rather as symbolic of his receiving and being filled with the word of God. This is supported by the result of the eating of the scroll which was sweet as honey in his mouth, and that does not sound very descriptive of chewing a manuscript of papyrus or leather.

In the first part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught about sin and warned that one may be led into sin by the appetites

of the body. He declared, "and if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matthew 5:30). A few individuals have taken this literally and have actually mutilated their bodies. Most people have recognized that this is only a very strong, figurative statement of the terrible consequences of sin and that all should do away with sin even if it necessitated the sacrifice of the body. Few things are more valuable to men than their physical bodies; and so the sacrifice of some of the body by cutting it off would be the most drastic way of showing the destructive result of sin and the need of eliminating it from the life of the child of God.

A caution must be raised against the inclination to make *literal* what is *figurative* in its nature as defined by the context. This has been illustrated above by the attempt to force a literal meaning on the terms "three days and three nights." In the interpretations of cults and sects with major heresies in doctrinal teaching, this error is committed. For example, the Mormons attempt to prove that God was "once like we are," a human being, because of the use of anthropomorphic terms of eyes, hands, face, etc. This is simply an ignorant reading of scripture which violates the Law of Harmony in many places in its teaching about God and the positive statement that "God is spirit" (John 4:24).

On the other hand, a strong warning must be raised against making *figurative* those things that are *literal* so as to avoid the implications of the ordinary meaning. It is a temptation for sinful men to read the text in a figurative way to safeguard their particular interpretation of a passage. A common example of this is the effort to make the *water* in John 3:5 into a metaphor for the word or the Holy Spirit. There is no reason in the text or in other scriptures to take the term in other than the literal meaning of H₂O. This is a needed rule for all to understand always the terms in their ordinary and literal sense *unless* the context, the *genre*, the Law of Harmony, or logic dictates otherwise.

7. The figurative meaning of a word finds its basis and explanation in literal meaning. The literal meaning enables a secondary meaning to develop which is called a figurative or "tropical" meaning. The word "tropical" comes from the Greek *tropos*, which means a turn or change and indicates that a word is being redirected to another use. Because the strength of an ox is very familiar to men, it became possible to describe a man as "strong as an ox." Because the manna in the wilderness was to the

children of Israel the bread of life sustaining them through their journey, Jesus could appropriate this language and declare, "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die" (John 6:48-50).

Back of a figurative expression there will be a literal use of the words in current language which is being extended to other creatures or conditions with a comparison or implied comparison of meaning, not an exact identification. Because a fox is clever, sly, and wily, Jesus could apply this meaning to King Herod when He said, "Go and tell that fox . . ." (Luke 13:32). The more one has a full understanding of the literal meaning of a term, the more he can appreciate the figurative meaning and the reason for its development. Those who do not have this understanding, such as foreigners to the language, encounter many difficulties in understanding the tropical language which is easily understood by the nationals.

The development of tropical language has been supposed by some to arise from the scarcity of words for us in describing things. This is not as likely a theory as attributing the rise of figurative language to the fertile mind of man that is so constituted as to seek descriptions and comparisons in a variety of expressions to vivify and make concrete that which is vague or abstract.

8. New meanings must not be assumed or advanced if the established meanings are sufficient to explain the terms. Lamar states this principle well:

No change or modification should be made in the primary sense in any given case, except what is PROVED to be NECESSARY by the CIRCUMSTANCES of that case. This rule cuts off all guess-work, and all arbitrary proceedings in settling the secondary sense of words. It teaches us that we are, in the first place, to insert, as it were, the primary sense, in order to ascertain whether all the facts and circumstances can be made, without violence, to fit in with it, so as to form a consistent whole; and that, where this is impossible, the general meaning is to be extended, restricted, or turned aside just enough to make the fit, but no more.¹⁶

The principle of parsimony (economy) should operate to prevent the needless addition of alleged new meanings. The more omnibus a word becomes the less exact and useful it becomes to convey precise meaning. Of course, there are advances in thought which produce new meanings for old words,

and this is to be expected in any living language. The point is one should not arbitrarily and on his own propose new meanings for words as it may please him.

New meanings will have to be established in the light of the context, a definition by the author, or comparison with parallel passages where such construction and usage of words is found. The alleged new meaning should be tested for appropriateness in conveying valid meaning in keeping with the thought patterns of the author and in harmony with good usage. The burden of proof for the validity of a new meaning is upon the person who alleges that such a meaning is valid. For example, one who would declare that a proper meaning of the word *ecclesia* is a *denomination* (some group smaller than the universal Body but larger than a local congregation) must be able to establish this meaning from the inductive study of the occurrences of the word.

9. The meaning of the context must be determined before appealing to it for the meaning of doubtful words or difficult terms. It is necessary to know the frame of reference before judging the meaning of the words individually or as to their possible meaning. All face the danger of forcing the meaning that they want upon a word and then compelling the context to agree with that. *Possible* inferences from the context or *plausible* meanings of the words must not be assigned as the actual meanings of the words. The frame of reference must govern the meaning of the words as they occur in this particular context. Plausibility is not a sufficient ground to establish a meaning which is desired by the interpreter. It is heard too frequently that "while the usual meaning is such and such, yet I am going to make it mean so and so." No one has the right to change the context which gives the actual meaning nor to import from another context a known meaning of the word which is not in keeping with the thought of the author in this passage.

10. Words vary in meaning with varying circumstances. Consider the various uses of the word *board* as in the expression "room and *board*" referring to the food that is set on the table. In another instance, it can be said that the child was struck on his fundament with a *board*, meaning a paddle. A person may be a member of a *board* which would refer to those having official duties in an organization or government. Still another person may be said to have gone *on board*, meaning that he has gone upon the deck of a ship. These varying circumstances are indicated by the context, and usually there is little confusion in

detecting and understanding the different meanings of this same word.

In the New Covenant scriptures the word *apostle* means one who is sent and above all refers to the Lord Jesus Christ as the one sent from God so that He is called *the* apostle (Hebrews 3:1). The word is used in the plural to refer to the twelve men especially selected and qualified by Jesus Christ to be the executors of His will. These were not only taught so as to teach others but were to become the *official* witnesses of His resurrection. After Judas betrayed Christ and committed suicide, his place was filled by Matthias. Also, Paul is a true apostle having been selected and taught by Jesus Christ as well as seeing the risen Lord (1 Corinthians 9:1). Still another use of the word *apostles* is found in other circumstances when it is applied to those who were sent out by the church on an evangelistic tour such as Paul and Barnabas are referred to as *apostles* (Acts 14:14). This is the probable meaning when the term *apostles* is applied to Andronicus and Junias in Romans 16:7. To indicate this meaning and avoid some confusion, some translators use the word *missionaries* or *messengers*. Again, it becomes clear why the context must be considered carefully before attributing a definite meaning to a word even those that may be quite familiar to the interpreter.

11. Words when used generically do not express specific meanings, and specific words do not express generic meanings. Words that are general or broad in scope do not give a restricted and narrow meaning. For example, the word *go* is generic and does not limit or define the mode of transportation or the action to be taken in fulfilling the command. The word *communicate* is a generic term for it does not define the exact kind or means of communication as to whether it is verbal, written, sign language, or in some physical expression communicated.

At the same time it is true that words which are specific in meaning cannot be used to express general meaning. The word *repentance* is a specific word that indicates a change of heart, mind, and will. Repentance on the part of human beings can only essentially be fulfilled in one way, changing the heart, mind, and will concerning God which results in a transformation of life. The word *walk* is a specific word; and while one may walk fast or slow, backward or forward, yet walking is a specific action that is not running or crawling. *Baptism* is sometimes claimed to be a generic word and without specific action being defined, but the scripture seems to be quite clear that it is a specific action of dipping or

immersing someone under the water that is a likeness to the burial and resurrection of Jesus. No other action for baptism can possibly express or symbolize this burial and resurrection nor give the profound psychological impact that the mode of immersion does.

Dungan declares that words of definite action can have only one meaning:

Jump, walk, run, sit, chop, dip, sprinkle, pour, shoot, hang, strike, etc., are definite and therefore but one meaning is possible to any one of them. Hence, when action is ordered by any one of them, it cannot be obeyed by doing any other thing than that which is the meaning of the word employed.¹⁷

The interpreter must be careful not to be sloppy in the investigation of meanings of words which have specific meaning. Specific words must not be turned into general meanings nor can general terms be restricted and limited to narrow meanings.

12. Words that are used to prescribe the duties of religion have the common meaning current at the time they are prescribed. The famous scholar of law, Blackstone, has written something parallel to this rule as touching the law:

To interpret law, we must inquire after the will of the maker, which may be collected either from the words, the context, the subject matter, the effects and consequences, or spirit and reason of the law. (1) Words are generally to be understood in their usual and most known significance; not so much regarding the propriety of grammar, as their general and popular use. . . . (2) If words happen still to be dubious, we may establish their meaning from the context, etc.; of the same nature and use is the comparison of a law with laws that are made by the same legislator, that has some affinity with the subject, or that expressly relate to the same point.¹⁸

This brings back the matter of cultural context in that words setting forth the commands or obligations according to a particular religious system are to be understood in their ordinary and usual meaning at that time. They must be defined as they were understood by the author and by those who received his communication. No one has the authority to change the meaning of or the action of a command into something acceptable to a later culture. The interpreter must not be guilty of importing a meaning into the terms used by the author from his own time and frame of reference. For example, those who have a rite of confirmation may find it easy to assume that the inspired writer is

speaking of their peculiar practice when he declares that Paul and Barnabas went through the cities “confirming the souls of the disciples. . .” (Acts 14:22). No such formal and ecclesiastical rite is referred to, and better translations have changed the word to “strengthening the souls of the disciples.”

13. Every valid meaning of a word should be interchangeable with the word. If a definition is correct or acceptable, it should make good sense in a sentence when substituted for the word itself. This is a practical rule that may be useful in helping to clear up points that are obscure. Translations have to consider the substitution of such meanings when bringing the text over from another language. In one culture the translator was faced with a difficulty over Jesus’ words as recorded in Luke 11, “Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he?” In this particular culture a snake would have been an acceptable offering of food. The translator had to find some other term which would convey a repulsive and unacceptable gift to get across the meaning of the term used without using an exact translation of the word.

An example of this rule in actual use may be found in seeking the meaning of baptism as it occurs in Mark 1:9, “And it came about in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan.” The word translated *in* comes from the Greek word *eis* which is almost always translated *into*. Accepting this standard meaning and reading “was baptized by John into the Jordan,” then the action of the baptism performed can be checked by substituting proposed definitions in the place of the word baptism. Is it logical and acceptable usage to say that Jesus was “sprinkled of John into the Jordan”? Or is it an appropriate use of language to say that Jesus was “poured of John into the Jordan”? Does it make good sense and is it in keeping with language usage to say that Jesus was “immersed of John into the Jordan”? The latter meaning seems to be the clearest and most suitable to the construction of the passage. This meaning is reinforced by the Law of Harmony as well as the etymology of the word.

Again, it is proposed by some that the translation *demons* be understood rather as indicating diseases of mankind and not superhuman beings. Applying this rule of substitution to various texts will reveal that this is not an acceptable definition of the word *demons* in the gospel accounts according to Mark 1:34, “And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out

many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was." It is to be noted in the first place that the healing of those with various diseases is separated from the action of casting out many demons. Substituting the idea of diseases for demons would give the following translation, "And He healed many who were ill with various diseases and cast out many diseases; and he was not permitting the diseases to speak because the diseases knew who He was." These were certainly very peculiar diseases that are unknown to medical science since they could recognize the Son of God and bear a testimony to His identity.

A further use of the rule as it applies to this question is found in Luke. The proposed definition of *diseases* will be substituted for the word *demons*:

. . . a certain man from the city met Him who was possessed with diseases. . . . For he had been commanding the disease to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard; and yet he would burst his fetters and be driven by the disease into the desert. And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many diseases had entered him. And the diseases came out from the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake, and were drowned (Luke 8:27-33).

From these examples it can be shown that this rule has some use in checking in a rather direct and practical way the good sense and probable value of a definition that is proposed for a term.

14. In some circumstances words of different meanings may be interchanged and still be correct. It is possible to state accurately that "when they had consumed, observed, eaten, kept, partaken the Lord's Supper, they went out." This is the rule of synonyms, and genuine synonyms can be used appropriately for the original word. There may be value in seeking to use a number of synonyms in a passage to elaborate upon the meaning of the term. The *Amplified Bible* has been constructed on this very principle of gathering a number of the synonyms for a term and putting them alongside of it for the purpose of filling out the meaning of the word. Of course, there is danger in simply collecting a number of synonyms and supposing that they are all of equal significance in explaining the word in the text. The word in the text must take precedence in its established meaning over synonyms that may be brought into conjunction with it.

15. When the meaning is doubtful, the common and

established meaning should prevail. The primary and most usual meaning of the term should take priority over some more recent and less accepted definition. An illustration of this is the effort by some to weaken the idea of hell (*Ghenna*) by introducing the idea that it means only a separation from God and not eternal punishment from the presence of the Lord. This meaning has not been established and is to be rejected in favor of the meaning of the word as used in the various contexts.

Another example is the attempt to dilute the meaning of salvation as redemption and cleansing from sin or moral defilement to simply the idea of restoring wholeness of personality to a person who is fundamentally all right. It may also be illustrated from current debate on the inerrancy of the scripture by showing that some are attempting to keep the word *inerrancy*, which means without error and incapable of being false, while admitting a limited number of errors in subject matter that does not relate to God and spiritual truth. This can definitely be shown to contradict the usage and definition of this word from its beginning. Such efforts often indicate a desire to keep the shell of a respectable word while removing all of its essential content as a weasel will do to an egg. Such action is dishonest and unethical, and yet it has been widely practiced by a great many liberals and modernists who have thereby deceived trusting individuals who could not imagine such trickery to be practiced.

It has already been pointed out that new meanings will be attached to old words from time to time, but these new meanings must be examined to see if they are valid extensions of the meaning of the word and that the change of meaning is recognized as a shift from the former and established meaning. Lamar points this out:

In determining the meaning of a word in any given case, the presumption is always in favor of its primary or general sense. The effect of this principle, as every rhetorician knows, is to throw the *burden of proof* upon the opposite side. In other words, it tells us that we are not called upon in any case to show that the ordinary meaning is the one most proper in the case, because this is to be taken for granted unless there exists positive *proof to the contrary*. Hence, when there is no such proof or evidence, the general meaning stands without the aid of special support.¹⁹

16. Commands generally and ordinances always are to be understood in a literal sense. A figurative expression would give rise to possible confusion and uncertainty. When the Lord Jesus

Christ issued the warning to the disciples, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," (Matthew 16:6), the disciples with Him mistook His language supposing that He was referring to the fact they had not brought sufficient *bread* with them. The figurative statement had to be given in a literal form to enable the apostles to grasp the correct meaning. Thus, one must use figurative language with considerable care as it can be misinterpreted much more readily than the ordinary and literal meaning.

Since the point of a command or an ordinance is to bring about a definite action of obedience and often prompt action at that, the effective communicator will use literal words so as to remove all the potential confusion that could arise from the figurative language. Note the following examples of literalness of commands: "This is my beloved Son . . . hear Him;" "Come to Me . . . Take My yoke . . . and learn from Me;" "Believe in the Lord Jesus;" "Repent therefore and return;" "Repent, and . . . be baptized;" "love your neighbor;" "accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us."

A command or ordinance may be set forth and described in figurative language as was true with Nicodemus, for Jesus described the new birth as being born of water and the Spirit. This was an enigma or difficult expression to Nicodemus because it was in figurative language. Jesus seems to be anticipating the future gospel command of baptism into Himself as a spiritual birth and entrance into the kingdom of God. His figurative statement became quite clear to those who heard Peter on the day of Pentecost command men and women in literal terms to "repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38 ASV). This rule is probably not needed by most individuals because the very sense of a passage usually indicates its nature as a command which is to be carried out directly and in an obvious, literal meaning. It is certainly true that commands or ordinances are not to be removed by turning them into figurative expressions which do not require specific behavior.

CONCLUSION

These sixteen helpful rules for the interpretation of words deal more specifically with the possible difficulties involved in regard to the meanings of words, but they are to be used in the light of the earlier generic principles which set forth the proper approach

to understanding words through the frame of reference determined by the context and the Law of Harmony. If an interpreter will keep in mind these various rules and seek to apply them to passages he is interpreting with difficulty, these can give him significant insight into detecting the erroneous definitions and at the same time come to an accurate understanding of the terms. With these rules in mind regarding the interpretation of words, the basic unit in the expression of thought, the interpreter is ready to learn the rules for interpreting sentences.

NOTES: THE INTERPRETATION OF WORDS

1. Steffan Andrews, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1952.
2. Charles W. Ferguson, "How 'Whip Words' Show America to be Male-Dominated," *National Observer*, April 17, 1967, p. 22.
3. E.J. Nelson, *Mind*, XLII (1933), 34. Quoted by B. Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought* II. (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1939), p. 413.
4. W.A. Neilson (ed.), *Webster's New International Dictionary* (second edition, unabridged; Springfield, Massachusetts: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1947), p. 1419.
5. These rules for words are adapted from I.B. Grubbs' unpublished lecture notes.
6. C.S. Lewis, *Studies in Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 6.
7. Mortimer J. Adler, *How to Read a Book* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), pp. 185-86.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
9. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 8-9.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
11. J.S. Lamar, *The Organon of Scripture* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1860), p. 281.
12. J.A. Ernesti, *Elementary Principles of Interpretation*, trans. Moses Stuart (third edition; Andover: Gould and Newman, 1838), p. 10.
13. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
15. Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19, 26:64; Mark 9:31, 10:34; Luke 9:22, 13:32, 18:33, 24:7, 24:21, 46.
16. Lamar, *op. cit.*, p. 296.
17. D.R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 188.
18. Wm. Blackstone, *Blackstone's Commentaries*, I, 59-61. Quoted by D.R. Dungan, *ibid.*, p. 87.
19. Lamar, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

QUESTIONS

1. List and define the five different ways to study words.
2. Negatively, we should know the meaning of words to protect us against the _____.
3. Positively, we need to know the meaning of words to enable us to grasp the _____.
4. List the sixteen rules for interpreting words.
5. Be able to explain the meaning of each of these rules.
6. Do you agree or disagree with Nelson when he says, "Not even God Himself can make men into women by shifting words . . ."? Why?
7. What interesting illustration from your own experience can you write out when the sound or form of a word led you into a misinterpretation or misunderstanding?
8. It is what Lewis calls the insulating power of the _____ which "enables speakers to give half a dozen different meanings to a single word with very little danger of confusion."
9. What is the figure of paronomasia, and why is it only an apparent exception to the rule of only one meaning of a word?
10. The beginning assumption is that a text is to be taken literally. What reasons would make a sound interpreter turn to a secondary or figurative meaning?
11. How can you determine from the text of scripture that demons do actually exist and are not diseases or psychological conditions?
12. T F All communication depends on words.
13. T F Words have only one meaning.
14. T F Words can manipulate the minds of people.
15. T F Ferguson argued that the language of our culture shows the strong influence of women.
16. T F Language is a trustworthy medium of communication.
17. T F Knowledge cannot be communicated without language.
18. T F The extent of one's vocabulary has very little to do with his ability to communicate well his thought.
19. T F Words always keep their same meaning.
20. T F A word does not have a definition as much as it takes a definition when used by the author in a context.
21. T F A word can have only one particular and significant meaning in one and the same statement or connection of thought.
22. T F You can always go by the dictionary definition of a word as the dictionary is the authority that establishes the meanings words must have.
23. T F Lewis warns us that in reading literature of an earlier culture interpreters must be especially careful about imposing modern-day meanings on the words used.

The Interpretation of Sentences and Paragraphs

Words have meanings, and the exact meaning cannot be determined apart from its relationship to other words put together in a construction which is called a sentence. The sentence will express a thought-relationship by means of the words and attempt to convey some fact, truth, or impression. The more carefully and skillfully the writer is able to compose his thoughts and choose his words the more effectively and accurately he will communicate with his audience. In the interpretation of the sentences the larger unit of thought-relationship called a paragraph or a pericope is involved as the natural context. As one seeks to interpret a word within a context or a sentence, so one must interpret a sentence in the context of a paragraph as a unit of thought. Much depends upon the skill of the author in putting together the best sentences to enable the reader to comprehend with ease and with certainty the message that he wants to get across.

The interpretation of sentences and the larger area of paragraphs is very much dependent upon the generic laws which have been given earlier — the Law of Reproduction, the Law of Harmony, and the Law of Frame of Reference. All of the skills which have been encouraged in earlier parts of this book will be needed to get the best understanding. Some of the rules which have been given for interpreting words will have some carry-over and application to the interpretation of sentences. Each of these rules should again appear to the interpreter as but logical inferences of the mind, for that is precisely what they are. They are not strange and foreign products imported into the mind but are the logical, functioning abilities of the mind as God has created it. In most ways these rules should seem evident and what is actually observed in use by intelligent people.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF SENTENCES FOR THE COMMUNICATION OF THOUGHT

Without sentences there would be no real communication of thought, and all the grammar that you have learned now becomes extremely valuable as the means of understanding the sentences that you are reading. The sentences of an author are composed of meaningful words that become vehicles of his thought to bring the readers to understand and accept his idea. All interpreters want to gain knowledge from the writer and so have to study his sentences and paragraphs to understand the development of his thought.

The reader is aware of the fact that there are different kinds of sentences, basically those that ask questions and those that give answers. The greatest number of sentences are declarative in form, as they attempt to persuade the reader to accept certain information as true. Again, sentences may be simple, compound, or complex in structure. This means that careful consideration will have to be given to the points being established in these sentences.

Find important sentences. As every word has meaning, even so every sentence has meaning; but all of these are not equally important. There are certain crucial statements that are judgments or propositions upon which, as foundation stones, the entire edifice of thought is erected. It is the duty of the interpreter to find these important sentences, to understand them, and to determine the validity of their assertions. Adler

notes that the most important sentences often will be those that give you the greatest difficulty in understanding them. The author may call attention to these important sentences and mark them in some particular fashion such as italicizing them. At other times they will have to be found by careful reading to see if they are foundational statements upon which larger units of thought are built.

Expect difficulties. The reader must be aware that there are difficulties in the meaning of sentences and paragraphs. Language is a trustworthy means of communication but not a perfect means of communicating. The fault is with men, both those who compose their thoughts into sentences and those who attempt to read them as the author intended. Every scrap of grammatical knowledge can be turned into good use in this endeavor to understand the sentences. Without grammatical knowledge it will be extremely difficult for the person to apprehend adequately the meaning that is being expressed. Good grammar books in various languages are very helpful tools to have for ready reference.

Use care. To really understand the meaning of an author in a book written by inspired or uninspired men, diligence and care are required. It may well take several readings of a book to have a clear understanding of the major premises or positions being advanced as well as to understand the arguments offered to support these positions. Careless reading can lead to distortion of the meaning of the author. Determine to spend the necessary time to get at the foundational truth as stated in the important sentences. Be willing to learn the rules and apply them judiciously to the material that you are reading. Such effort and care should be rewarding, for you will be able to gain the thinking of the author on his subject with accuracy.

II. THE RULES FOR INTERPRETING SENTENCES

The following rules should prove useful to the exegete in handling in a fair and effective way the sentences of the author you are reading. They will not automatically perform the task of interpretation; but when used by an intelligent person who really wants to apprehend the meaning of a book, they should prove to be most helpful. There should be no conceit on the part of the interpreter that he has arrived at a *perfect* knowledge of what his author is attempting to say, and it is wise to keep open to other possible interpretations of the material.

Rule One: Law of Harmony

The Bible as the inspired revelation of the God of all truth must be expected to be harmonious in all of its statements throughout the entire revelation. The Law of Harmony assumes the unity of truth and requires such interpretation and application of a statement or passage as is consistent (noncontradictory) with other undoubted scripture teaching. No human writer can come up to the level of achievement in this area that the revelation of God does.

The application of the Law of Harmony safeguards the interpreter from some errors in interpretation by the very fact that he knows the Bible statements must not be in conflict or contrary to the truth. The greater his knowledge of the entire revelation of God, the greater will be his ability to detect a misinterpretation which would conflict with other known Bible teaching. Even a human author will not knowingly contradict his judgments. How much less will it be possible for an inspired writer to write what conflicts with what has been revealed. So sentences must first of all be interpreted in the light of the fact that God has given His truth in the most accurate form possible, and all men are under obligation to read exactly that thought. Thus, the Law of Harmony is the greatest demand upon the interpreter for achieving consistency of thought with all of the revelation of God and at the same time becomes a strong encouragement for the interpreter to expect and seek that consistency of thought.

Rule Two: Comparison of Parallel Passages

Author's own elaboration. Helpful light may be thrown upon a difficult or doubtful passage by comparing it with other statements of the author (or other authors) upon the same subject. This is closely connected with rule one because it involves a knowledge of scriptural teaching collated from all the texts upon a particular subject. Of course, the interpretation of a sentence by a particular author is assisted in the most definite way by considering the author's elaboration on the same thought. Thus, Paul's teaching upon the matter of the Old Covenant having been done away with in Christ is briefly treated in Galatians and Ephesians but more extensively dealt with in Colossians 2:14-23 and 2 Corinthians 3:6-14.

Examples. In Romans 15:26, Paul speaks of the gathering up of

a contribution for the poor saints in Jerusalem from the churches of Macedonia and Achaia. This is expanded by Paul's explanation to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15. It is a tremendous help to an interpreter to read the brief reference to this collection in the light of the full account.

Another example is found in 1 Thessalonians where Paul teaches the new Christians at Thessalonica concerning the return of the Lord Jesus from heaven. Because of the misunderstanding of some and the false teaching of others concerning the coming of Christ, he has to explain his precise meaning in the second letter to the Thessalonians (chapter two).

If one is to have an adequate understanding of corrective discipline in the Lord's church as indicated in Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 1:20, "Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme," then he will read Paul's direction to the Corinthian church for the exclusion of the immoral man (1 Corinthians 5) along with the instructions to the Thessalonian congregation in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 as well as Titus 3:10-11 and Romans 16:17-18. Only by drawing together all of these passages on the same subject and not neglecting the context in which each stands can one gain a thorough view of Paul's teaching about corrective discipline in the congregation under Christ.

Again, Paul's one statement concerning the interpersonal relationship between wives and husbands set forth in Colossians 3:18-19 finds a detailed explanation in Ephesians 5:21-33. If one desires to know more what Paul's teaching is concerning bearing with one another (Colossians 3:13) and putting on love (Colossians 3:14), then he would want to turn to 1 Corinthians 13 as well as Romans 14:1-15:6. These other passages treat in greater detail the exercise of bearing with brethren and showing them the true love of Christ.

When someone wants a thoroughgoing knowledge of the subject of Paul's conversion and saving experience, he will want to consider the three accounts recorded by Dr. Luke in Acts 9, 22, and 26. By considering these three together, the most complete understanding of Paul's becoming a Christian is obtained.

Inductive study. These are just a few of the examples that illustrate the rule that a difficult or obscure verse may be elaborated upon elsewhere to the great benefit of the interpreter. Without collating all parallel passages there can be no application of the Law of Harmony. This is simply a renewal of the earlier

feature of the correct method, the requirement of a thoroughgoing inductive study of all the relevant passages.

Other authors. This naturally leads to a second part of this rule which logically requires that beside the author's own statements all other inspired statements on the subject are to be considered. Since the Holy Spirit is the author of all scripture, any genuine parallel text on any subject of scripture will have merit and authority for understanding that subject. For example, Paul mentions in Ephesians 4:29, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear." Peter refers to this matter when he quotes the Old Testament and says, "For let him who means to love life and see good days refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile" (1 Peter 3:10 from Psalm 34:12-13). It is James, however, who gives the most complete understanding of the tremendous power of the tongue in its potential misuse when he writes chapter 3:1-12.

Examples of second part. The question of good works is raised by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:10, and the Holy Spirit teaches more on the subject in 1 John 3:16-18. One of the longest and most helpful passages is found in James 2:14-26. Paul's dealing with the passing of the old covenant and the unique character of the new covenant in 2 Corinthians 3, Galatians 4, and Ephesians 2 will be strengthened and explained by the teaching found in the book of Hebrews. The inspired commentary on the book of Daniel is the apocalypse of John. For a complete understanding of what took place in Acts 15 at the conference at Jerusalem on the matter of circumcision and law-keeping vs. the gospel, one must turn to the second chapter of Galatians to read Paul's inspired commentary upon the events that transpired. In like manner, it is true that parts of the book of Acts are illuminated by passages in the epistles of Paul which give details upon the events often briefly alluded to by Luke.

Scripture interprets scripture. Thus, the long-standing principle that the scripture must be interpreted by scripture is borne out in this rule for consulting all the relevant parallel passages. When properly done, observing the rules of hermeneutics, there is no better way for the interpreter to know the teaching of God upon a subject. When Luke talks about the appointment of the seven deacons in Acts 6 and refers to the elders at Jerusalem in Acts 11 and 15 and elders in the churches in Galatia and at Ephesus, it is

of great value to the interpreter to be able to read the inspired instructions concerning these officers in 1 Timothy and Titus. Without these inspired comments the church would be uncertain as to the position, function, and qualifications of these officers.

Rule Three: Sound Critical Judgment

Use of reason. The interpreter of sentences and paragraphs must use sound critical judgment in determining their meaning. It is necessary to do some reasonable reconstruction of what took place as the inspired record is often abbreviated. There is a considerable area of inferential judgment that must be exercised in reading the scripture. The Holy Spirit assumes the intelligence of the reader. Everything is not detailed, and every action is not explained in a complete way. The Holy Spirit assumes that men will be able and willing to learn logically and apply the truth as it is indicated even briefly in the scripture.

In other words, God has given men capable minds for the purpose of investigating His word and to use in the interpretation of those things that are well established as true and factual judgments. There is nothing in the word of God that is irrational or requires man to deny that which is known to him as true, historically or philosophically. The Bible does not require one to stop thinking and merely exercise some emotional response or subjective feeling about what is written.

Misuse of reason. Of course, a strong word of warning must be inserted against the *misuse* of human reason as has been detailed under the investigation of the rationalistic method of interpretation. There is no place for limited human knowledge in the various fields of philosophy, history, or science being used to deny or undermine the teaching of scripture in its clear judgments in matters of revelation. Man's mind was not given for the purpose of becoming the judge of God.

Thus, any interpretation of a sentence or paragraph which would pass doubt upon man's freedom of the will to make moral decisions for which God holds him responsible must be judged to be unreasonable in the light of reason and the requirements of scripture. Any teaching that denies the possibility of God miraculously disclosing Himself, His will, and His truth to man must be repudiated as illogical and contrary to the accomplished fact of divine revelation through Christ and His word.

Let the interpreter come to the scripture with all of his native ability and his God-given logical mind and humbly seek to

understand the teaching of God's word as given through men like himself of intelligence, specifically qualified by God for their great task, and guided by the Holy Spirit into all the truth (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:6-13). His critical faculties will be used not to judge and overthrow the word of God but to receive that word in all of its logical, historical, and spiritual force. His critical ability will come into play often in disproving the false interpretations which men have given to scripture that deny the most basic knowledge that mankind has of itself. The critical ability will be exercised also to indicate what is not likely to be the interpretation of a passage in the light of logic and present knowledge. Surely man's reason will teach him to say, "I am ignorant or in error," before he will dare to say, "God's word is in error and teaches falsehood at this place."

Rule Four: Context

Connection of thought. Every sentence must be interpreted in the light of its context, that is the connection of thought which runs through the passage or paragraph within which the statement stands as an integral part. Though much has been written on this already (cf. pp. 93-97, 245-251), it is altogether necessary to remind the interpreter not to neglect the context. As was pointed out in the earlier material, this is a most fruitful area of misinterpretation throughout the history of exegesis. It is so easy for men to neglect the inspired connection of thought and frame of reference and to transpose the material to a context that is more congenial to their thinking.

Example. Various illustrations of this are available; but Jesus' statement is a clear illustration of the principle, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). This has been held to teach that the Lord was holding up an absolute standard of perfection in all of life for His followers though they cannot possibly attain it in this life. This interpretation is inconsistent with the context, for Jesus was not teaching about Christian character in general nor the meeting of an absolute standard; but He was teaching about the kind of love that His disciples must manifest to everyone, even to their enemies. It is to be a divine love, *agape*, a love in sharp contrast to that of the pagans who loved only those who loved them. Even the despised publicans loved those who loved them. The word *perfect* must be interpreted as relative to what man can do in comparison to what God can do. Christians as human beings must show as

thorough and unreserved love for fellow men as God in His perfect nature loves all.

Larger contexts. Always the context, first of the paragraph and then the bigger sections, is of the greatest importance in grasping adequately the meaning of the sentences which are fitted together. For example, the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah form a context; and this must guide the interpreter in understanding all of the pericopes within this major context of the book. This is one of the reasons that students are urged to memorize outlines of the various writings of the scripture, because these divisions give the major sections as well as the minor sub-divisions in the thought of the author. Knowing these and the overriding theme which binds these various sections together enables the interpreter to make fewer errors in judgment by supposing that the author is speaking of something foreign to his intention.

Kinds of connections of thought. The context may be governed in its connection of thought by a variety of subject emphases, for the author may be thinking *historically* and relating matters that are historical. This would be true of the books of history in the Old Testament and would apply to the book of Acts in the New Testament. Luke, as an historian, is concerned to present things from an historical connection; for he opens his account of his gospel with the statement that he has "traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus . . ." (Luke 1:3 ASV). This pointedly declares that he is dealing with events in an historical, orderly way. The materials presented in the book of Genesis are developed in an historical relationship because that is obviously the main design of the author. It would be expected that the historical principle has governed the selection of materials found in Exodus, Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, etc.

Another connection of thought is denoted as *historico-dogmatic* which, as its name indicates, will combine both historical material and a teaching purpose. The thought of the author will be conveyed from an historical foundation or framework but with a definite didactic goal. The book of Deuteronomy is a good example as Moses gives a running historical account of the previous history of the Jews and clear lessons to be gained from this material. Much of the teaching in the gospel as recorded by John is of this dual nature as Christ acts and speaks in His ministry.

The historico-dogmatic connection is manifested in the letter to the Galatians as Paul tells about his conversion to Christ, the revelation of the gospel to him, and his relationship to the apostles. He refers to the historical meeting of the apostles at Jerusalem to decide the matter of law-keeping with its great theological significance and other specific events such as confronting Cephas at Antioch, when he was dissembling. Of course, much of the teaching found in the New Covenant scriptures is grounded in the historical events of the Old Testament, which laid the foundation for the New Covenant. Thus, there are many allusions and references to the historical action of God in the Old Covenant period in the New Covenant writings. Note Paul's great use of Abraham's life and the covenant with him, especially in Romans and Galatians.

Logical connection is a third type of thought relationship. When the author is presenting a reasoned argument for the position or doctrine that he is advancing, then one would look for a logical connection between the sentences that he constructs into paragraphs. The apostle Paul presents tremendous arguments logically connected to prove his point in Galatians and Colossians, which has been said to be his message to intellectuals (chapters one and two). Splendid examples are those found in the New Covenant letter to the Romans, where Paul is arguing the truth of the gospel in its finality and perfect presentation of salvation. The letter to the Hebrews is also a reasoned argument for the superiority and uniqueness of Christianity over the Old Covenant. As a hortatory message to Christians who were wavering in their faith, it is filled with strong reasons for not abandoning Christianity. Jesus Christ is the greatest reasoner that the world has ever known, and the connection of thought in His confrontations with the Pharisees and Sadducees shows a masterful use of logic (Matthew 22:15-46).

Psychological is the fourth type of connection that may be involved in an author's use of his materials. As the word indicates, the central dynamic of such a sentence and paragraph will be in its psychological origin and/or its effect upon the emotions and the will. Paul bares his soul to the Corinthians in his second letter; and while there are passages that deal with doctrine and history, the great appeal of many passages psychologically flows from the personal experience of Paul and his profound feeling for his brethren at Corinth. Many of the Psalms are constructed with a

psychological principle operating in reaching a climax with strong personal involvement of the most profound nature.

Rule Five: Purpose of the Author

Design of writing. Every sentence and paragraph must be interpreted in the light of the declared or implied purpose of the author. This rule closely follows that of the context in which the connection of thought has been noted and analyzed. This rule embraces the entire work rather than a smaller context. What was the design and intention of the author in writing his letter, treatise, gospel, or history? Without this knowledge it is easy for the interpreter to assume that certain passages have a meaning quite out of line with that which the author intended. The purpose of the author must take first consideration if the Law of Reproduction is to be carried out successfully. It is not what someone thinks the author may have meant to write or what plausible interpretation can be made out of his materials but what was his actual intention and goal in writing as he did, selecting materials, using various illustrations or allusions, and seeking to persuade his readers about the truth of the matter he is discussing. The meaning of *scope* as the design of the author is defined by Terry:

Scope is the end or purpose which the author has in view. Every author is supposed to have some object in writing, and that object will be either formally stated in some part of his work, or else apparent from the general course of thought. The plan of a work is the arrangement of its several parts; the order of thought which the writer pursues.¹

A moment's reflection will indicate the vast importance of obtaining a thorough knowledge of the general design of the entire work so as to be able to give each part its appropriate weight and to observe its significance in accomplishing the goal of the writer. Human authors are susceptible of failing to accomplish the goal or design which they had in mind, but inspired writers are enabled by God to achieve successfully their design.

Determining design. Naturally the question that comes to mind is how can one come to a certain knowledge of this all-important matter of the author's purpose? The answer is twofold, for the author may actually state and define the intention and goal that he has in writing or it can be learned from a careful examination

of the whole work in its outline and connection of thought. *When the author writes out his design*, the reader has the surest grasp of the scope. The Old Testament prophets often state at the beginning of their books the purpose and occasion for their prophecies and even state the design of particular sections. An illustration of this is found in Micah 1: 1-5 where the word of Jehovah came to Micah "in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." The following verses indicate the basic message is one of judgment upon the Northern and Southern Kingdoms because of their sins.

Jeremiah indicates that he is prophesying in the days of Jehoiakim to the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah; and he declares his theme or purpose in the words of God: "See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (1:10).

The great prophet Isaiah opens his writing with an indictment of the sinful nation of Judah and God's declaration of judgment. Isaiah indicates that his word concerns Judah and Jerusalem (2:1). In the sixth chapter he reports his commissioning as a prophet and says that his message was given by God.

Often Isaiah will entitle a section of his work with the particular subject in view. For example, chapter thirteen opens with the statement, "The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw" (13:1), while in the fifteenth chapter he notes that this is "The oracle concerning Moab." Many examples of this are found throughout Isaiah and also in Jeremiah.

The book of Proverbs opens with a precise statement of the purpose of the author setting forth the matter of giving wisdom and instruction to the simple and the young man (1:1-6). In the New Testament Luke is very clear in presenting his purpose, using one long sentence in the Greek, the first four verses of the first chapter of Luke. John is explicit in telling his readers why he has written, "but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). Jude is also definite in stating his design in writing his short letter,

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that

you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (verse 3).

He goes on to state the occasion for his writing,

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now I desire to remind you . . . (verses 4-5).

When the author has not stated the purpose and design of his writing, then *the exegete must make a diligent examination of the contents of the writing* looking for any clues which the writer may have given to indicate his purpose; and many writers do disclose their plan and purpose in writing. Moses divided his material in Genesis into ten sections, each one beginning with the heading, "these are the generations of." This indicates the subsequent history flowing from that person as carried out in his descendents.

C.H. Turner has pointed out that Luke in writing the book of Acts has arranged his material into sections which cover approximately five years of time and a particular geographical area. These sections or panels of history are indicated by the closing summary statement that Luke uses to complete each section. The first historical material has to do with the beginning of the church and what happened in the first years at Jerusalem. Luke's summary statement is, "And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). The next section carries the history forward from the death of Stephen through the conversion of the apostle Paul; and the summary statement is given at 9:31, "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and, going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase." Other such summarizing statements are found in Acts 12:42, 16:5, and 19:20. All of these support the view that a major purpose of Luke is expressed in these opening words, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (1:8). This historical march of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome is set forth by Luke in his six historical sections.²

Rule Six: Historical Circumstances

Occasion. Every sentence or paragraph should be interpreted with the most complete understanding possible of the historical circumstances surrounding its composition. This will involve the interpreter in a thorough investigation not only in everything he can learn about the author, but all that he can learn about the conditions of those addressed. The particular occasions which triggered the writings are of definite value. For example, the confusion of the Galatians as they were faced with false teaching in regard to the Law and their rush toward apostasy is the necessary background for understanding the severity of Paul's writing to them as well as the thrust of his argumentation. When one begins to read the Lamentations of Jeremiah, he is assisted greatly in understanding these words by the realization that Jeremiah had endured the siege of Jerusalem, his beloved city, and was a witness to its destruction by the Babylonians. Lamentations is from the broken heart of a Jewish patriot who was an eyewitness to the complete devastation of the seat of God's government, the holy city.

Other examples. The prayer that Jesus taught to His disciples, *the model prayer* (Matthew 6:9-13), surprisingly gives no recognition to the mediatorship of Jesus Christ and does not involve His name. When it is realized that this was given *before* the cross and before Jesus had been exalted to the right hand of God as Lord and Savior, the reason for the omission is understandable. Now that Jesus Christ is reigning over His messianic kingdom, Christians are taught by the Holy Spirit, "and whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Colosians 3:17). While the model prayer gives to believers the basic elements that should engage the attention of all Christians, perhaps the recognition of the mediatorship of Jesus Christ should be indicated in the prayer by adding the phrase, "In Jesus' name."

Historical circumstances are most helpful when one reads in *Jeremiah* of the vision which he received from God. He records this vision as "I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north. Then the Lord said to me, 'Out of the north evil will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land'" (Jeremiah 1:13-14). To Jeremiah and his people this would be a clear indication that the judgment was going to be an invasion of foreign forces that would come from the usual northern route into Palestine.

The important passage containing the *prophecy of a virgin birth* of Jesus Christ is located within the context of "the book of Immanuel" (Isaiah 7-12), and considerable is known about the historical circumstances when the amazing prophecy of Christ's miraculous birth was given. King Ahaz was threatened by a powerful coalition of Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the king of Israel. These two kings were determined to overthrow Ahaz and to install one of their puppets. Because of this plot the weak faith of the king was severely shaken, and God had to send Isaiah to him to reassure him of divine protection and the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant and promise. The extreme fright of the king and the people make it clear why this great prophecy was uttered at this particular time. Thus, the historical conditions enable the interpreter to appreciate the deep significance of the promise of a miracle to this particular king.

Historical considerations are valuable in getting a better interpretation of some of the *Psalms*. The psalms in a number of instances cannot be definitely identified with a certain occasion, but a large number of the psalms have a superscription on them which indicates a most ancient editorial opinion about the composition of those particular psalms. Though these are by many modern critical commentators rejected as of no value, most of them cannot be rejected on objective evidence. Many of them clearly have meaningful association and fitness with the words of the psalm to which they are attached.

The wise interpreter will allow these headings to have proper weight in his seeking to understand the meaning of the Psalms. The meaning of Psalm 57 is more definitely realized when the interpreter notes that this comes out of David's experience when he had to flee from Saul and hide in a cave. Or Psalms 51 is made more understandable by the notation that this psalm was composed by David after Nathan, the prophet, had denounced him for his sin of adultery with Bathsheba. The interpreter of Psalm 18 is enabled to appreciate the words in the light of the superscription indicating David's authorship of this Psalm and the occasion as the "day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul." How vivid and personal the words of Psalm 3 become when one accepts the historical circumstance as noted when David had to flee from his own son, Absalom, who was intent upon taking his father's throne and life.

Careful research. The good interpreter is going to carefully

research all of the historical evidence available to try to have the most complete and accurate view of the historical conditions and circumstances surrounding the particular composition which he is studying. He will read all of the relevant history in the scriptures (as, for example, the journeys of the apostle Paul, the trials of Jesus Christ, etc.) and will in addition read the best histories and encyclopedias on his subject matter. Thus, he will gain valuable insight into the personal and vivid meaning of the words; they will come alive to him. At the same time he will have a much more adequate base from which to make an accurate interpretation.

Rule Seven: Emphasis on Words

Order of words. When a writer indicates emphasis upon a word or a thought, this emphasis must be given due weight in the evaluation of the author's meaning. In the Hebrew and Greek languages the first word in a sentence or the last word in a sentence will be emphatic, especially if they are out of the usual grammatical construction. In Hebrew, the usual order would be predicate, subject, and object. When a subject or object is placed first or at the end of the sentence, it is likely to indicate special significance attached to them. Psalm 93:1 reads "Jehovah reigns" instead of "reigns Jehovah," which means that the author wanted to emphasize the personal sovereignty of Jehovah. Another illustration is found when Abraham is so anxious to try to avoid any trouble coming to him over his beautiful wife, Sarah, that he says, "Say, I pray thee, my sister thou art" (Genesis 12:13 KJV). He wanted her to definitely *tell* everyone of her relationship to Abraham even though it was a half-truth.

Similar examples of emphasis are found in the New Testament. Luke draws attention to his key word — *certainly* or *exact truth* — as his purpose in writing to Theophilus his account by making it the last word. In 1 Corinthians 3:9, the apostle Paul is concerned to emphasize Christians' relationship to God and God's supremacy over each, so that he puts *God* as the first word in the Greek construction. "God's fellowworkers we are, God's tillage, God's building ye are." These constructions will become apparent to the interpreter who has a working knowledge of Greek or who can use an interlinear translation. The very literal translations into English such as Young's and Rotherham's also may indicate these emphasized words.

Contrast. Another way of indicating emphasis which is more

apparent in translation is by way of contrasting two different thoughts as in John 6:27, "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life. . . ." Peter gets across his emphasis on the proper dress for women by way of contrast:

And let not your adornment be external only — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, and putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:3-4).

Be alert to search out and to grasp the important words which the author had called attention to by means of word arrangement or grammatical construction.

Rule Eight: Literal Meaning First

A sentence like a word is to be taken in its literal, most obvious, and usual sense unless imperative reasons in the context, in other scripture, or in the demands of logic forbid such meaning. No other way to approach a communication is possible if one is attempting to find the author's real meaning. Most communication is done in a literal form, and the use of figures of speech and poetic language are the exceptional forms.

The genre of the writing, of course, has a role to play in the extent of the figurative language which may be anticipated. The literal use is always the foundation for the secondary or figurative use. Thus, the interpreter is safe when he takes the normal and usual sense of the words to be the intention of the author while keeping his mind open to the possibility that some part of the communication might be figuratively stated. Departure from the literal meaning must be justified with sufficient reasoning such as the nature of the context, the genre of the book, or the impossibility of holding to a literal meaning.

Rule Nine: Figurative Sentences

Interpret figuratively. Sentences which are identified as figurative must not be given a literal meaning but interpreted according to the rules that govern figurative speech. The next chapter will deal extensively with the subject of identifying figurative language and the relevant rules for attempting to accurately interpret the meaning of such sentences and passages. As there is a danger in attempting to make figurative or tropical

that which is literal, so there is a danger in attempting to make that which is figurative into literal statements of truth. Thus, when Jesus speaks to Nicodemus about the necessity of being born again if he is to see the kingdom of heaven, Nicodemus takes this in a literal sense and is puzzled as to how a man can enter into his mother's womb for that second birth. Obviously, this is impossible; and the meaning of Christ is made plain by His additional comments. He is speaking of a spiritual birth involving the Spirit and water, not a mother's womb (John 3:3-6).

Examples. On another occasion Jesus was speaking about His impending death; and He said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32). In spite of the fact that John declares in the very next sentence, "But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die," men have often turned this literal statement into a tropical meaning. Christians are exhorted "to lift Christ up before men" so as to draw all to Him. This is not the meaning of the sentence as originally spoken and can only be a possible *application* of this truth. On the other hand, it is more legitimate to see in these words the entire enactment of Christ's redemptive work which included His being lifted up on the cross and after death lifted up by the resurrection and the ascension. These may be legitimate implications of the term "lifted up."

John reports the teaching of Jesus to Nicodemus in regard to His being "lifted up." Here he uses an historical incident to present a simile of comparison: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). This is a parallel passage to John 12:32 and indicates His redemptive power through His death; for the Israelites were saved through their faith in the brazen serpent that Moses had made at the command of God even as those who believe in Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, are saved through their faith.

These nine rules are useful in encouraging the interpreter to pay close attention to the serious thoughts that he is reading and to grapple with the construction and meaning of each sentence or passage. They can open up possible interpretations as well as expose erroneous interpretations. By their judicious use, the exegete can come much closer to an accurate understanding of the author's intended meaning; and this, of course, is his grand goal.

NOTES: INTERPRETATION OF SENTENCES AND PARAGRAPHS

1. M.S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1890), p. 210.

2. C.H. Turner, "Chronology of the New Testament," *Dictionary of the Bible*, James Hastings, editor (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), I, 421.

QUESTIONS

1. In interpreting sentences and paragraphs the student must begin with the three grand generic Laws learned earlier: _____, _____, _____.
2. In studying words five ways were noted. Which *two* of these will also be valuable in interpreting sentences? a) lexical, b) author's use, c) general usage, d) synonyms, e) grammatical.
3. State the nine rules for interpreting sentences with explanation.
4. List the four different kinds of connections of thought.
5. T F Most sentences are interrogative in form.
6. T F It is necessary to find and study the important sentences in a text to interpret it properly.
7. T F The important sentences are often those what give you the greatest difficulty in understanding.
8. T F Scripture interprets scripture means that nothing outside the Bible should be used to help one interpret.
9. T F One should expect some difficulties in understanding communications because men are imperfect communicators.
10. T F It is surprising to discover how much one can learn from a message by exercising care in studying and in having an expectation (desire) to understand.
11. T F If a book cannot be understood upon the first reading, it is probably not worth reading a second time.
12. T F Human authors frequently decide to contradict themselves, but inspired authors never.
13. T F The comparison of parallel passages compliments the Law of Harmony.
14. T F One cannot avoid the use of reason in interpreting the Scriptures.
15. T F Modern man with the tremendous knowledge gained over the centuries and with the great technological advances like computers can sit in judgment upon the word of God.
16. Words do not convey thought until they are put together in a thought relationship which is a _____.
17. While Peter and Paul refer to the proper use of our tongues, it is _____ who gives the most complete treatment.

The Interpretation of Figurative Language

I. THE NECESSARY USE, ORIGIN, VALUES AND VARIETIES OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

One of the remarkable features of all literature is the presence of figurative language, that is language which is used in other than its usual, obvious, and normal sense. This is called *tropical* language (from *tropos* in Greek meaning to turn or change), because it is a change of the current meaning of the word into another or secondary meaning. All languages have many examples of this usage. Its value and use in the communication of thought will be considered in this chapter. Naturally, the presence of figurative language may cause some difficulties in accurately ascertaining the meaning of the author since it departs from the literal meaning. For the most part, the intelligent reader is able to detect the presence of figurative language and to accept it with the understanding the author intended by its use.

In this chapter the origin and values of figurative language will be considered along with the major kinds of figures. How to determine whether a passage is figurative will be studied with

various helpful suggestions for settling the question. The definitions of the most significant figures of speech found within the scriptures will be set forth along with various examples to enable the interpreter to see how to identify the figure accurately. Figurative language that is classified as figures of thought and the identification of these special figures will be studied. Finally, the chapter will close with a presentation of important principles and rules for the interpreting of all figurative language with special attention paid to parables. The student who wants to excel in the proper use of figurative language will need to grasp these points and, by diligent work in examining various passages and comparing them to the illustrations given, learn to solve most of the problems found in the interpretation of figurative language.

The Omnipresence of Figurative Language

All kinds of writings, not merely religious or poetic works, are enriched and vivified with figurative expressions. The authors of a book entitled *Understanding Poetry* point to the statement of Robert Andrews Millikan, an internationally famous physicist, when he discusses the question of pacifism,

For sentimental pacifism is, after all, but a return to the method of the jungle. It is in the jungle that emotionalism alone determines conduct, and wherever that is true no other than the law of the jungle is possible. For the emotion of hate is sure sooner or later to follow on the emotion of love, and then there is a spring for the throat. It is altogether obvious that the only quality which really distinguishes man from the brutes is his reason.¹

Brooks and Warren remark that though a scientist made the statement, yet he has drawn in emotionally laden words and metaphorical language. For example, he qualifies the word *pacifism* with the word *sentimental*, and arouses certain emotional attitudes toward the subject by speaking of "the jungle" and "a spring for the throat." These terms are not scientifically neutral, and they indicate how language is used to condition the reader and persuade him of the author's viewpoint.

Again, Brooks and Warren call attention to a criticism in a certain textbook concerning the poetry of Emily Dickinson:

To glean from another recent textbook: "Emily Dickinson the seer teases us into believing that she has dived into the depths where great truths lie and has brought up new and astounding specimens. Many of her bulletins from Immorality seem oracular.

Shorn of her matchless imagery they turn out to be puritan platitudes or transcendental echoes. Her definitions of weighty abstractions are unphilosophical. They are quick fancies, created out of a fleeting mood, and are therefore frequently contradictory. But when Emily failed with logic, she succeeded with imagination." It is impossible, apparently, to determine from what principles of poetic criticism these remarks can be derived. The objection that Emily Dickinson's poetry when "shorn of its matchless imagery" would turn out to be platitudes could be raised with equal justification about the most celebrated passages of Shakespeare. The passage rests on a misconception of the relation of "truth" to poetry, and on a confused notion of what constitutes poetic originality.²

Certainly it has to be accepted that figurative language plays an important part in verbal communication whether written or oral. There is nothing wrong with having figures of speech, and they may be used to communicate a great deal of truth even though it is not in the precise forms of scientific formula or cold prose. Most of life is not lived under neutral, objective, scientific conditions. Figurative language can be abused as well as properly used, but the abuse of it does not destroy its validity as a legitimate means of communication. The interpreter must be aware of the existence of figurative language, be prepared to interpret it according to its nature, and understand the intention of its author.

Origin

Scholarly discussion about the origin of figurative language indicates uncertainty. While it may be in part accounted for by the limited number of words and the vastly greater number of experiences and things to be described by the limited number of words, yet Terry seems to be correct when he notes the power of the human mind:

The natural operations of the human mind prompt men to trace analogies and make comparisons. Pleasing emotions are excited and the imagination is gratified by the use of metaphors and similes. Were we to suppose a language sufficiently copious in words to express all possible conceptions, the human mind would still require us to compare and contrast our concepts, and such a procedure would soon necessitate a variety of figures of speech. So much of our knowledge is acquired through the senses, that all our abstract ideas and our spiritual language have a material basis.³

God's design. That God made man with a mind patterned after the divine so that the depth of thought and the amazing wonders of human experience could be set forth in language with a beauty of detail accounts for the imagery and symbolism of tropical forms of speech. Christians can see the handiwork of God in preparing all material things to be a reflection and shadow of the spiritual realities which are true and permanent. While human language speaks from man's experience of the material world, it can be successfully and validly used of the spiritual world because God has graciously taken it up and by His Holy Spirit presented His eternal truth in the terms of human thought. As the Lord Jesus Christ, who was God, could become incarnate in human flesh by virtue of man's creation in the image of God, even so human language descriptive of material qualities and quantities can be used authentically because God created them to be reflections of His truth. Trench points out the remarkable harmony between the material world as described in human terms and the spiritual reality revealed by God as something designed by the Almighty:

It is not merely that these analogies assist to make the truth intelligible, or, if intelligible before, present it more vividly to the mind, which is all that some will allow them. Their power lies deeper than this, in the harmony unconsciously felt by all men, and by deeper minds continually recognized and plainly perceived, between the natural and spiritual worlds. . . . All lovers of truth readily acknowledge these mysterious harmonies, and the force of arguments derived from them. To them the things on earth are copies of the things in heaven. They know that the earthly tabernacle is made after the pattern of things seen in the mount (Exod. xxv, 40; 1 Chron. xxviii, 11, 12); and the question suggested by the angel in Milton is often forced upon their meditations—

“What if earth

Be but the shadow of heaven and things therein

Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?”

For it is a great misunderstanding of the matter to think of these as happily, but yet arbitrarily, chosen illustrations, taken with a skillful selection from the great stock and storehouse of unappropriated images; from whence it would have been possible that the same skill might have selected others as good or nearly as good. Rather they belong to one another, the type and the thing typified, by an inward necessity; they were linked together long before by the law of a secret affinity. It is not a happy accident

which has yielded so wondrous an analogy as that of husband and wife to set forth the mystery of Christ's relation to his elect Church.⁴

Scriptural use. In a most illuminating essay, C.S. Lewis argues the question, "Is Theology Poetry?"⁵ He discusses the use of figurative language in the scripture and what is to be made of it. He rejects the idea of a crass literalism such as the Son of God being in a physical sense born of the father or that Jesus Christ came down literally like a parachutist. He says that the agnostic supposes that the originators of Christianity actually believed in the literal truth of these statements and that later Christians have to defend them because they have no other recourse. He declares that the early Christians had no problem with metaphorical and anthropomorphic language because it is likely that no such distinction was in their minds. However, when the issue was presented to the church in the second century, anthropomorphism was rejected.

The Church knew the answer (that God has no body and therefore couldn't sit in a chair) as soon as it knew the question.

.....
 The earliest Christians were not so much like a man who mistakes the shell for the kernel as like a man carrying a nut which he hasn't yet cracked. The moment it is cracked, he knows which part to throw away. Till then he holds on to the nut: not because he is a fool but because he isn't.⁶

Furthermore, Lewis explains why it is impossible for Christians to state their convictions in a literal sense apart from metaphor or analogy:

The reason why we don't is that we can't. We can, if you like, say "God entered history" instead of saying "God came down to earth". But, of course, "entered" is just as metaphorical as "came down". You have only substituted horizontal or undefined movement for vertical movement. We can make our language duller; we cannot make it less metaphorical. We can make the pictures more prosaic; we cannot be less pictorial. Nor are we Christians alone in this disability. Here is a sentence from a celebrated non-Christian writer, Dr. I.A. Richards.¹ "Only that part of the course of a mental event which takes effect through incoming (sensory) impulses or through effects of past sensory impulses can be said to be thereby known. The reservation no doubt involves complications." Dr. Richards does not mean that the part of the course "takes" effect in the literal sense of the word *takes*, nor that it does so *through* a

sensory impulse as you could take a parcel *through* a doorway. In the second sentence "The reservation involves complication", he does not mean that an act of defending, or a seat booked in a train, or an American park, really sets about rolling or folding or curling up a set of coilings or rollings up. In other words, all language about things other than physical objects is necessarily metaphorical.⁷

Norman Geisler declares that the only possible way for man to speak meaningfully of God and of spiritual realities is through the use of analogical language.⁸ This is true if the word analogical is not over-restricted so as to exclude that which is literal, historical, and parabolic. For the most part all human description of God and His relationship to man must be in human terms to be intelligible to man and, therefore, in symbolic or analogical character.

Values of Figurative Language

From what has been said already about the necessity of the use of metaphorical or analogical language in describing spiritual realities, certain values in the use of such language can be appreciated. J.S. Lamar notes three major benefits for the Christian in the use of figurative language:

1. Figurative language heightens the interest of the Bible. However grand and lofty the truth it reveals, they would be read with great comparative indifference if they were dryly stated, without metaphor, simile, or illustration of any sort. In fact, it is scarcely too much to believe that if such had been its character [without figures] it would, apart from some special interposition of Providence, long since have perished from the earth, and its saving light have been extinguished by the dullness and sterility of its forbidding style.

2. It serves as an illustration of the meaning of literal truth; it gives clearness to, and intensifies the meaning of, that which is taught without a figure. And this, notwithstanding it must itself be explained *by* the literal. If we desired to give an untaught savage a correct idea of a steam-engine, it would not be sufficient to *describe* it to him, even in the most plain and unadorned language we could command; nor should we succeed better by placing an exact picture of it before him, unaccompanied by such explanation. But if we place the picture before him, and at the same time explain it, he understands the picture *by means* of the literal description, while the description is itself made plain by means of the *picture*. Only *one engine* is described, but it is doubly described. So in the Bible, the

literal and the figurative language does not communicate distinct and different truths, but they mutually aid in filling the mind with the same great truth. . . .

3. It keeps the great truths of the Bible ever before the mind. Infidels have contended that if God had given a revelation to men, he would have inscribed it upon the sun or the prominent objects of the material world. And this is just what is done. The law of gravitation is not more clearly written upon the face of a falling apple, than is the law of man's spiritual life on the clustering grapes and verdant leaves of the forest vine. The intelligent consideration of a *believer* sees the law in the one case as in the other. Spiritual truth, in the same way, is transferred to almost everything we behold. When our eyes take in the *light* of the morning, or when raised to view the *stars* of the evening, the mind may be filled with a truth, may perceive a *Light* and a *Star* which shed their beams upon the heart. . . . He must be blind indeed who cannot recognize divine wisdom and benevolence in thus devising a scheme, simple as the Bible, by which the whole universe becomes vocal with eternal truth, and beaming with heavenly light.⁹

Varieties of Figurative Language

In an earlier discussion of language and particularly that found in religious writings and the Christian revelation, it was pointed out that Biblical language may be literal, historical, analogical, parabolic, and symbolic. Figurative language would encompass the three forms of symbolic, analogical, and parabolic. These are the particular areas of interest in this chapter. Under these topics a further classification of figures of speech and figures of thought may be adopted. Under figures of speech are found all the various forms of comparison and illustration such as simile, metaphor, parable, allegory, metonymy, hyperbole, personification, fable, proverb, irony, sarcasm, and apostrophe. Figures of thought involve antithesis, symbols, emblems, and types. These will be taken up in order, defined, and illustrated; and helpful means of distinguishing them one from the other will be given.

II. THE DETERMINATION AND IDENTIFICATION OF THAT WHICH IS FIGURATIVE

A Valid Question

It is easy to talk about figures of speech and to realize that there is a good deal of figurative language in all literature, but the alert

student will immediately realize that he must have a means of segregating and discriminating the literal from the figurative. How is one to know whether the word, sentence, or passage is to be taken literally or figuratively? Certainly this requires a clear answer.

It must be admitted that there are various passages of scripture that will be interpreted differently by equally sincere and competent exegetes, some saying that it is figurative and some that it is literal. There is no guaranteed way to get an infallible answer on this question. At the same time, it must be said that very little of vital significance is at stake in most of these controverted passages. Although unanimity of opinion is highly desirable and must be sought, yet the relatively few passages where there is significant balance between the opinions of scholars will not affect the salvation of an individual. This does not rule out the judgments that were placed upon the allegorical-mystical method or the dogmatic-rationalistic method. The use of those methods may lead to a denial or rejection of scripture that is intrinsically vital to the salvation of the individual.

Valid Guidelines

The beginning point for the determination of whether a word, sentence, or passage is figurative is in the elementary principle of the grammatical, cultural, critical, inductive, and spiritual method. A word or statement is to be taken in its normal, literal, and most obvious sense unless there are imperative reasons which forbid such a meaning being placed upon the statement. The prior and basic assumption is that a passage will be literal, and this must always be the starting point for questions as to their meaning and nature.

Generic laws. Certain sensible means for detecting and identifying materials that are figurative will come to the mind readily from what has been stated in the past. The generic laws will come into operation always. The Law of Harmony would require that a figurative interpretation could be suspected if taking a statement literally would cause a contradiction in scripture. Knowing that the scripture cannot contradict itself, the interpreter would see if one or the other of the sentences or passages may be appropriately given a figurative meaning in the light of its own context. Always the context of the passage should be studied to see if a figurative meaning is a possibility if there are difficulties with taking the statements literally. The context often

provides the indication of the figurative. When Jesus took the loaf and said, "This is my body" and the cup likewise and said, "This is my blood" (Matthew 26:26-28), it is logically impossible to take these terms in a literal sense; for Jesus was right there before them in the flesh. He did not drain some of the blood from His veins for them to drink nor take some of His flesh to let them swallow. It can carry profound spiritual meaning and still be interpreted metaphorically as His body and His blood.

Again, when Jesus is discussing the testimony and judgment concerning Himself (John 5:30ff), He points to the testimony of John the Baptizer and declares that he has borne witness to the truth. "He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light" (John 5:35) cannot be taken literally, for John was not a lamp and did not burn in any literal sense nor was he burned at a stake for his testimony. Obviously Jesus indicated that the witness of John was that which blazed out as a true prophet. The context underscores the emphasis upon the idea of witness. Still another example is found in Jeremiah 25:15ff, "For thus the Lord, the God of Israel, says to me, 'Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it.'" Jeremiah is then said to take the cup from the Lord's hand and to make all the nations drink it, Jerusalem, Egypt, foreign kings. This was literally impossible and is to be taken figuratively as indicating the judgment of God upon all of these surrounding nations.

Ethical difficulty. Another logical guideline for detecting figurative statements would be the cautious application of the rule that when the statement requires people to do those things that are wrong or forbids them from doing those things that are acceptable to God, it is probable that a figurative meaning is involved. This helps in the interpretation of Matthew 18:8-9 when Jesus commands those who are caused to stumble by their members of the body to cut them off rather than to go into hell. The maiming of the body is nowhere approved of in scripture; and, therefore, the overwhelming probability is that this command is to be taken figuratively. When the Lord Jesus Christ speaks of one who becomes His disciple by forsaking all, He uses a strong hyperbole requiring one to hate father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, and his own life. This cannot be harmonized with the God-given command of the Old Testament, reinforced by apostolic use in the New Covenant scriptures, that children honor their father and their mother. Thus, it must be

taken as a figurative statement indicating how much greater the love for Christ is in comparison to the love that one has for the dearest and closest of human kin.

This guideline must be used with caution lest a rationalistic viewpoint be imposed upon the scripture. The meaning must not be determined by what man may find acceptable. In at least one case, an action was required which was taken literally, and properly so, even though it involved an apparent violation of everything taught elsewhere in scripture. Abraham was commanded by God to take his only son Isaac and offer him as a human sacrifice to God (Genesis 22). Abraham understood this to be a literal command and carried it out to the very point of striking his son dead. It was a supreme test of his love for God and his trust in God's will, regardless of the conditions and consequences.

Author's clue. Of course, when an author indicates in any way that he is using the terms figuratively or gives an interpretation of the statement which indicates its figurative meaning, the question of figurative language is settled for the interpreter. Several times in the gospel it is indicated that Jesus spoke a parable to them, and some of these parables are interpreted in the context. Thus, there is no question as to the identification of the material as figurative, and even the interpretation is settled. Paul, writing to the Galatians, uses an historical incident from the life of Abraham and from it teaches a powerful lesson about the Old and the New Covenants. Paul declares that "This contains an allegory" (Galatians 4:24).

In John 2:18-22, the teaching of Jesus in regard to the future resurrection was stated figuratively, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews assumed that He was talking about the temple built by Herod, but John states that He was speaking of the temple of His body and that after the resurrection they realized this. Jesus also spoke in figurative language when He cried out on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water' " (John 7:37-38). John tells us immediately, "But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believe in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (7:39).

A rational decision. Terry is on sound ground when he points out that rules are not necessary in a direct way to get at figurative

language, because most people are able to detect it for themselves with the use of their reason and the context. He points out that it really comes down to one's own rational decision and conviction as to whether a passage is to be taken figuratively. Able scholars disagree occasionally on some of these matters, and no set of rules can solve the difficulty. The interpreter cannot get away from the necessity of using logic and a critical research into the difficulty. The careful interpreter will consider the *genre* of the writing, everything that is known about the author and his style of writing, and the scope and design of the passage as seen in the larger context of the plan of the book. The figurative use of terms, images, and sentences by all the inspired writers will furnish both definitions and a paradigm to go by in evaluating controverted passages.¹⁰

With the judicious use of all the hermeneutics that have been presented up to this point along with the particular guidelines which have been suggested, the interpreter should become competent in detecting figurative language. There actually is not a great amount of uncertainty and debate about much of the scripture as to whether it is figurative or literal. Of course, in apocalyptic books like Daniel and Revelation and prophetic books like Ezekiel in which there are many symbols, many questions can arise. Until some of the prophecies are fulfilled, it will be impossible to have certainty.

When men cannot determine if a passage is figurative, two points need to be kept in mind. First, it is to be held in a suspended judgment and no dogmatic use made of it. Second, the failure of the interpreter to be able to definitely determine if it is figurative or not will not jeopardize the complete meaning or value of the writing. Neither will it involve a person's salvation. Extensive research will have to be continued to analyze and perhaps establish at some time in the future the probability in the matter. At times the interpreter is going to have to say, "I am not sure about this meaning." Actually, controverted passages are in a small minority as over against the majority of passages that are fairly well accepted.

III. THE DEFINITION OF VARIOUS FIGURES OF SPEECH AND THE MEANS OF IDENTIFYING THEM

There are many figures of speech, and it is not practical to try to cover all of these in this book. Principal ones have been selected

which appear to be of greater usefulness for the interpreter using this work. Eleven figures of speech will be treated with a view to enabling the interpreter to become familiar with each of these figures and be able to identify other examples of them as they occur in the scripture.

All figurative language involves a change of the use of the word from its normal and customary sense to a new application and significance. As noted earlier, there is a significant gain when this is done well in the freshness of the expression and the impact of the words upon the people. The imagery used is almost always drawn from the familiar knowledge of surrounding conditions of life whether in the home, society, business, agriculture, or nature. Because the purpose is to illuminate and make vivid the truth being expressed, the freshness of the figurative language comes through a new application of terms. Figures of speech all develop from a comparison or resemblance of one thing to another which is stated or implied. Mickelsen defines what he means by figurative language:

. . . the representation of one concept in terms of another because the nature of the two things compared allows such an analogy to be drawn. When Jesus says: "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), He uses this metaphor because He is to man spiritually what bread is to man physically — the source and sustenance of life.¹¹

With these thoughts in mind, the eleven figures of speech will be examined in turn.

Short Figures of Speech

Simile. A simile is one of the most common of all figures of speech and the easiest one to detect because the resemblance or comparison is marked by the words *as* or *like*. It is defined as "a figure of speech by which one thing, action, or relation is likened or explicitly compared in one or more aspects, often with *as* or *like*, to something of different kind of quality. . . ."¹² Examples of the simile are found in everyday conversation and are a very frequent literary device in the scripture. In Isaiah 53 as an illustration, the Messiah is described: "He grew up before Him *like* a tender shoot, and *like* a root out of parched ground"; "All of us *like* sheep have gone astray . . ."; "*Like* a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and *like* a sheep that is silent before its shearers; so He did not open His mouth" (Isaiah 53:2, 6, 7).

Note the very clear picture of desolation that Isaiah communicates when he speaks of Jerusalem in similes,

And the daughter of Zion is left *like* a shelter in a vineyard, *like* a watchman's hut in a cucumber field, *like* a besieged city. Unless the Lord of Hosts had left us a few survivors, we would be *like* Sodom, we would be *like* Gomorrah (Isaiah 1:8-9).

The psalmist makes good use of the simile in describing the status of the wicked. "The wicked are not so, but they are *like* chaff which the wind drives away" (Psalm 1:4). Later he uses similar vivid expressions of simile in talking about the wicked and the enemies of God:

Deal with them *as* with Midian, *as* with Sisera and Jabin, at the torrent of Kishon, who were destroyed at Endor, who became *as* dung for the ground. Make their nobles *like* Oreb and Zeeb, and all their princes *like* Zebah and Zalmunna . . . O my God, make them *like* the whirling dust; *like* chaff before the wind. *Like* fire that burns the forest, and *like* a flame that sets the mountains on fire (Psalm 83:9-11, 13-14).

The widespread use of simile makes it so common that most people do not even take time to realize that they are reading a figure of speech, and it gives them no difficulty in interpretation. When you see a comparison on the basis of some resemblance or likeness between the various objects which are introduced by the words *as* or *like*, you can be certain that you are seeing the use of a simile. For use as a formula to go by in comparison to later figures of speech, the simile pattern can be stated "A is *like* or *as* B."

Related to the simile is the *similitude* which is an extended simile or series of similes yet without a story or narrative being involved. It stands between the simple simile and the parable. The similitude differs from the parable in not having a developed story. A fine example of this is found in Psalm 102:3-11:

For my days have been consumed in smoke,
 And my bones have been scorched *like* a hearth.
 My heart has been smitten *like* grass and withered away,
 Indeed, I forget to eat my bread.
 Because of the loudness of my groaning
 My bones cling to my flesh.
 I resemble a pelican of the wilderness;
 I have become *like* an owl of the waste places.
 I lie awake,
 I have become *like* a lonely bird on a housetop.
 My enemies have reproached me all day long;
 Those who deride me have used my name as a curse.
 For I have eaten ashes *like* bread,

And mingled my drink with weeping,
 Because of Thine indignation and Thy wrath;
 For thou hast lifted me up and cast me away.
 My days are *like* a lengthened shadow;
 And I wither away *like* grass.

No one reading this similitude can escape the powerful feeling of the psalmist in the midst of his affliction and destitute loneliness. This marks well the character and value of the simile and the similitude.

Metaphor. A metaphor is a brief, pungent, vivid form of comparison in which the sense of one word is transferred to another without any formal sign of comparison such as *like* or *as*. Webster's dictionary defines metaphor as the "use of a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea in place of another by way of suggesting a likeness or analogy between them (the ship plows the sea; a volley of oaths)."¹³ The use of metaphors is more frequent in all languages than the use of similes. The formula given for identifying a simile was "A is *like* or *as* B"; but in the identification of the metaphor, the formula to apply is "A is B."

Jesus used metaphors in much of His teaching. When the Pharisees came to Him and urged Him to flee because Herod was wanting to kill Him, Jesus replied, "Go and tell that fox . . ." (Luke 13:32). The reader upon seeing this would be surprised and caused to reflect upon the character of Herod and how aptly the term *fox* fitted this sly politician. No one would suppose that Jesus was saying that Herod was a quadruped covered by fur and having a bushy tail.

Most metaphors are easily identified, and all good metaphors immediately disclose their value in the transference of a significance of one object to another. In Genesis 49:14, the old patriarch Jacob called his sons together before him and predicted the future of their descendants. In regard to Issachar, he used a metaphor, "Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between the sheepfolds." This is a metaphor and a description of the donkey-like character of the tribe of Issachar which was fulfilled historically. When Jacob said, "Judah is a lion's whelp," this metaphor just as clearly revealed the kingly nature of this tribe (49:9).

In Psalm 18:2, the psalmist adds up six metaphors in the description of Almighty God, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take

refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" As these dramatic comparisons of the invisible and mighty God are presented to the reader, he becomes profoundly aware of the mighty protection of Jehovah and the security of the believer. The prophets, as well as all the inspired writers, find great use for metaphors. Jeremiah speaks for the Lord in a metaphor when he says, "For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). Here are two metaphors, which combined, set forth the folly and tragic fault of the people of God in turning away from Jehovah.

The New Testament is also loaded with metaphors. The prophet Micah is quoted by the scribes to Herod in reference to Christ, "For out of you shall come forth a Ruler, who will *shepherd* My people Israel" (Matthew 2:6). This compares the Messiah to a shepherd, and the thought is immediately apparent to all who read it John the Baptizer's word to the religious leaders is expressed in a metaphor: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You *brood of vipers*, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' " (Matthew 3:7). John the Baptizer forthrightly and accurately characterized the religious hypocrites as snakes, a term arousing a feeling of repulsion and condemnation.

When Jesus was calling His apostles to Him, He encountered Simon and Andrew who were fishermen; and He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Such a metaphor was a most fitting way to get across to these fishermen a new occupation with some similarity to their old occupation. In the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, metaphors proved their usefulness, "You are the salt of the earth. . . . You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light shine before men. . . . The lamp of the body is the eye. . . . Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 5:13, 14, 16; 6:22; 7:15).

John records a very strong metaphor of Jesus in the episode with Nicodemus, for Jesus told Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). A man like Nicodemus must undergo a spiritual rebirth if he is to enter the kingdom of God. Such a new birth is of water and the Spirit involving both an outer and an inward action. Metaphorically described as a new birth, the great transformation of life in Christ is firmly and beautifully fixed in the mind.

Paul uses a great deal of metaphorical language in his writing. He sends a message to the Christians in Rome and reminds them of their new life in Christ which began when they were “buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Terry notes that “it need not be denied or disputed that the figure also may include incidentally, a reference to the practice of immersion.”¹⁴ This is accomplished by the use of a metaphor indicating that the action was an immersion representing a burial and a resurrection with Christ in a most fitting way, physically, psychologically, and spiritually identifying with Christ as Lord. Paul goes on to use another metaphor in Romans 6:17-18, “But thanks be to God that though you were *slaves* in sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed . . . you became *slaves* of righteousness.” The same metaphorical thought is expressed in verse 22, “But now having been freed from sin and *enslaved* to God. . . .” All of these examples of the use of metaphor in the scripture confirm the pattern “A is B” and should enable the interpreter to identify the many other metaphors which he will encounter in the word of God.

Enigma and riddle. The words riddle and enigma are interchangeable though the word riddle often is used in figures of lower dignity and application to human things whereas the enigma is applied to spiritual things.

Mickelsen refers to riddles as secular and sacred. He defines a riddle as “. . . a concise saying which is intentionally formulated to tax the ingenuity of the hearer or reader when he tries to explain it.”¹⁵ The enigma is a statement that is puzzling, obscure, thought-provoking and often of a spiritual nature, possibly prophetic. It may be described as a dark or concealed saying, yet it does have meaning which can often be gathered from the context.

Samson’s riddle recorded in Judges 14:12-20 is one of the well-known riddles of scripture, “Out of the eater came forth food, and out of the strong came forth sweetness” (Judges 14:14 KJV). The answer to the riddle was that bees had made a nest in the skeleton of a lion that he had killed and had produced honey inside of the skeleton.

On the higher plane of conveying some spiritual meaning, enigmas are given in the teaching of Jesus when He indicated that

Simon Peter would be taken captive and imprisoned in his later years,

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go (John 21:18).

This is interpreted by John, "Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God" (John 21:19). Also, Jesus used an enigma in teaching the disciples about their future action as His apostles and admonishing them that their future condition is to be different from the earlier ministry to Israel for now "... let him who has a purse take it along, likewise also a bag, and let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one." Following this statement, which is enigmatic, the apostle declared, " 'Lord, look, here are two swords.' And He said to them, 'It is enough' " (Luke 22:36, 38). It appears that the apostles missed the figurative meaning of Jesus in regard to the sword and took it literally, indicating that they had two swords among them at the time. Obviously, Jesus was not teaching His apostles to go forth with a sword to fight their way across the world, which would contradict His entire teaching and the spiritual nature of His kingdom; but the meaning of the enigma was that they must be prepared for warfare. They are going to have conflict and struggle though it will be spiritual in nature from their side.

An enigma that is very often discussed is found in Revelation 13:18 where in the description of the antichrist who is to come, John states that his number is the number of a man, "... and his number is six hundred and sixty-six." This is clearly an enigma to conceal the name of a person who is to come in the future. It is possible that no one then was able to figure out the enigma though it is known that numerical values were connected with the letters of the alphabet. Thus, the numerical value for the name Jesus is eight hundred eighty-eight. It may be that John is simply indicating that this claimant to deity is only a man and not the Christ by giving him the numerical value of a name totaling six hundred sixty-six, much below that of Christ. No one has provided a solution that is at all acceptable to the majority of scholars, and so this enigma must be left an enigma.

The statements of Jesus contained in John 3:1-15 partake of the enigmatic and puzzled Nicodemus. The solution to the

enigmatic discourse was not fully disclosed until after the gospel had been preached on the day of Pentecost. Similarly there are enigmatic elements in John 6:53-59 and to the woman of Samaria in John 4:10-15.

Proverb. This is a familiar figure of speech because it is commonly experienced by people everywhere as wise sayings or moral lessons are expressed in short, pithy sayings. From early times people have developed proverbs because of their ability to sharply and effectively communicate a truth. They become common currency in the minds of the people of a nation. The form of a proverb may be that of a simile, metaphor, or even a condensed parable; yet all of them are built on a comparison or similitude which is implied or stated. Some feel that the proverb that Jesus referred to, "Physician, heal thyself," is a condensed parable. Thus, the form and the content are distinguishable; and the form is not always the same. Proverbs 5:15 presents a moral proverb which is metaphorical in form, teaching the husband to be faithful and satisfied with his own wife in sexual union.

While the book of Proverbs is the greatest source of proverbs, they are not limited to the book of Proverbs but may be found throughout the Old and New Covenant scriptures. Ezekiel cites a well-known proverb, "The fathers eat the sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2). Paul cites a memorable saying of Jesus which is proverbial in form, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). For the most part, proverbs do not present a great deal of difficulty in interpretation although some may require thought to grasp the meaning which is one of the purposes of the proverb. There are obscure and enigmatic proverbs which puzzle scholars and on which there is not agreement, but these are few in number and not all that significant.

Metonymy. Metonymy is an interesting figure of speech which is different from the other figures of speech studied in that the comparison is not between two distinctly different objects but between two objects that are associated with each other. It is the substitution of one word or thing for another word or thing which is frequently associated with it. For instance, it is said that "the government announced" or that "government will act" when it actually means Congress or the President will announce or act. Government is an abstraction which is placed for the members of legislative or executive bodies. In American language it is often

said that “the White House announced something.” Here metonymy is used putting the residence of the President in place of the President for the purpose of making it more impersonal.

The common varieties of metonymy used today as well as in the scripture are *metonymy of the cause* put for the effect; for example, “They have Moses and the prophets” meaning that they have their writings. On the other hand, the *effect* may be put for the cause as when Moses said, “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil” (Deuteronomy 30:15 KJV). That is the effect of obedience or disobedience.

Other types of metonymy are putting *the subject* for the adjunct or *the adjunct* for the subject. “God so loved the world” indicates His love for the people of the world, those who are contained by the world. When Paul refers to the letter and the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3:6, the letter stands for the tables of law and the Spirit stands for the New Covenant of grace mediated by the Spirit. Again, in Romans 3:30, Paul uses the term the circumcised and the uncircumcised to indicate the Jews and the Gentiles. When Jacob refused to let Benjamin go down to Egypt, he declared, “If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my grey hair down to Sheol in sorrow” (Genesis 42:39) by which term he indicated that he was an old man and would die as a result of the loss of his youngest son. When in the disciples’ prayer men petition, “Give us each day our daily bread,” the word bread stands for the necessary food for life and is not limited merely to bread made from flour.

Still another example of metonymy is found in Jesus’ statement, “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34). It is to be understood that the sword is put for an instrument of warfare that takes peace from among men. Thus, it is metonymy of the cause. When Paul warns Christians against having fellowship with idolatry and the evils connected with it, he uses effectively a metonymy of the subject, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and the table of demons” (1 Corinthians 10:21). The cup and table of the Lord refer to the communion of the Lord’s Supper, and the cup and table of demons refer to the idolatrous feasts in the pagan temples.

A figure of speech closely related to metonymy is *synecdoche*. This is also a substitution of a resemblance in which there may be more of a physical relationship than in metonymy. It may be the

substitution of a part for a whole or a whole for a part, an individual for a class or a class for an individual, a singular for a plural or a plural for a singular, etc. Because of the closeness of the form to that of metonymy, it is frequently classified under that heading. A number of examples can be found within the scripture. In Judges 12:7 it is said, "And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in the cities of Gilead" (KJV). It is obvious that Jephthah was buried in only one city of Gilead, but by synecdoche it is indicated he was buried in the midst of his people.

The figure of synecdoche is to be noted in a number of passages where the word *forever* is used, for example, Leviticus 25:46,

And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour (KJV).

It is obvious that the word *forever* as a total period of time is placed for a part of time. The *New American Standard Bible* translates forever by the word permanent, "... you can use them as permanent slaves."

The covenant of circumcision was called everlasting in Genesis 17:13, "He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant" (KJV). In the light of the teaching of the New Covenant that circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing (Galatians 6:15), the everlasting nature of circumcision is indicated to be delimited by the Old Covenant. When it is said that the law is forever, consideration of the context and the Law of Harmony indicate it is limited to the Mosaic dispensation and in effect until God Himself gives a new covenant. The word forever (or everlasting) may be exhausted in its meaning by the dispensation or covenant to which it belongs. The context is indispensable to settling the duration of *forever* and whether it is by synecdoche limited to a certain period, a certain covenant, or not.

Other examples of metonymy (or synecdoche) are found in 1 Corinthians 14:19 as Paul declares he would rather "...speak five words with my mind ... than ten thousand words in a tongue." In Acts 15:16, the tabernacle of David is substituted for the kingdom of David. The word *mouth* is substituted for the testimony given by the mouth of the witnesses in Deuteronomy

17:6. Jesus is identified in John 1:29 as the lamb of God, and by metonymy the lamb stands for the sacrifice or sin-offering.

The formula suggested to help you remember metonymy is "A is A¹," a substitution of an associated element. Whereas the simile is "A is *like* or *as* B" and the metaphor is "A is B"; the metonymy is a closely associated part of the subject, "A is A¹."

Irony. The figure of speech called irony is present when a speaker says the opposite of what is meant so as to mock or ridicule an idea. Irony is best understood when one hears the statement rather than reads it, because the tone of voice is very important in the expression of the irony. The irony that must have been in the voice of Elijah when he said of Baal, ". . . he is a god" is indicated by the statement that he ". . . mocked them" (1 Kings 18:27).

King Ahab asked Micaiah, the prophet of Jehovah, if he should go up to Ramoth-gilead to battle; and Micaiah responded, "Go up and succeed and the Lord will give it into the hand of the king" (1 Kings 22:15). It would be impossible to know if this was irony without reading the reaction of the king as he emotionally said, "How many times must I adjure you to speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?" (22:16). Then Micaiah the prophet stated literally that he saw all Israel scattered over the mountains (v. 17). Thus, the irony of his original statement giving the king the answer he wanted must have been shown by his tone of voice.

Paul uses irony effectively in 1 Corinthians 4:8-13 when he deflates the conceited and false pride of the Corinthians and contrasts them with the humble and desperate condition of the apostles. The irony was evident to them by the consideration of the actual conditions portrayed and to modern readers by their knowledge of those conditions.

Sarcasm is related to irony and, while it can be considered a separate figure of speech, it may be defined as extreme and severe irony. It comes from the Greek word *sarkadzein* meaning "tearing the flesh like dogs." It is to speak bitterly, scornfully, and with contempt. Examples of this are found in the soldiers mocking Christ (Matthew 26:29) and the cruel scorn of the chief priests, scribes, and elders while Jesus was on the cross (Matthew 27:39-43).

Hyperbole. Hyperbole is derived from the Greek meaning "to throw beyond" and is an intentional exaggeration of meaning. The author represents something as greater or less, better or

worse than it actually is to gain effect or make a positive impression on the mind. Thus, in Judges 7:12, it is said that the Midianites and Amalekites "... were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore." Though a simile in form, it is also a deliberate exaggeration.

Another example is David's expression of his profuse weeping, "I am weary with my sighing; every night I make my bed swim, I dissolve my couch with my tears" (Psalm 6:6). Jeremiah uses a similar hyperbole when he declares his terrible grief and anguish over the sinful people of God, "O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (Jeremiah 9:1). John uses hyperbole in describing the many events of the life of Christ which he did not record by stating, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written" (John 21:25).

This figure of speech should not be difficult to identify and interpret. Keep in mind that a hyperbole may be expressed in the form of a simile or a metaphor; and, as in the case of a proverb, the form and the meaning may be distinguished. David's statement, "But I am a worm, and no man" (Psalm 22:6 KJV) is not to be taken literally but is both a metaphor in form and a hyperbole in meaning. Consideration must be given to the intention of the author as he seeks to underscore his statement and communicate his feeling which also removes any reason for supposing that misrepresentation or deception is present.

Personification. Personification is a figure of speech in which inanimate objects or abstract ideas are spoken of as alive or having the qualities of a person. This is highly suited to poetic language and imagination. In describing the death of Korah and his family, the writer declares,

Then it came about as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground that was under them split open; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah, with their possessions (Numbers 16:31-32).

Here the earth is said to have a mouth and to intentionally swallow up the rebellious men as though it were a great animal.

Another illustration is found in Psalm 114:3-7 when the writer

celebrates the victorious exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the sea and the mountains are addressed as though they were living beings:

The sea looked and fled;
 The Jordan turned back.
 The mountains skipped like rams,
 The hills like lambs.
 What ails you, O sea, that you flee?
 O Jordan, that you turn back?
 O mountains, that you skip like rams?
 O hills, like lambs?
 Tremble, O earth, before the Lord,
 Before the God of Jacob.

A fine example of personification which has sometimes been mistakenly identified as metonymy is found in the Lord's rebuke to Cain after he was rejected for his improper offering,

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Genesis 4:6-7).

Here sin is personified as an evil and ferocious animal ready to spring upon Cain if he does not resist temptation. He is able to master and overcome sin if he will. Job uses personification of abstract concepts in discussing where wisdom can be found, "Abaddon and Death say, 'With our ears we have heard a report of it'" (28:22).

Jesus used personification when He declared, "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34). Paul also uses the figure in Romans 8:22, "For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now."

Longer Figures of Speech

Parable. The parable is a narrative built on a simile, which is fictitious but true to life and experience, teaching some moral or spiritual truth. If an interpretation is given, it will follow the narrative and not be integral to the story itself as in the case of the allegory. The fact that the parable is built on a simile is most clearly seen in some of the parables of Jesus whereas in other cases the simile is implied rather than stated. Jesus often stated

the simile which was the basis of the parable. In Matthew 13, Jesus taught by means of a number of parables, some of which He interpreted. Several of them begin with a statement of a simile:

He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is *like* a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. . . ." He spoke another parable to them; "The kingdom of heaven is *like* leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened." "Again, the kingdom of heaven is *like* a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind. . . ." (Matthew 13:31, 33, 47).

As you turn to the thirteenth chapter, you will notice that Jesus gave a long parable in regard to the sower and the seed. Then some of the other parables are short, and some are only one sentence (13:44, 45, 52). Actually, those statements without development are unelaborated parables and may be better classified as similitudes or embryonic parables. They are suggestive to the minds of the audience of the rest of the story, but strict classification would eliminate the one sentence figures as parables which must have some developed narrative.

The parables of Jesus are not difficult to identify, because so many of them are designated as parables either by Jesus or by the gospel writers. However, there are a large number of parables outside the very familiar ones in the gospel account. One of the earliest parables recorded in scripture is found in 2 Samuel 12:1-6 in which Nathan told his famous parable to David and enabled David to condemn himself for his own sin because it was presented to him in parabolic form. Isaiah also presents a clear example of a parable when he opens with the statement, "Let me sing now for my well-beloved a song of my beloved concerning His vineyard" (Isaiah 5:1ff). Through the next six verses he describes the parable of the vineyard; and in verse seven he gives an explanation of the moral lesson intended by the parable,

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress (Isaiah 5:7).

Another parable was used with great effectiveness by the scheming Joab in behalf of David's son, Absalom (2 Samuel 14:1-24). Joab employed a wise woman to disguise herself as a mourner and to appeal to King David supposedly on behalf of her son. David was touched by the women's narrative of suffering

and the jeopardy of her son's life. Then the real meaning and purpose of the parable was given as she pleaded for the life of Absalom.

A short but skillful parable is given in Ecclesiastes 9:14-15:

There was a small city with few men in it and a great king came to it, surrounded it, and constructed large siegeworks against it. But there was found in it a poor wise man and he delivered the city by his wisdom. Yet no one remembered that poor man.

While this is not extended and elaborated, it is a gem of a parable. The explanation follows when Solomon says, "So I said, 'Wisdom is better than strength.' But the wisdom of the poor man is despised and his words are not heeded" (Ecclesiastes 9:16). This is the lesson of the parable.

Jesus was the master user of parables in all of His teaching, so a diligent study of His parables and their interpretation are of great value to the interpreter of scripture in other parables. A later section will be devoted to the interpretation of parables because of the interest in and wide use of parables. Paul did not make use of parables, but some allegories were used by him as is also the case of John. John does not give any of the parables of Jesus but some of the allegories in the Lord's teaching.

Allegory. An allegory is a longer figure of speech constructed on an extended metaphor involving a narrative which teaches some moral or spiritual truth. The narrative is usually fictitious though not fabulous or unreal, and the interpretation is implied within the story itself; indeed, the story is the meaning. The differences between the parable and the allegory are noted by Terry:

The allegory contains its interpretation within itself, and the thing signified is identified with the image; as "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (John xv, 1); "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. v, 13). The allegory is a figurative use and application of some supposable fact or history, whereas the parable is itself such a supposable fact or history. The parable uses words in their literal sense, and its narrative never transgresses the limits of what might have been actual fact. The allegory is continually using words in a metaphorical sense, and its narrative, however supposable in itself, is manifestly fictitious.¹⁶

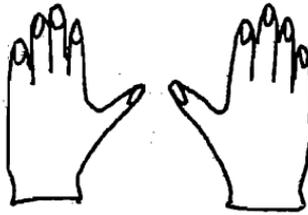
The allegory differs also from the parable in that it will have a plurality of points of comparison whereas the parable will be focused usually on one principal comparison. This is clearly

illustrated in Paul's well-known allegory of the Christian armour in which he describes the Christian's spiritual equipment,

Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:14-17).

Each part of the armour is given its spiritual meaning in the narrative itself. It is self-explanatory.

Those who are acquainted with Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* are familiar with the *genre* of allegory and how it is to be read. The word *allegory* comes from two Greek terms which mean to say something so as to imply another meaning. As one reads the narrative, the true intended meaning shines through to the reader.



To teach visually the difference between the simile and the metaphor as well as the parable and allegory, the author has used his right and left hands. Placing the thumbs together with the fingers extended on both hands, the simile and parable are illustrated; because the two hands, while similar, are placed in comparison and are not superimposed upon one another. The story and the meaning are distinct.



Then by placing the left hand over the extended palm of the right hand with thumbs and fingers matched, the visual representation of the metaphor and the allegory is shown. In the

allegory the inner and outer meanings are blended, and the qualities and properties of the story become the qualities and properties of the meaning. The story does not bring another comparison and meaning to mind as something distinct but is itself the meaning intended.

By bringing into juxtaposition an example of a parable and an example of an allegory which use the same common object of comparison, a vine, the reader may be able to apprehend more clearly the distinctions and the differences between the parable and the allegory.

Let me sing now for my well-beloved a song of my beloved concerning His vineyard.

My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.

And He dug it all around, removed its stones,

And planted it with the choicest vine.

And He built a tower in the middle of it,

And hewed out a wine vat in it;

Then He expected it to produce good grapes,

But it produced only worthless ones.

“And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
Judge between Me and My vineyard.

What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not
done in it?

Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it
produce worthless ones?

So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard:

I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed;

I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.

And I will lay it waste;

It will not be pruned or hoed,

But briars and thorns will come up.

I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.”

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel,

And the men of Judah His delightful plant.

Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed;

For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress (Isaiah 5:1-7).

This parable is a story of a farmer who plants a vineyard with the very choicest vine and does everything for it that needs to be done to produce good grapes; however, it produces only bitter and worthless ones. In verse seven the interpretation is given indicating that the Lord is the one who planted the vine and the vine is Israel. The lesson is that, in spite of God's exceptional

provision for Israel, the nation had failed and had become the very opposite that God had planned.

The allegory for comparison is found in Psalm 80:8-16:

Thou didst remove a vine from Egypt;
Thou didst drive out the nations, and didst plant it.
Thou didst clear the ground before it,
And it took deep root and filled the land.
The mountains were covered with its shadow;
And the cedars of God with its boughs.
It was sending out its branches to the sea,
And its shoots to the River.
Why hast Thou broken down its hedges,
So that all who pass that way pick its fruit?
A boar from the forest eats it away,
And whatever moves in the field feeds on it.
O God of hosts, turn again now, we beseech Thee;
Look down from heaven and see, and take care of this vine,
Even the shoot which Thy right hand has planted,
And on the son whom Thou hast strengthened for Thyself.
It is burned with fire, it is cut down;
They perish at the rebuke of Thy countenance.

The reader immediately recognizes this as an allegory in that it cannot be taken literally; for Jehovah never physically and literally did this with any vine, nor do vines do what this vine did. As an allegory rather than a parable, the meaning is intrinsic in the story. The reader perceives at once that God took the nation Israel from Egypt and drove out the heathen nations and planted it in Canaan, where it took deep root and became a strong nation. It extended its hegemony to the Mediterranean Sea and to the Euphrates. The judgment of God has come upon it, and the people have suffered affliction, probably the Babylonian exile when the "boar from the forest," the king of Babylon, had taken it away. "It is burned with fire, it is cut down" is probably a reference to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. Thus, there are a number of points of comparison within the allegory where there is one principal point in the parable. The meaning in the allegory is an integral part of the story whereas the meaning of the parable is given after the parable in verse seven.

The study of the allegories in the scripture will be helpful and necessary to gain an appreciation of the literary form and its value in communicating truth. A notable allegory of the Old Testament is found in Ecclesiastes 12:2-6, a most interesting description of a

prematurely old man who has not remembered his Creator from his youth up. The meaning is not too hard to pick out of the words: The watchmen of the house are the hands; and the mighty men are the legs, while the grinding ones are naturally the teeth that are few. Those who look through the windows are the eyes, and the doors on the street which are shut indicate the dullness of hearing by the ears. The almond tree blossoms refer to the white hair of the older person, and the grasshopper and the caperberry are no longer delicacies of food that arouse the appetite. Man's vitality has faded, and he is headed for the grave. When the silver cord is broken, the golden bowl crushed, the pitcher by the well shattered, and the wheel of the cistern is crushed, all the vital processes of life have failed. Everything that is essential to life has now broken and come to nought:

A vivid picture of the false prophets in the time of Ezekiel is given by the prophet (13:8-16). The allegory uses a metaphor of those who build a wall. It is weak and ill-constructed, but its true nature is deceitfully hidden by generously plastering it with whitewash. It looks good but is worthless. The wall will be tested by a flooding rain (judgment) from God which will wash away the whitewash, and the wall will fall. The plasterers will be destroyed by their own wall.

Jesus used a number of significant allegories in His teaching. John records allegories of Christ rather than parables. In John 10 Christ teaches vividly His relationship to the sheep. Christ is the one who is the door, and only through Him is there salvation for the sheep. He continues this thought with a change to the fact that He is the good shepherd (a metaphor) who lays down His life for the sheep. In this way He predicted His coming death on behalf of mankind and the inclusion of the Gentiles by His reference to other sheep which are not of this fold who, hearing His voice, will become one flock with one shepherd (10:16).

Likewise, in John 15:1-10, the well-known allegory of the vine begins with a metaphor which is a clue to the fact that it is not a parable: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser." This thought is elaborated upon in regard to the individual disciples who are noted as branches in verse five, "I am the vine, you are the branches." He goes on to warn them about being fruitful and the absolute necessity of being vitally connected with Him. He who does not abide in the vine will be cast off and burned in the fire. It is one of the very strong lessons of the allegory that there must be essential and continuing union of each

person (branch) in Christ, the vine. Nothing will be accomplished unless that relationship is maintained, and it is maintained especially through abiding in Christ's word and love, keeping His commandments.

The figure of speech in Galatians 4:21-24 is of special consideration; for, although this is called an *allegory*, it appears to be more technically correct to classify it as a type. These are associated figures, yet it seems better to reclassify it because the term *allegory* (4:24) is a more general description rather than a technically accurate description. This passage will be studied under the section dealing with typology.

Fable. A fable is a figure of speech in which a narrative is presented which is fictitious and fabulous, not true to life and teaching only some human lesson or something on a lower scale of value from the parable and the allegory. It is the least dignified of the figures of speech in literature and certainly in the scripture. The imagery is not the real experiences of life, as individuals and objects do that which is contrary to their nature. Terry gives this helpful word about fables,

We should also note how completely the spirit and aim of the fable accords with irony, sarcasm, and ridicule. Hence its special adaptation to expose the follies and vices of men. "It is essentially of the earth," says Trench, "and never lifts itself above the earth. It never has a higher aim than to inculcate maxims of prudential morality, industry, caution, foresight; and these it will sometimes recommend even at the expense of the higher self-forgetting virtues. The fable just reaches that pitch of morality which the world will understand and approve."¹⁷

Only a few fables are told in the scripture, and these will illustrate the definition that has been given. The men of Shechem revolted against Jerubbaal and did evil. Jotham called them to account through telling a fable (Judges 9:7-20). It is a well-constructed and effective fable, a very fine example to analyze for the properties of a fable. The trees seek a king to rule over them, and only the lowly bramble could be persuaded to do so. The ridiculous humiliation of the trees and the absurd threatening of the bramble (9:15) illuminate most effectively the foolish action of the men of Shechem in accepting Abimelech as their ruler. The meaning is confirmed in the closing verses (16:20).

Another fable is recorded in 2 Kings 14:9. This is a condensed fable and not elaborated upon, yet it is quite clear in its message

concerning the political activity of Amaziah who challenged Jehoash, king of Israel, to military conflict. Jehoash pointedly discouraged Amaziah about his supposed military prowess by the use of a fable. Certainly the lesson was well made although Amaziah chose to disregard the advice contained in the fable.

Ezekiel in his prophecy recorded in chapter seventeen seems to make use of a fable, and it is called in verse two a riddle and a parable. By stricter classification it would be an enigma-allegory because there are several points of comparison embedded in the narrative itself. While something happens that is fabulous because it does not happen in nature, yet it is more than a fable. It is not difficult for the reader to grasp the meaning of the narrative as the first great eagle represents Egypt; and the second one represents Babylon, while the cropping of the top of the cedar and taking of the seed of the land refer to the nation Israel. This thought is developed in the explanation, verses 12-21. The allegory closes by Jehovah declaring that He Himself will take a sprig from the top of the cedar and plant it on the high mountain in Israel, and this sprig will become the Messiah Himself.

The interpreter will realize there are other figures of speech that can be studied and will be encountered in the scripture. Help on these new ones can be obtained by reference to the commentaries and dictionaries for definition and identification. It is believed that the eleven figures presented are among the more difficult or more significant figures of speech that will be encountered and of interest to the general reader of the scripture.

IV. THE DEFINITION OF FIGURES OF THOUGHT AND THE MEANS OF IDENTIFYING THEM

In addition to the figures of speech which have been considered, there are several usages of language which are not literal and yet do not seem to be definite figures of speech as defined in the preceding paragraphs. These will be considered as figures of thought, literary devices to communicate effectively the thought of the author by certain patterns. Under this heading three different figures or patterns of thought will be examined.

Antithesis

The figure of thought called antithesis is not difficult to recognize, and its value in communication becomes immediately

apparent. The author attempts to discriminate and distinguish various elements of his subject by placing them in opposition to each other. As the word is derived from the Greek language it indicates a setting against. It is identified whenever you read contrasting ideas or a series of contrasts.

A mechanical model of an antithesis would be two columns of equal dimensions set over against each other and with a compass on the top with one leg on one pillar and the other leg on the second pillar. An antithesis in language is not mechanical but when carried out will have exact relationship to the opposite members. What is said on the one side will be in opposition to that on the other side. Dungan suggests that by antithesis the question concerning how faith comes about may be determined by placing all the causes of unbelief on the one hand and noting that faith will be the opposite to each of these. The causes that produce unbelief will be the opposite of those causes that produce faith.¹⁸

Many fine examples of antithesis occur in the scripture. They often appear within argumentation or the presentation of controverted points. In teaching about the Old Covenant versus the New Covenant, Jesus set up the antithetical statements by the introductory words, "You have heard that the ancients were told . . . But I say to you . . ." (Matthew 5:21-22). This pattern is repeated four times in the fifth chapter of Matthew as Jesus clearly delineates the higher righteousness required of His disciples in contrast to the ethical demands of the Law.

Again, Jesus used antithesis in teaching about the judgment when He will sit on His glorious throne (Matthew 25:31-46). All nations are to be gathered before Christ; and He will separate them into two groups, the sheep on the right and the goats on the left. Praise will be given to the righteous because of what they have done in ministering to Him and to His body. Those on the left will receive rebuke and be condemned for not doing the very same things that the righteous had done to honor Christ. The conclusion of the antithesis defines the final condition of the wicked and the righteous. Those who have failed to be obedient will be sent into eternal punishment and the righteous into eternal life (Matthew 25:46). While the extent of the punishment of the wicked is described by the same word as that for the righteous, eternal (Greek *aionion*), the meaning is clinched by the principle of antithesis which requires an exact opposite in the elements of the antithesis. The wicked are punished just as long as the righteous live with God.

Paul made effective use of antithesis in many of his presentations of the truth of the gospel. In writing to the Roman Christians (2:5-11), the apostle is treating of the righteous judgment of God which is universal and without partiality; and by use of antithesis he portrays very clearly the two classes of individuals and what they will receive in judgment according to what they have done. This antithesis may be visualized by putting it into the two columns which answer to each other.

Romans 2:7-10
 RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD

Render to everyman according to his deeds

1. those who by perseverance	1. those who are selfishly ambitious
2. in doing good	2. do not obey the truth
3. seek for glory	3. obey unrighteousness
4. honor	4. wrath
5. eternal life	5. (implied: eternal death)
6. glory	6. indignation
7. glory	7. tribulation
8. honor	8. distress
9. peace	9. (implied by silence: anguish)
10. who does good	10. who does evil
11. Jew and Greek	11. Jew and Greek

No partiality with God

Undoubtedly the finest example of an extended antithesis for the purpose of distinctive teaching is found in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians in regard to the Old Covenant and the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:5-18). This vital teaching on the distinctions between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is sharply pointed out by the antithesis which Paul constructs.

OLD	COVENANT	NEW
1. tablets of stone		1. tablets of human hearts
2. of the letter		2. of the Spirit
3. letter kills		3. Spirit gives life
4. ministry of death		4. ministry of Spirit
5. ministry of condemnation		5. ministry of righteousness
6. glory		6. surpassing glory
7. fades away		7. remains
8. Moses veiled his face		8. apostles' great boldness
9. minds veiled		9. faces unveiled
10. not apprehend glory of the Lord	10.	apprehend the glory of the Lord being transformed in it

On the one side he lists the characteristics and effect of the Old Covenant given through Moses and on the opposite side he contrasts the wonderful characteristics of the New Covenant. No one giving careful consideration to these astonishing opposites can confuse the Old Covenant with the New Covenant or ever desire to live under the Old Covenant instead of under the New Covenant. The antithesis is so very sharp and clear that all can appreciate immediately the uniqueness of the New Covenant.

A very meaningful parallel passage on the same subject is written to the Galatians by Paul (4:21-31). This is said to be an allegory, and because of its typological significance it will be considered under typology. Although it is allegorical in form, it sets forth in the strongest way the antithesis between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant using the first and second wives of Abraham and their sons to establish the impassable gulf between the Old Covenant and the New.

Symbols

The whole subject of symbols is a very large field of study with several subdivisions inviting investigation. It is of interest and value to the interpreter to be able to identify and interpret the various areas of symbolism, for they play an important role in Bible teaching. At the same time it will be impossible to go into a detailed study of all the aspects of symbols as even books have been written on some areas of the subject.¹⁹ A brief treatment of symbols and emblems will be given in this section followed by a separate section devoted to types, a special kind of symbol. The student will consider this as an introduction to these deep subjects and not as exhaustive treatments of them.

The second definition given under symbol in *Webster's New International Dictionary* is helpful in appreciating the meaning of the term:

That which stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental but not intentional resemblance; esp. a visible sign of something invisible, as an idea, a quality, or totality such as a state or a church; an emblem; as, the lion is the symbol of courage; the cross is the symbol of Christianity.²⁰

In another place Webster's dictionary makes these discriminations:

EMBLEM, SYMBOL, TYPE, TOKEN agree in the idea of a significant representation. An EMBLEM is a visible object representing another by a natural suggestion of characteristic qualities, or by a habitual or recognized association; as, a circle, having no beginning or end, is an *emblem* of eternity, the dove is the *emblem* of peace, a flag is the *emblem* of the country; "Like *emblems* of infinity the trenched waters run from sky to sky" (*Tennyson*). A SYMBOL may be entirely arbitrary or conventional (as in the case of algebraic, astronomical, typographical symbols, and the like); as a synonym for *emblem* (with which it is often interchangeable, as, "Be still a *symbol* of immensity; a firmament reflected in a sea," *Keats*) the word frequently suggests profounder or more recondite significance; as, "In a *symbol* there is concealment and yet revelation. . . . The universe is but one vast *symbol* of God" (*Carlyle*). TYPE, as here compared, stresses the idea of representative character, and often implies prefigurement (compare *antitype*); as, "one mind, the *type* of all, the moveless wave whose calm reflects all moving things that are" (*Shelley*); Joshua was a *type* of Christ. A TOKEN is a symbol which serves esp. as a memorial or a guarantee; as, "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a *token* of a covenant between me and the earth" (Gen. ix. 13).²¹

From this data it appears that the word symbol may be used to embrace the special kinds of symbols such as the emblem, type, and token. All of these have in common a representative likeness and comparison which stimulates the mind to grasp the truth presented. The emblem differs from the symbol in being naturally suggestive of that which it represents, while the symbol is arbitrary and without any essential relationship. The type differs from the emblem and the symbol by having reference to time. In the scripture, it looks forward to its completion and fulfillment in an antitype. The token is not of immediate concern in biblical hermeneutics and is associated with the idea of sign. Genesis 9:13 speaks of the rainbow as a token, but in the *New American Standard Bible* it is translated as a sign rather than a token of a covenant.

Three classes of symbols. Writers on the subject of symbolism are in agreement that symbols may be classified under three headings: miraculous, material, and visional. There are not many examples in the scripture of *miraculous* symbols, but they include the miracle of the cherubim and the flaming sword set at the entrance of the Garden of Eden after the exclusion of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:24). This prevented man from returning to the garden and eating of the tree of life thereby living forever in the

misery of sin. The way to the garden was blocked off and symbolized man's alienation from God.

God used a miraculously burning bush which was not consumed at Mt. Sinai to reveal Himself to Moses (Exodus 3:1-6). The burning bush symbolized the presence of Jehovah in His majesty and holiness. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, God's presence with them was symbolized by the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night (Exodus 13:21). This constant pillar of cloud and fire reminded Israel that Jehovah was with her in the midst of the difficulties and trials of the wilderness journey.

Miraculous symbols in the New Covenant scriptures include the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus Christ in the form of a dove. Clearly the dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit as noted in Matthew 3:16, "And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him." Likewise, the events recorded in Acts 2 concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles in the fulfillment of the promise of Christ to them was in the form of miraculous symbols:

And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance (Acts 2:2-4).

The invisible Spirit is given to the apostles with visible, miraculous symbols for the purpose of making clear to those who witnessed it that Joel's prophecy was beginning to be fulfilled in the apostles' reception of the Holy Spirit. The uniqueness of the day of Pentecost as the birthday of the church is strongly underscored by the unique manifestation of miraculous symbols.

The next class of symbols used in the scripture is *material* symbols. Some of these would include "the testimony" that was symbolized by the presence of the tables of the Law in the Ark of the Covenant, for they served as a constant reminder of God's covenant with Israel and His moral requirements (Exodus 25:16-21, 31:18; Deuteronomy 4:13). The tables of stone on which the ten commandments were written symbolized the whole Law and Covenant with Israel. Even more significant for Israel

was the fact that the mercy seat (or *capporeth*) was on the top of the Ark of the Covenant. There between the cherubim the high priest sprinkled the blood of atonement once a year. The mercy seat covered the tables of the Law; and, through the sprinkling of the blood, atonement was made for the violations of the Law which the people had committed during the year. Thus, the symbolism is carried out of mercy rejoicing over the judgment and the condemnation of the Law because of the atoning sacrifice.

The golden altar of incense in the tabernacle was the symbol for the worship of God offered by the people through prayer. David prayed, "May my prayer be counted as incense before Thee" (Psalm 141:2). In the book of Revelation, the angel offers up incense at the altar standing before God,

... and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand (Revelation 8:3-4).

In the Old Testament economy, God permitted people to have a strong symbolic reinforcement of the truth that their prayers were ascending to Him.

In the worship of God in the tabernacle and the temple, the material symbol of the cherubim was quite important. They were woven into the curtains of the tabernacle; and two of them made of gold faced each other, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings (Exodus 25:18-20). Cherubim were carved on the inner walls of the temple and woven into the great veil (2 Chronicles 3:7, 14). Because Jehovah is enthroned upon the cherubim, the presence of the Lord was indicated by these material symbols (1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; Isaiah 37:16). The holiness and glory of Jehovah was also emphasized by the presence of the cherubim.

Blood is one of the outstanding material symbols that is found in both covenants. The blood of animals offered in sacrifice has been one of the most prevalent customs throughout all cultures. Under the Law, specific regulations were given for the blood of the sacrifices and its particular use in atonement (Leviticus 17). The restriction was very strong against the use of blood in anything but sacrifice. The reason for this is stated in Deuteronomy 12:23-25:

Only be sure not to eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh. You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water. You shall not eat it, in order that it may be well with you and your sons after you, for you will be doing what is right in the sight of the Lord.

The life (or soul) is associated with the blood, and life is sacred. Life belongs peculiarly to God and is, therefore, offered to Him in the sacrifice of the blood. This profound symbolism impressed upon Israel that a life was being offered for their sins, not just any common object. It prepared men for the supreme offering of Christ under the New Covenant as through the shedding of His blood He gave His life for the world.

In John 10:11, Jesus teaches that He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep; and this is repeated throughout this passage. At the last supper when Jesus instituted the communion of His body and blood, it is recorded, "And He took a cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is to be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matthew 26:27-28). Thus, the important symbolism of blood throughout the Old Testament emphasized the life of the victim in making atonement, all of which typically looked forward to its accomplishment in the life of the Son of God, who alone could take away sin (Hebrews 9:11-15, 10:4-14).

The greatest number of symbols are classified as *visional* and are extensively used throughout the scripture.²² Visual symbols use objects which are common to man; and yet, through their use in a vision or dream, God imparts a particular lesson, what could be called an object lesson. Some truth is revealed by means of a new significance given to the object used. Examples of this will make clear the meaning of visual symbols.

When Jehovah commissioned Jeremiah, He gave to him a vision, "And the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'What do you see, Jeremiah?' And I said, 'I see a rod of an almond tree'" (Jeremiah 1:11). This object has a symbolic meaning attached to it for Jeremiah, as God explains the vision, "You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it" (Jeremiah 1:12). Since the word almond (Hebrew *shaked*) is very close to the word watching (Hebrew *shoked*), there is a play upon the object which he saw. God is diligent to perform His word and is watching over it to see it accomplished. Also, the almond tree was the first of the trees

to blossom in the spring, and this idea of its early awakening strengthens the teaching of the symbol that God is alert and vigilant in regard to His word.

Jeremiah saw a vision of two baskets of figs set before the temple of the Lord (Jeremiah 24:1-10). One basket was filled with very good figs, like the first of the season, very desirable; and the other basket had very bad figs which were rotting. The symbolism is explained by God that the good figs represent the captives of Judah who were in Babylonian exile and who would be built up and returned to the land, while the very bad figs were those Jews who remained in the land of Palestine and were going to perish under the judgment of God.

Another prophet was given a vision of a basket of summer fruit (Amos 8:1-2). Amos saw a basket filled with fully-ripe fruit (*qayitz*). This symbol is explained by the Lord, "The end (*qetz*) has come for My people Israel. I will spare them no longer" (Amos 8:2). A basket of summer fruit will be quickly consumed by those who are present, or it will spoil into rotteness in the hot sun. The Lord makes a play upon the similarity of the two words (*qayitz* and *qetz*) to disclose the meaning of the symbol in the vision. The people are ripe for judgment, and God is bringing Israel to it.

Many are familiar with the notable visual symbol that occurs in Ezekiel from a popular song based on the event. Ezekiel was brought by the Spirit of the Lord and set down in a valley of bones that were very dry (Ezekiel 37:1ff). He was told to prophesy over these dry bones and that God was going to cause breath to enter into them so that they might live again. After Ezekiel prophesied to the bones, there was a great restoration of the bones into bodies and a resurrection from the dead. This vivid visional symbol was explained by God as referring to the whole house of Israel that would be brought back from a state of death in the exile and restored to the land of promise (37:11-14). Such a clear symbol would impress not only the prophet but the people to whom he spoke with great hope for the future deliverance from exile and restoration to the land.

The book of Revelation has many visional symbols composing a considerable part of the book. In the opening vision, John sees one like a son of man walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands and holding in his hand seven stars with a sharp two-edged sword proceeding from his mouth (Revelation 1:12-16). As John falls at his feet, the personage he has seen identifies himself as Jesus, the risen Lord. He interprets the

symbols of the seven golden lampstands as representing the seven churches of Asia mentioned in verse eleven, while the seven stars are identified as the angels or messengers of the seven churches (1:20). It is not difficult to explain the symbolism of the sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of his mouth as representing the word of God, for so it is used in other references (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12).

Peter's vision while he was at Joppa is one of the most interesting and valuable visual symbols given in the New Testament. Peter was hungry at noontime; and while food was being prepared, he went to the housetop to pray. He fell into a trance, an ecstatic vision, and saw a remarkable symbol:

... the sky opened up, and a certain object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, "Arise, Peter, kill and eat!" But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean." And again a voice came to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy." And this happened three times; and immediately the object was taken up into the sky (Acts 10:11-16).

Peter was greatly perplexed over the meaning of the vision, but both Peter and the reader are quickly made aware of its meaning as the messengers from the Gentile, Cornelius, arrived and asked Peter to accompany them to Caesarea. The Lord had to prepare Peter through this vision, which was repeated three times, to get him to realize that the Gentiles were acceptable to God along with the Jews; God had cleansed them, and they were no longer unholy or unacceptable to Him. This vision from God was quite important to convince Peter, and nothing else could be better evidence for other Jewish Christians that God was approving the admission of the Gentiles. The symbolism used was quite appropriate to a Jewish Christian like Peter, who had kept the Law so rigidly. The lesson was driven home to Peter in an unforgettable way by its threefold repetition; it was unmistakably true.

From these visual symbols certain characteristics of symbols can be gathered. The object used is to be understood literally of some common, physical object familiar to the person. The object used in the symbol is not the meaning but suggests something else that resembles it (as in allegory) where one thing is said while another is intended. Always the symbol is given to teach a lesson

or truth in a vivid and memorable way. The symbol will have some resemblance to the meaning that it portrays though it is distinct from that meaning, representing something other than itself.

Symbolic numbers, names, colors, and metals. Though much has been written upon the symbolic meaning of various numbers, names, colors, and metals, there is considerable difference of opinion among scholars as to how much can be accurately identified as symbolic in these elements. No unanimity is available, but there appears to be general agreement that *some* symbolic meaning is implied in the use of certain of these factors. Dogmatism as to their interpretation is quite out of place.

Certain *numbers* are used with apparent symbolic meaning in various contexts. Three may stand for a few of something, in which case it is like metonymy. It is used of a unity seen in such triads as beginning, middle, end; past, present and future, etc. More significant of symbolic meaning is the use of three with God's name (Numbers 6:24-27; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). Four frequently seems to carry with it the idea of completeness (Amos 1:3, 6, 9). Terry suggests that four may be the number of the world as there are many fours used of the earth (winds, corners, seasons).²³

Seven, a combination of three and four, suggests a relationship between God and man which is often realized in a covenant. (Note all the periods of sevens under the Old Covenant and the references to sevens in Revelation.) Ten seems to suggest the idea of perfection or completeness (Exodus 34:28; Ruth 4:2; Matthew 25:1).

The number twelve is of very wide-spread use in both the Old Covenant and the New with the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve apostles, and the twelve thousand times the twelve tribes of Israel in Revelation 7:4ff. The new Jerusalem has twelve foundation stones and twelve gates. The city is laid out on dimensions that are multiples of twelve. Such usage indicates that twelve is a symbolic number referring to God's covenant people or God's elect people.

There seems to be good reason to identify certain *names* as symbolic, for both Sodom and Egypt are used to bring reproach and condemnation against those so named (Revelation 11:8). Again, Babylon is a term that is used symbolically in Revelation 14:8, 16:19, 17:5. Babylon suggests world power hostile to God's people and covenant. It would have strong symbolic significance as the oppressor of God's people and all that stands in antithesis to the city of God, the New Jerusalem. The New

Jerusalem is a very meaningful symbol of the new covenant people or the *ecclesia* (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 3:12; 21:2, 10). It has definite prophetic promise of the true city which is of God and not the physical city that corrupted itself and abandoned God, not the Old Covenant but the New Covenant which was given from Jerusalem.

Colors, also, carry some symbolism as they are associated with various features of the tabernacle. The blue, purple, crimson, and white blended in the coverings seemed to symbolize heavenly beauty and glory. Whiteness is often appropriated as a symbol of purity or holiness. The priests' garments were to be of white linen, and this same thought is carried over in the book of Revelation in the white robes of the saints (Exodus 28:5ff; Revelation 7:9). Black seems to be frequently used symbolically of that which is evil or which involves death such as famine. Red is frequently associated with warfare and strife because of its reminder of the redness of blood. There is considerable evidence that purple carried with it the idea of royalty and high office. Scarlet is associated with blood and thus with the sacrifice.

Metals are used in ways that suggest a symbolic value. Gold is of the first order in significance, the most costly and precious, and seems to point to the glory and beauty of God. The ark and altar of incense, the table of showbread, and the lampstand all were made of gold as befitting the majesty of God. Brass seems to be associated with the judgment upon sin or possibly its removal because of the brazen altar of sacrifice and the brazen serpent that was lifted up in the wilderness for saving the lives of those bitten by snakes. Silver was used in some parts of the tabernacle and ranks between gold and brass.

The rule in the symbolic use of numbers, names, colors, and metals is to proceed with caution and do a careful inductive study of the possible symbolic use of these materials before making an interpretation of their supposed symbolic meaning. Not every use or reference to a particular number, name, color, or metal must be assumed to have symbolic meaning.

Emblems. Emblems may be considered as a special kind of symbols in that they are more restricted in meaning to that which presents some natural association of meaning or intrinsic resemblance among the objects. While symbols can be conventional and arbitrary, emblems are a distinctive kind of symbol that involves its meaning in its structure. The flag of the United States of America is emblematic of the nation because its

thirteen stripes indicate the original thirteen colonies and its fifty stars indicate its many states that are bound together in the unity of one nation. The peaceableness of a dove means that a dove is an emblem of peace rather than merely a symbol, as there appears to be a fitness about the emblem and what it naturally suggests. Ezekiel and John are both required by God to take and to eat a scroll. This seems to be emblematic action setting forth in a clear way the prophetic position that these men occupied. The word of God enters into them, and they are enabled to give forth the word out of the profound involvement of their lives.

The Lord's Supper was established by Christ with very strong metaphorical language, "this is my body and this is my blood." As He used the bread upon the table at the Passover Feast, it became a most appropriate emblem of the body of Christ. The fruit of the vine with its redness of color was most suitable to bring to the mind of the worshiper the blood of Christ. The elements of the Lord's Table should be referred to as emblems rather than symbols though they are not referred to in the scripture by either term. One should be able to effectively move through the emblems to the spiritual reality that they present because of their evident resemblance and historically related meaning.

Likewise, baptism has strong emblematic force in its action as set forth in the New Testament for the identification of the believer with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-11). It is a powerful means of recognizing and acknowledging the historical facts of the gospel concerning Christ and at the same time experiencing in a physical, psychological and spiritual way the great climactic event of personal salvation.

Types

Types are among the most significant of the figures of thought for the Christian because of their connection with Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of the Old Covenant in the New Covenant. Crabb's definition is clear:

The *type* is that species of emblem by which one object is made to represent another mystically [spiritually]; it is, therefore, only employed in religious matters, particularly in relation to the coming, the office, and the death of our Saviour; in this manner the offering of Isaac is considered as a type of our Saviour's offering himself as an atoning sacrifice.²⁴

Because the scripture is inspired of God, the Bible has the unique

feature of types given centuries before they were fulfilled in an antitype under the covenant of Christ. This has remarkable apologetical force for the inspiration of the Bible and the truth of Christianity.

Legitimacy. The legitimacy of typology has often been debated through the years. When it is properly understood and defined, it certainly has a legitimate and scriptural basis for consideration. There is typology in the scriptures when they are read in depth and with an objective mind. Unfortunately, there has been confusion between the allegory and the type and even more between allegorizing and typological interpretation. The allegorical method of interpreting is false and is to be rejected. It has been the villain which has brought legitimate typology into disrepute; but allegorizing is of an entirely different class, handles the word of God in a wholly different way, and treats history inadequately. The allegorist seeks a supposedly hidden meaning within the words of scripture and does so on a highly subjective basis. He is almost always importing meaning which is foreign to the intention of the writer and the context.

On the other hand, the sound typological interpreter contends that the meaning was intended by the Divine Author in the persons, events, and institutions of the Old Covenant to have a greater fulfillment in the future. Yet, the sense is the same and not foreign to the original element as given. In other words, the typologist contends that the new and higher meaning in the fulfillment of the type is by the intention and design of God. He honors the historicity of the type and yet is aware of a greater fulfillment of that type in the perfection of the New Covenant and of Christ.

The *unity* of the Old and New Covenants as the one revelation of God with the goal of human redemption establishes the basis for typological consideration. The grand design of God is set forth in verbal terms through predictive prophecy while the typical persons, places, things, etc., are designed emblems pointing to the redemptive kingdom. Types are prophetic emblems which look to the future for their fulfillment.

The *Lord Jesus Christ* authorizes the Christian interpreter to recognize typology and to carefully interpret certain events, persons, places, etc., as typological following His perfect hermeneutical model. To the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, Jesus began with Moses and taught about Himself from all of the scriptures (Luke 24:25-44). Again, Jesus invited men to

search the scriptures because they testified of Him (John 3:39-44). Christ saw Himself as the fulfillment of all the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament and also the antitype fulfilling the office of prophet, priest, and king. He was the Lamb of God that took away the sins of the world, the great antitypical atonement for sin.

Also, there are *words* in the New Testament which encourage the identification of certain subjects as typological. For example, in Hebrews 9:23 in speaking about the sacrifice of Christ and the earthly tabernacle, the writer declares, "Therefore it was necessary for the copies (*hypodeigmata*) of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." *Hypodeigma* means a sign, pattern, or a representation of something. The very next verse continues this thought and uses the word antitype, "For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy (*antitupa*) of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (9:24). The word antitype (*antitupa*) means something formed after a pattern, a counterpart, or something that is made by a type. *Tupos* and *tupikos* give rise to the word type and indicate the mark of a blow, an impression or something created by a striking blow. These words point to the existence within the scripture of a further or deeper sense beyond that which was understood in the beginning as a part of the original word.

Typological interpretation is found in the *inspired writers'* use of the Old Testament following the example of Christ. The letter to the Hebrews is the finest and most complete example of typological interpretation of the types in the Old Covenant that have now been realized in their fullness in the final covenant of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul uses the tremendous episodes of the Exodus and the history surrounding it to point out that these events had a specific and deeper meaning for Christians and are not merely ancient historical events. He refers to these as examples or types:

Now these things happened as examples (*tupoi*) for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved . . . now these things happened to them as an example (*tupikos*), and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11).

A literal translation of verse eleven would read, "Now these things typically happened to those men and were written for

admonition. . . ." Another time Paul boldly takes the Old Testament name of the people of God, Israel, and turns it into a new sense by applying it to Christians; for he sees that the *ecclesia* is now the covenant people of God, "And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). There is a new Israel for Paul because the old Israel has now been replaced by the antitype which was in the mind of God when He established Israel to begin with.

It is, therefore, a *clear hermeneutical principle* of scripture that God has given certain things as types which have been fulfilled in antitypes. The typological interpretation is scriptural and valid. There are those who have gone to the extreme of trying to make too much in the scripture typical, straining and pressing things beyond all reasonable meaning from the context and the models of scripture. On the other hand, there have been those who have gone to the other extreme and have denied so much of the typological they reduce it to a nonentity. Clearly there is a moderate and balanced view of the subject which is to mark out and analyze those things that are typical such as referred to above. With this as a model and following an inductive and objective study, other types and antitypes can be identified, though there is no place for dogmatism.

Characteristics. It has been said that types are a special kind of symbol. While there are many symbols in the scripture, there are not a large number of clearly defined types. The type differs from the symbol in that in the type there is more of a formal comparison made between different persons, things, and events. The distinction between them is clear and not blended as it would be in the metaphor and allegory. Terry gives this illuminating word as to the differences:

The interpretation of a type requires us to show some formal analogy between two persons, objects, or events; that of a symbol requires us rather to point out the particular qualities, marks, features, or signs by means of which one object, real or ideal, indicates and illustrates another. Melchizedek is a type, not a symbol, of Christ, and Heb. vii furnishes a formal statement of the typical analogies. But the seven golden candlesticks (Rev. i, 12) are a symbol, not a type, of the seven churches of Asia. The comparison, however, is implied, not expressed, and it is left to the interpreter to unfold it, and show the points of resemblance.²⁵

Another unique feature of the type as distinguished from the symbol is that the type always is involved with a future reference.

It has a time factor which requires one to look forward to a fulfillment whereas the symbol is timeless in its significance. A type is, then, according to Mickelsen:

. . . a correspondence in one or more respects between a person, event, or thing in the Old Testament and a person, event, or thing closer to or contemporaneous with a New Testament writer. It is this *correspondence* that determines the meaning in the Old Testament narrative that is stressed by a later speaker or writer. The correspondence is present because God controls history, and this control of God over history is axiomatic with the New Testament writers. It is God who causes earlier individuals, groups, experiences, institutions, etc., to embody characteristics which later He will cause to reappear.²⁶

Thus, the type is always real and not fictitious as the symbol may be; it is not arbitrary but has an intrinsic resemblance to the antitype. Terry declares that a type will have three characteristics if it is a true type:

1. There must be some notable point of resemblance or analogy between the two. They may, in many respects, be totally dissimilar . . . Moreover, we always expect to find in the antitype something higher and nobler than in the type, for "much greater honour than the house has he who built it" (Heb. iii, 3).

2. There must be evidence that the type was designed and appointed by God to represent the thing typified . . . "To constitute one thing the type of another," says Bishop Marsh, "something more is wanted than mere resemblance . . . The type as well as the antitype must have been pre-ordained, and they must have been pre-ordained as constituent parts of the same general scheme of divine providence."²⁷

3. The type must prefigure something in the future. It must serve in the divine economy as a shadow of things to come (Col. ii, 17; Heb. x, 1). Hence it is that sacred typology constitutes a specific form of prophetic revelation. The Old Testament dispensations were preparatory to the New, and contained many things in germ which could fully blossom only in the light of the Gospel of Jesus.²⁸

Kinds of types. Types have been classified under several headings, and five of them can contain all the types. *Persons* are a frequent kind of type. Adam is a type of Christ in that he is the head of the race; and Jesus is the second Adam, the head of the new race (Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:45). Elijah is a type of John the Baptizer as he is predicted as the one who is to come before Christ as the forerunner (Malachi 4:5). When the disciples questioned Jesus about Elijah's coming, He told them that Elijah

has come already; and they had done to him what they wished (Mark 9:11-13). Matthew records the eulogy which Christ gave for John the Baptizer and in that context unmistakably identifies John the Baptizer as the typological fulfillment of Elijah, "And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come" (Matthew 11:14).

Moses is a type of Christ in that he is the law-giver of the Old Covenant, the mediator. Also, he is the deliverer of his people and the great prophet. Jesus, the antitype, is the giver of the New Covenant, the perfect mediator between God and man, and the final spokesman for God. David as king is a type of Christ who is the King of kings.

One of the grandest typical persons of the Old Testament is Melchizedek as a type of Christ, for he was a priest-king. Israel had no priest-kings, but Jesus Christ is both priest and king. Christ has been made a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek; His priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood and is an unchanging priesthood. This is one of the major arguments presented in the letter to the Hebrews (Hebrews 5:1-10; 7:1-25). Though the word type is not used of Melchizedek, yet in Hebrews 7:3 it is affirmed that he was "made like the Son of God."

Under *typical events*, the wilderness wanderings have already been referred to as typical of the Christian life on the basis of Paul's use of this historical material in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11. Clear types and antitypes are established as Paul points to Moses as the one who led Israel out of Egypt even as Christ has led men out of sin. They were all baptized into Moses even as believers are baptized into Christ. Their deliverance took place when they had been baptized into Moses by crossing the Red Sea and saw the destruction of the power of Pharaoh even as believers having been baptized are fully delivered from the power of sin (Romans 6:7, 11, 18). The Israelites had food and drink given to them from Christ (the rock in 1 Corinthians 10:4), even as He ministers the spiritual food and drink to His people today — the word of God, the Lord's Supper, the help of the Holy Spirit, etc. The Israelites in the wilderness went through a series of trials, and many of them disobeyed God and died in the wilderness; even so Christians are promised trial and temptations before they arrive at the promised land, a type of heaven. Christians can apostatize even as did the Israelites, and Paul is warning all Christians in this passage against such apostasy and disobedience.

Moses lifted up a brazen serpent in the wilderness for the saving of those who by faith looked upon the serpent (Numbers 21:4-9). Jesus declared that He was the antitypical fulfillment of this action in the Old Testament, lifted up on the cross in His death even as the serpent was lifted up on the pole (John 3:14-15). As the serpent was made in the likeness of that which brought death to the people, so Christ was made in the likeness of sinful man (Romans 8:3). The faith required of the Israelites in looking upon the divinely appointed object corresponds to the faith required of men in coming to Christ to receive life.

Peter points to the flood in the days of Noah as a type of baptism, for Noah was saved through water "which also after a true likeness (*antitupon*) doth now save you even baptism . . ." (1 Peter 3:21 ASV). The formal correspondence is in a transitional act; for the water separated Noah from the old world of sin and corruption and brought him into the new, cleansed world. Now baptism is a transitional act in which the believer is brought through the water into a new world or status of life with God. This agrees with the antitypical meaning of baptism as related to the type of Israel being baptized into Moses at the crossing of the Red Sea, which was also a transitional act leaving the bondage of Egypt for the freedom of the wilderness under God.

The three great offices found in the Old Covenant in the prophets who spoke the word of God, the priests who ministered on behalf of the people of God, and the kings who provided government and protection are all *typical offices*. Here a distinction must be made between the men who held those offices and the offices themselves. All of the prophets direct one's attention and hope to the perfect prophet, Jesus Christ, who was to come (Acts 3:21-23). The high priests of the Old Covenant were but shadows of the reality that has come in Christ and was to prefigure His priestly atonement for the sins of men (Hebrews 7:26-28; 9:6-14). The kings, and especially the representatives, David and Solomon, are but the imperfect types of the perfect King who lives and reigns forever, Jesus Christ (Psalms 45 and 110). Christ holds all three offices in the perfection of His person; and Christians have no other prophet, priest, or king. He is the end of all revelation, the perfect atonement for sin and the benevolent and loving King who rules over His people forever.

Similarly, the *institutions* of the Old Testament were preparatory for the greater accomplishments of Christ and His Church. The sacrifices that were offered continually under the

Law were typical of Christ who is Himself the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He is a lamb both unblemished and spotless (1 Peter 2:19). The Passover was one of the greatest institutions among the Jews under the Old Covenant, and Christ is now the perfect fulfillment of that type. He is the Passover Lamb according to Paul (1 Corinthians 5:7). The writer of Hebrews deals extensively with Christ's perfect sacrifice showing that Christ was both the high priest and the sacrificial lamb (Hebrews 9:11-10:18).

Another typical institution is the theocracy which prefigured the kingdom of Christ, the *ecclesia*, which has Christ as King. As the Old Testament people were under the authority of a king and under God's protection, even so the church is governed by Christ and receives the peculiar blessings of God as a kingdom of priests (Revelation 1:6).

A final class is *typical things*. Certain material objects in the Old Covenant are typical of new realities in the covenant of Christ. The author of Hebrews does not only deal with typical offices (high priest), persons (Melchizedek), and institutions (sacrifices), but also the tabernacle itself. He points out that Moses was required to make the tabernacle "according to the pattern (*tupon*) which was shown you in the mountain." Thus, the tabernacle is "a copy (*hypodeigmati*) and shadow of the heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5).

In the ninth chapter the author gives an extended treatment of the furniture and form of the tabernacle as it was used (9:1-8), and he declares that this was "a symbol (*parabole*)." Robert Milligan has pointed out a number of the antitypical fulfillments of the tabernacle and its furniture.²⁹ For example, the most holy place being a perfect cube was typical of heaven (Hebrews 6:19-20, 9:8, 24). The holy place where the priests ministered to God was fulfilled in the church, for it is composed of ministering priests (1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 2:5). The partition veil was fulfilled in the body of Christ which became the means of man's access to God (Hebrews 10:20). The altar of incense was fulfilled in the offering of prayers and worship to God. The table of showbread (presence-bread) with the twelve cakes made of fine flour in two rows of six represented the people of God while the cups of frankincense and the wine-cups represented offering and praise (Exodus 25:23-30, 37:10-16). This was fulfilled in the New Covenant in the continual presence of Christians before God and in the communion and praise

especially set forth in the Lord's Supper. In the meeting around the Lord's table Christians receive the nourishment of Christ and participate with Him in His life (1 Timothy 5:5-6; John 6:35, 51-56, 63). The great golden lampstand on the south side of the tabernacle was fulfilled in the church as presenting the light of the gospel to mankind (Revelation 1:20; 1 Timothy 3:15; Philippians 2:15-16).

The Israelite worshiper entered the outer courtyard by passing through the screen (hangings) which represented his separation from the world and was fulfilled in Christians coming out of the world and being separated unto God (2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1). Next came the brazen altar upon which the burnt offerings were made, pointing to the fact that apart from the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Also, Christians have an atonement in Christ which is perfect, for He is their altar and sacrifice (Hebrews 9:22, 13:10). Before entering the holy place, the priests had to wash their hands and feet to be cleansed and sanctified for God's service. This was fulfilled in the daily sanctification and cleansing of the heart in preparation for service to God on the part of all Christians.

Another grand type in the Old Testament is the temple with all of the glory connected with it as the location of the true worship of God, the house of God, and the place of His worship. The Old Testament saints were thrilled by the glory and majesty of God that indwelt the temple at Jerusalem (Psalm 68:29, 35; 27:4-6; 42:1-4).

In the New Covenant the temple type is fulfilled in the body of Christ; first as He Himself is the dwelling place of the Spirit of God, for Christ said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up . . . but He was speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:19, 21). Second, as the *ecclesia* is the body of Christ, it becomes the dwelling place of the Spirit. The people of God are the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15). Paul is emphatic in telling the Corinthians that they are a temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:9, 16-17). He elaborates upon this in the statement to the Ephesians declaring that they have become

God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Christians are the sacred building, the only sanctuary of God in

the world today. Thus, a beautiful, personal fulfillment of an Old Testament type is found in a living temple. Like the tabernacle, a mobile sanctuary, the church is a mobile, visible witness to God everywhere.

A controverted text. One final point needs to be clarified under the subject of typology — Galatians 4:21ff has been referred to earlier as a controverted text which demands examination. Is this passage an allegory, or is it an example of typological interpretation? Did God preordain the correspondence between these historical persons and facts with the meaning which the inspired interpreter, Paul, points out? It is possible that this is a typological interpretation, and yet some questions remain; for Paul uses *allegoria* instead of *typos* or even the word *parabole*. Also, it is a fact that this extended treatment has more of the characteristics of an allegorical form than of a typological form; for it is not just the correspondence of a person to a person or an event to an event but moves from an historical person to a category such as covenant, which is more the allegorical form.

Before these two problems are taken up for possible solution, it is appropriate to get the teaching of the passage clearly before the mind. I. B. Grubbs has analyzed and arranged these analogies and antitheses in the following clear form:

THE TWO WOMEN AND THE TWO COVENANTS³⁰
(Galatians 4:21-31)

	<i>Historical</i>	<i>Allegorical</i>	
(a)	(The handmaid	The old covenant	24
Mothers	(vs.	vs.	
	(The freewoman	The new covenant	26,31
(b)	(Ishmael	Jews under the O.C.	
Sons	(vs.	vs.	
	(Isaac	Christians under the N.C.	
(c)	(Nature as to Ishmael	Natural birth of subjects	
Births	(vs.	under O.C.	29
	(Promise as to Isaac	vs.	
		Spiritual birth of subjects	
(d)	(Ishmael — persecutor	under N.C.	28
Dispositions	(vs.	Jewish persecution	29
	(Isaac's endurance	vs.	
(e)	(Domestic bondage—Ishmael	Christian's endurance	
States	(vs.	Legal bondage—Jews	25
	(Domestic freedom—Isaac	vs.	
		Spiritual liberty—	
		Christians	31
(f)	(Ishmael "cast out"	Rejection of the Jews	30
Results	(vs.	vs.	
	(Isaac made heir	Acceptance of Christians	30

Here is a fine example of teaching by antithesis and a powerful lesson driving home the fact that the Old Covenant and the New Covenant are as dissimilar as Sarah and Hagar. Also, it is made clear that those who are under the Old Covenant (Law) are not Christians and do not have the promise of eternal life. By means of this teaching Christians are warned of the tragedy of apostasy in going back to the Old Covenant, for there is now no redemption by keeping the Law.

What solutions can be found to the problem of classifying this material? First of all, it needs to be recognized that this is a product of Paul's inspiration and thus is the word of God, a true teaching and not the product of Paul's imagination. One cannot deny its truthfulness. Second, it is not an example of Rabbinic teaching by means of a subjective or fanciful allegorizing. The allegorizing of scripture is wrong and is not upheld by any of the inspired writers, least of all by Paul. Third, the history actually had such a meaning; and, as in typology, this may have been the God-designed deeper meaning now made known to Paul by the Spirit that these wives and sons were prophetic symbols. Fourth, there is a variety of scholarly opinion as to the classification of this passage. Some have seen it as an *argumentum ad hominem*, while others have felt that it was a form of allegorical argument which was Rabbinical in its origin and may have been used by Paul against his Judaizing opponents. A better solution seems to be that suggested by Lightfoot that Paul is using the word *allegoria* here more in the meaning of *tuπος* as found in 1 Corinthians 10:11.³¹ Several other scholars such as Meyer, Findlay, and Lambert feel that this is a border-line case in which Paul is using allegorical form along with typological content.

The conclusion is that there is no certainty about the classification of this passage though it can be said that it is not a justification for any allegorizing by any uninspired writer. It is a sharp contrast to the allegorist Philo's use of this passage, and Paul does not deny or minimize the historical reality and value of the Old Testament narrative. The author feels that it is appropriate to take the passage as a typological interpretation, because its contents were designed by God to have typical meaning which the Holy Spirit disclosed to Paul. Only the form looks in the direction of the allegory. One thing is clear — the lesson which Paul is teaching the Galatians and all Christians is of vital importance: "It was for freedom that Christ set us free;

therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

V. RULES FOR INTERPRETING FIGURES OF SPEECH

General Rules

Over the years writers on interpretation have defined various rules to keep in mind as one interprets figurative language with its various difficulties of interpretation. These rules are a product of logical reasoning and commend themselves to the intelligent person as being sound guidelines in arriving at the true meaning.

1. Let the author give his own interpretation. Many times the author will interpret his figure within the context of its use. This is true of John in the Revelation of Jesus Christ as he mentions the lampstands and the seven stars which the son of man held in his right hand (Revelation 1:13, 16); for John interprets the mystery (the hidden meaning) of the seven stars as symbolizing the angels of the seven churches while the seven lampstands are the seven churches. Jesus interpreted two of His parables for His listeners (the sower and the tares, Matthew 13:18-23, 36-43), and this settles the matter of the meaning of those particular parables. So always read the context of the passage to see if the author has interpreted his own figure of speech.

2. Interpret the figure in the light of the general and special scope or design of the passage. The figures of speech in the Song of Solomon with all their vivid and detailed elaboration must be interpreted in the light of the purpose of the author to depict the highest type of pure, human love involving the sexual, physical, and sensuous part of marriage. When this is realized, there is no objection to the startling imagery that is used to describe God's great gift of human love.

The occasions for the parables of Jesus, as well as some of the parables found in the prophets, provide a definite clue to interpreting the parables. The purpose of Nathan's parable to David is quite evident from the context which involves David's action toward Bathsheba and Uriah. In the interpretation of the allegories in John 10, the connection is with the event in the ninth chapter of John recording the history of the blind man who was cast out by the Pharisees.

Paul's use of the figure of the wild olive tree and the branches (Romans 11:16-24) can best be interpreted in the light of the

entire purpose of his letter to the Romans setting forth the universality of the gospel invitation and the basis of salvation in faith and not in family. In the light of this purpose, the interpretation of the olive tree and its branches is made easier. The allegory of the whole armor of God, which is to clothe the Christian (Ephesians 6:11-17), flows out of the purpose of encouraging Christians to stand fast in the Lord and to overcome the devil and the world.

3. Compare the figurative statements with literal accounts or statements. Since the figurative flows out of a literal usage and background, the use of the idea in a literal setting is valuable. Thus, in John 3:5 the figurative statement in regard to being born into the kingdom through a new birth is brought forward in a literal statement to the Jews on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:38). The meaning and the means of accomplishing the new birth are now made evident through the literal commands of Peter.

Jesus said, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water' " (John 7:38). John gives the literal meaning of this figure in the next verse, "But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). At another time, Jesus responded to the demand of the scribes and Pharisees for a sign by saying,

An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:39-40).

This sign to them was in the form of an enigma, because they could not fully comprehend this statement until the resurrection had become an historical fact. After the resurrection, Jesus appears to the disciples and makes it clear that the sign of Jonah has been fulfilled (Luke 24:44-46).

Shortly before His crucifixion Jesus is requested to favor James and John with high positions in His kingdom. He responds with a metaphor and an enigma, " 'Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' He said to them, 'My cup you shall drink . . . ' " (Matthew 20:22-23). In the garden, Jesus uses this same figure in referring to His own death as He prays, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from

Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). In the subsequent death of Christ on the cross, which He had foretold, the meaning of the cup as martyrdom for God is indicated. The literal fulfillment of His statement to James came as recorded in Acts 12:2, "And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword." James was the first of the apostles to drink the cup of death for Christ.

4. Consider the resemblance of things compared or the use of paradox. When Jesus changes the name of Simon to Peter, a rock, then the associations that go with rock enable the reader to appreciate the character of Peter. Jesus declares in another passage that He is "the Good Shepherd," and all of the characteristics of a good shepherd in Palestine at that time would furnish information as to the rich meaning of this term. Again, when one reads the statement of Christ, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser" (John 15:1), then all of the imagery of the vine with its branches and its fruit along with the skillful vinedressers who keep the vine at peak performance should be brought before the mind to gain the maximum truth imbedded in the words. When Jesus is called "the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:36), the Old Testament sacrificial lambs make this a most potent figure; and many lines of resemblance between Christ and the lambs of the Old Testament may be drawn — a male, firstborn, spotless, innocent.

Then, in Revelation the term "lion of the tribe of Judah" (Revelation 5:5) is applied to Jesus; and this immediately brings before the mind the historical kingship of David and the sovereignty and power associated with the lion. Almost immediately John sees between the throne not a lion but a lamb standing as if slain (Revelation 5:5-6). This paradox of the lion and the lamb in the one person of Christ brings startling and strong meanings before the mind of the reader. The dual nature of Christ's work is brought out in this oxymoron, the meek, submissive lamb who perfectly fulfilled the will of the Father; but the same time He is the sovereign ruler of the universe. The interpreter should always seek to identify the essential quality of the comparison which is being established by the figure or figurative use.

5. Facts of history and biography may assist in the interpretation of the figures. In Isaiah 7:3-4, Israel and Syria in the persons of their kings are vividly pictured as smoking, dying firebrands (torches) sending out tails of smoke as they near

extinction. History verifies the fact that these two kings were in decline at this time and had very little significance for the future.

Jesus used a simile when He talked about the discipline by the church of one who would not repent of his sin saying, “. . . let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer (publican)” (Matthew 18:17). The interpreter needs to know the historical feeling of the Jews at that time about the Gentiles, pagans, outside the Law, and the Jews who were counted as traitors to their own country by collecting taxes for Rome to appreciate the strong terms of exclusion and reproach that would be given to the person disciplined by the church. John’s very strong metaphor in addressing the Pharisees and Sadducees who were coming to His baptism, “You brood of vipers,” can only be understood adequately in the light of the history of the Pharisees and Sadducees in their religious hypocrisy.

6. An inspired interpretation of a figure determines its meaning beyond doubt. In Acts 2, it is recorded that Peter, filled by the Holy Spirit, declared on the day of Pentecost that the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy began on Pentecost, “but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16). This settles the matter as to the beginning of the last days and the establishment of the final covenant of God with man through the Spirit. Jesus, in Matthew 13:36ff, explains the parable of the kingdom of God under the figure of the man who sowed good seed in his field and the enemy who sowed tares. Jesus declares that the field is the world, not the church as is sometimes interpreted.

John gives an inspired interpretation of the metaphor and enigma which Jesus used in giving a sign to His enemies — “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). John states that He was speaking of “the temple of His body. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, the word which Jesus had spoken” (John 3:21-22).

7. Figures must not be pressed beyond the point or points of resemblance on which the lesson is based. This is a warning against allegorizing figures of speech with meanings they were never intended to have. Parables particularly have been abused in this way by trying to make most of the elements of the figure have some hidden meaning. This simply is not to be expected, because much of the material in the parable and even the allegory are simply the framework upon which the story is hung or details that

provide background. Dungan gives an interesting illustration of the violation of this rule by a certain bishop who interpreted the parable of the good Samaritan as teaching that

“...the traveler represents the human race; his leaving Jerusalem is made to symbolize man's departure from God; Jericho is the symbol for temptations; the robbers are the devil and his angels; the priest signifies the sacrifices of the Old Testament; the Levite represents the law of Moses, and the Samaritan typifies the Saviour. . . .” I [Dungan says] think he might have gone further, and made the inn represent the church of Christ; the oil and the wine the blood of the atonement and the gift of the Holy Spirit; the two pieces of money the two ordinances left till the Saviour shall come again; and the promised return of this man, to stand for the second coming of the Saviour to the world. Then it would be too bad to leave out the ass on which the man had ridden. The beast might symbolize the feeling of self-sufficiency on which the world rides away from God. . . . It is high time that we were done with such foolishness. And yet almost every figure of the whole Bible has been rendered about as ludicrous as this, by some one who was regarded as brilliant.³²

The interpreter should be satisfied with the one principal lesson of the parable, and any suggestions as to other meanings of other parts of the parable must be given as tentative, possible applications.

8. Figures are not always used with the same meaning. Oil is not always a type of the Holy Spirit wherever it is found. The term word does not always refer to Christ. Every reference to water does not involve the idea of baptism. The meaning of the figurative use of waters is not always the same. In Revelation 17:18, the waters refer to the nations or the peoples whereas in another reference (Isaiah 28:17) “the waters shall overflow the hiding place” gives the idea of destruction. Likewise, the word fire may be used of impending judgment, the purifying power of God, or the presence of God in the burning bush at Mt. Sinai. Leaven is not necessarily a symbol of that which is corrupt or evil, for Jesus uses the term leaven to describe His kingdom in the parable (Matthew 13:33). While the lion is used as a figure referring to Christ (Revelation 5:5), it is also used of Satan in his effort to destroy Christians (1 Peter 5:8).

9. Figures may be used to explain figures. Jesus gave an allegory in John 10:1-5; but when they did not understand it, He gave another allegory to make clear the first one. In Matthew 13, Jesus gives seven parables explaining in a very full way the nature

of His kingdom. Here parables help to interpret parables and to give an adequate understanding of the subject of the kingdom.

10. The consistency or harmony of the figurative description is to be preserved throughout the interpretation of that figure. The fundamental comparison involved in a figure should not be changed within the figure. In other words, if the author is dealing with an architectural comparison, some new element from a different analogy (such as agriculture) should not be introduced into the interpretation as it would simply cause confusion. It is assumed that the author will hold consistently to his basic comparison. An illustration of this is found in 1 Corinthians 3:9-16. Verses nine and sixteen indicate very clearly that the figure is a building and that the building is composed of persons. As the description unfolds it is clear that the founder is Christ, a person; and He is also the foundation. Because of this the materials that are laid upon the foundation must also be interpreted as persons and not doctrines, as is sometimes assumed. (Parallel passages such as 1 Peter 2:5 and Ephesians 3:19-22 confirm this interpretation.)

Special Considerations for Parables

There is a great deal of interest in the parables and considerable use made of them in sermons and lessons, especially because the Lord Jesus Christ used them extensively in His teaching. They are a valuable and ready means of communicating spiritual truth through using the ordinary, everyday, life situations and earthy details that are familiar to the audience. Familiarity of the similitude used in the comparison makes them interesting and illuminating of a spiritual or abstract truth which otherwise might not be as easily grasped. Terry says, "The general design of parables . . . is to embellish and set forth ideas and moral truths in attractive and impressive forms."³³ About thirty parables are usually identified in the gospel accounts, and there are a number of them in the Old Testament. Accordingly, there is a place for a study of some particular features of parables and their rules to enable the interpreter to accurately interpret the parables.

Six uses of parables. Christ's use of parables is especially instructive as to their value in teaching. There are six reasons why Jesus used parables. *First*, the Lord Himself indicated that He used parables to reveal the truth to those who could receive it and respond to it in a favorable way. *Second*, it was to conceal the truth

from those carnal people who would abuse or oppose the truth (Matthew 13:10-13). This passage is abused by the Armstrong cult by saying that this is the *only* use of parables. While these are major reasons why Jesus used parables in His teaching, they are not the only uses. To reveal the truth to *all* who wanted to learn of His kingdom especially, Jesus illustrated the truth by parabolic narrative. This is clearly borne out when the lawyer seeking to justify himself asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29ff). Jesus taught the unforgettable lesson of the neighbor in the well-known parable as the Good Samaritan. The lawyer understood very well the meaning of the lesson as indicated by his reply. It is still the greatest lesson to answer the question of anyone who asks, "Who is my neighbor?"

Again, in Matthew 13, Jesus gave one parable after another on the meaning of the kingdom and by these stories so defined it that all may have an excellent portrait of what the kingdom of heaven is like. Therefore, Jesus did not deliberately conceal the truth from any sincere seekers after God but only from those who were unwilling to receive that truth and act upon it. Jesus used parables to reveal the truth to those who wanted it and to conceal the truth from those who would abuse it.

As a result of this, a *third* design of parables is that they became tests of the character of those who listened. It separated the careless from the sincere seekers who followed Jesus and said, "Lord, tell us what this means." On the other hand, people with a carnal and sinful outlook would tend to dismiss the parables as foolishness or mere stories. In a real sense it could be thought of as bringing about a self-judgment between the sheep and the goats.

A *fourth* purpose for the use of parables is to preserve the truth in a memorable way so that it can be recalled and reflected upon. The scriptural parables are so excellent in beauty, vividness, and power that once heard they stick in the mind for a lifetime. Truth embodied in the parables is kept from perishing in the ordinary course of time which wipes out so much of memory.

A *fifth* reason why Jesus and others used parables is that it enabled people to see and assent to the truth before they realized that they were the subject of the parable. Nathan told his parable to David of the disgraceful conduct of a rich man who stole one poor man's only ewe lamb. David forthrightly and properly condemned such a man as deserving the most severe punishment; whereupon Nathan simply said, "You are the man!"

(2 Samuel 12:7). Thus, all of David's hideous sin in regard to Bathsheba and Uriah was exposed to him through his own moral judgment.

Jesus did much the same thing with the scribes and Pharisees who pursued Him over Palestine trying to entrap Him and who were so self-righteous that they could not see their own sin. Jesus gave them the parable of the owner of the vineyard and the wicked stewards who beat his servants and killed his son (Matthew 21:33ff). Jesus said to His audience,

'Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?' They said to Him, 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons' (21:40-41).

Then Jesus applied the scripture to them; and Matthew declares, "And when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them" (21:45).

Finally, Jesus began to use parables in His ministry when the opposition of the religious leaders had begun to become oppressive and dangerous. It was this new method of teaching which caught the attention of the apostles as recorded in Matthew 13:10ff. The apparent reason that Jesus began to use parables more and more was to shield Him from an over-aggressive reaction from His enemies leading to violence. By means of the parables, Jesus was able to continue to teach the truth; but it was not so direct and clear that the enemies could lay hold on His words and use them to their own evil ends. This was a worthwhile value of using parables in the critical situation that Jesus found Himself.

Rules for determining the meaning. *First*, it is appropriate to keep in mind the fact that the parables used the ordinary, everyday details of the life of the Jews whether in the Old Testament or during the ministry of Christ. The similitudes were drawn from Palestinian culture and conditions. It is valuable in interpreting the parables to define these particular details of the similitude whether it be drawn from agriculture, the domestic scene, government, etc. The characteristics of the similitude need to be specifically noted. Terry says, ". . . we should make an accurate analysis of the subject matter and observe the nature and properties of the things employed as imagery in the similitude. . . ."³⁴

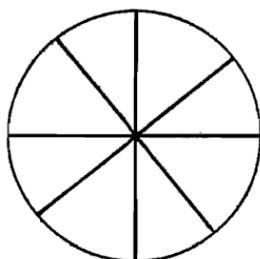
The *second* important thing to learn is the occasion that called

for the use of the parable and the condition of the hearers as much as this can be known. For example, Jesus gave the three parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son; because after He had gathered with the tax collectors and sinners, both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:1-2). Again, Jesus taught a parable about the unrighteous steward and what he did about money. He concluded by saying, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13). Luke comments, "Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money were listening to all these things, and they were scoffing at Him" (Luke 16:14). Therefore, Jesus went on to tell the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in which the rich man ends up in Hades in torment. The interpretation is thus directed to the idea of the proper uses of riches as a steward of God.

Luke gives the occasion for one of the striking parables of Jesus in regard to His kingdom, "And while they were listening to these things, He went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately" (Luke 19:11). The parable taught the lesson that the kingdom was some time in the future, and in the meantime His servants must be faithful in the use of their talents before the king returned and demanded an accounting. It also declared that those citizens who had hated him and tried to keep him from getting the kingship were destroyed by the king's command. The disciples should profit by the first two lessons, and His enemies should take warning from the third.

Third, state the main lesson or central truth which the parable is teaching. The allegory may teach a number of lessons, but a parable has one central thesis. This can be determined by observing how Jesus interpreted two of the parables, possible association with Old Testament parabolic material, or any clues which can be found in the context. When one has the central truth of the parable before his mind, he is able to more properly relate the parts of the whole and avoid an overemphasis on particular features of the parable which may be only the drapery of the story. Terry puts it this way, ". . . we should interpret the several parts with strict reference to the general scope and design of the whole, so as to preserve a harmony of proportions, maintain the unity of all the parts, and make prominent the great central truth."³⁵ This can be visualized as a wheel with its spokes converging together in the hub.

A PARABLE VISUALIZED AS A WHEEL



hub=great
central truth

spokes=circumstances and
details of the story

The hub represents the great central truth while the spokes of the wheel are but the circumstances and details of the similitude. The correct interpretation will place the interpreter at the hub, and he will see the proper significance of the various parts.

Today there is considerable scholarly emphasis upon the fact that in Jesus' parables the central truth is almost always related to Christ and His reign. The exegete should keep this in mind as he is trying to properly interpret the lesson of the parable. The central truth of the three parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, and the lost son is clearly announced by Jesus twice declaring, "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:7,10).

While parables are not given to teach doctrine, they are quite effective in illustrating doctrine. There is a definite spiritual or moral lesson for those who receive the parable. The central truth is penetrating and valuable for everyone. There can be some interesting applications drawn from the parables without doing damage to the central truth or twisting the parables into an allegorical meaning. For example, it is possible to see in the eldest son's attitude toward his younger brother the mean spirit of the Pharisees in general. It may be good to call attention to this feature in the parable as it may apply today to people who do not take joy in certain lost sinners repenting and coming to God when they are not the kind of people that "we want in our church."

The danger of seeking too much meaning within the parable is found in the frequent use of the parable of the lost son as teaching the plan of salvation or the essence of Christianity. Some have said this is "the very heart of the gospel." B.B. Warfield has pointed out that this is a serious distortion of the teaching of the parable and its interpretation.³⁶ It does not accord with the stated purpose of the parable by Jesus, and it seriously lacks the things that make the gospel the good news that it is. There is no

atonement for sin in the parable, and there is no Christ as Savior. There is no work of the Holy Spirit using the word of God to convict the sinner, and even the father is not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who comes earnestly seeking the sinner as in the case of Adam and Eve in the garden.

With these rules and guidelines before you, you should not have too much difficulty in explaining in an accurate way the parables found in the scriptures.

VI. RULES FOR INTERPRETING FIGURES OF THOUGHT

Rules for Interpreting Symbols

These rules are few in number but helpful when applied with reason and care. Of course, at *first*, it would be wise to search the scriptures for all the examples of symbols which were interpreted by the inspired writers to learn the way they determined the meaning. *Second*, the context should be considered to see what light it may throw upon the purpose and meaning of the symbol. *Third*, investigate the qualities of the object which is used as the symbol to determine what significance they have in the use as a symbol. *Fourth*, what are the points of resemblance between the literal object and that which it is intended to represent? *Fifth*, be cautious and reasonable and do not press the various features of the symbol beyond the point of propriety. Examples in the scriptures show that sometimes the details may have some significance and in other cases almost none.

Rules for Interpreting Types

First, investigate thoroughly the interpretation of types by the inspired writers in the New Covenant scriptures. One cannot go wrong when he is interpreting types which have been interpreted by the inspired writer. *Second*, determine the points of resemblance and correspondence between the type and antitype as they are set forth in their context. Avoid any unreasonable and excessive search for resemblances which were probably never intended. *Third*, note the various points of difference, contrasts, and opposition between the type and the antitype. The type will always be inferior to the antitype, and there are certain features of the type which will be accidental and incidental to the typological meaning. *Fourth*, the accurate interpretation of types can only be done in the full light of the completed revelation of God in Christ and the consideration of all the teaching of God's

word which is one united revelation. *Fifth*, keep a humble spirit and do not become dogmatic over your judgment that certain things are actual types and antitypes in the scripture. Mickelsen proposes that any suggestion about a type not specifically indicated by the scripture should be rigorously tested. It should be clearly shown that there is a similarity of resemblance in some basic quality or character and that this quality exhibits God's purpose in the historical context of both the type and the antitype. Also, the antitypical meaning should be in harmony with or declared in harmony with scriptural teaching or found elsewhere in a direct declaration of scripture.³⁷

One other rule for interpreting type and antitype is suggested by Dungan, "The type and the antitype are frequently both in view at the same time."³⁸ The Sabbath rest that was promised to the people of God in the Old Testament was realized in the antitype of the Christian's rest in Christ. And yet, the Christian's rest in Christ is a type of the antitype, heaven, and eternal rest with God as when He rested from all His works.

The prophecies of Isaiah are often misinterpreted because the exegete fails to realize that in the last chapters of his prophecy Isaiah has been carried away in the Spirit into the time of captivity and is looking into the future from that perspective. Thus, he sees the children of Judah and Benjamin returning home; and that restoration is typical of the Christian's redemption and restoration in Christ. Both of these events are intertwined and are not kept chronologically distinct because they are type and antitype. Both of them are to take place in the prophetic future.

Perhaps the clearest example of this rule is seen in Matthew 24 when Jesus describes the terrible destruction of Jerusalem, which is a type of the final destruction of the world. Some have referred it all to the destruction of Jerusalem, while others have declared that it is entirely connected with the end of the world which is yet to come. Yet Jesus had both the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the world, the type and the antitype, in view at the same time though they can be distinguished by careful analysis of His words. They do flow together because the destruction of Jerusalem is typical of the destruction of the world.³⁹

CONCLUSION

This concludes the examination of figures of speech and of thought in the scriptures. These few pages should be considered

more of an introduction to the subject than as a complete treatment of the subject, for this is the case indeed. Yet the subject matter should be adequate in accurately interpreting much of the figurative language of the Bible. Since figurative language does not compose the majority of what is written in the scriptures, it must not receive a disproportionate amount of attention in hermeneutics. The interpreter with these rules and guidelines should be able to identify, analyze, and interpret with good success most of the figures he encounters.

NOTES: THE INTERPRETATION OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

1. Cleanth Brooks, Jr. and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938), pp. 2-3.

2. *Ibid.*, p. vi.

3. M.S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1883), p. 244. See also the valuable discussion of symbolism by Bevan, Edwyn. *Symbolism and Belief*. London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1938.

4. R.C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, pp. 18ff quoted by Terry, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-45.

5. C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Proposes a Toast and Other Pieces* (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1965), pp. 41-58.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

8. Norman L. Geisler, "Analogy: The Only Answer to the Problem of Religious Language," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (Summer, 1973), pp. 167-79.

9. J.S. Lamar, *The Organon of Scripture* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1859), p. 111.

10. Terry, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-48.

11. A.B. Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1963), p. 179.

12. W.A. Neilson (ed.), *Webster's New International Dictionary* (second edition, unabridged; Springfield, Massachusetts: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1934), p. 2340.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 1546.

14. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

15. Mickelsen, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

16. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 267-68.

18. D.R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, n.d.) p. 347.

19. For a deeper investigation of symbols and types refer to these sources:

Fairbairn, Patrick. *The Typology of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956.

- Mickelson, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-79.
- Ramm, Bernard. *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970. pp. 215-40.
- Terry, *op. cit.*, pp. 334-46, 369-95.
20. Neilson, *op. cit.*, p. 2555.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 835.
22. Terry has an excellent and extensive treatment of these in his text, and you are encouraged to read his material. *op. cit.*, pp. 347-68.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 332.
24. George Crabb, *English Synonymes*. p. 531 quoted by Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 334.
25. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 335.
26. Mickelsen, *op. cit.*, p. 237.
27. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 337. Quotation taken from Herbert Marsh, *Lectures on Sacred Criticism and Interpretation*. p. 371.
28. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 338.
29. Robert Milligan, *An Exposition and Defense of the Scheme of Redemption* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, n.d.), pp. 123-37.
30. I.B. Grubbs, "Class Notes," (unpublished).
31. J.B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d. Reprint), p. 180.
32. Dungan, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-39.
33. Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 277.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 281-82.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 282. In footnote one, Terry credits Lisco, *Die Parablen Jesu*, p. 22 for the idea of visualizing a parable as a circle with its radii.
36. B.B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1952), pp. 523-42.
37. Mickelsen, *op. cit.*, p. 262.
38. Dungan, *op. cit.*, p. 222.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 222-25.

QUESTIONS

1. T F Tropical language describes figurative language because there has been a change from current meaning to another.
2. T F Intelligent and careful readers do not have great difficulties in understanding figurative language.
3. T F Figurative language is very widespread and occurs in many literary works of various kinds.
4. T F Trench believed that the remarkable harmony between the material world and spiritual reality was designed by God.
5. T F Lewis says that if Christians wanted to, they could describe their theology apart from figurative language.

6. T F A word or sentence should be taken as figurative wherever possible.
7. T F Ensign believes that Galatians 4:21ff is best understood as a typological interpretation.
8. State three values of figurative language.
9. State Terry's summary of determining figurative language as a rational decision.
10. Define and give one Biblical example of the following figures:
a) simile, b) metaphor, c) enigma, d) proverb, e) metonymy, f) irony, g) hyperbole, h) personification, i) parable, j) allegory.
11. Define the following figures of thought: a) antithesis, b) symbol, c) emblem, d) type.
12. State the three classes of symbols.
13. State three characteristics of a true type.
14. List five distinct classes of types.
15. State ten rules for interpreting figurative language.
16. List six uses of parables by Jesus.
17. State three rules for interpreting parables.
18. The hub of almost all the parables of Jesus was _____.

VARIOUS FIGURES OF SPEECH IDENTIFIED

1. You are the temple of God (Metaphor).
2. All flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass (Simile).
3. Ps. 80:8-14 (Allegory).
4. 1 Kings 20:38 (Parable).
5. They have Moses and the prophets (Metonymy of cause).
6. Mine eyes have seen thy salvation (Metonymy of effect).
7. Rev. 13:18: Number of the man is 666 (Riddle).
8. Isa. 5:1 (Parable).
9. God so loved the world (Metonymy of subject, container for the contained).
10. Gen. 4:7: Sin coucheth at the door and unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him (Personification, not metonymy).
11. 1 Cor. 3:9-15 (Allegory).
12. Ye are the salt of the earth (Metaphor).
13. Lest my fury go forth like fire and burn that none can quench it (Simile).
14. 2 Sam. 14:1-24 (Parable).
15. At the mouth of two witnesses or three shall he that is to die be put to death (Metonymy of cause).
16. See I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil (Metonymy of effect).
17. Judges 14:14 (Riddle).
18. Luke 16:1-13 (Parable).

19. Opening their treasures (Metonymy of adjective).
20. Cup of the Lord and cup of demons (Metonymy of subject) 1 Cor. 10:21.
21. Christian armour Eph. 6:11 (Allegory).
22. Tares Matt. 13:24 (Parable).
23. 1 Cor. 5:6-8 leaven (Allegory).
24. I said, Days should speak and multitude of years teach wisdom (Met. of adj.).
25. Howbeit in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding that I might instruct others also, than 10,000 words in a tongue. 1 Cor. 14:19 (Metonymy. Definite for indefinite).
26. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; tho your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; tho they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Isa. 1:18 (Simile).
27. As binding a stone in a sling, so is he that gives honor to a fool. (Prov., Sim.)
28. Luke 22:36 (Metonymy, enigma, spiritual conflict).
29. Eph. 3:17 (Metaphor).
30. Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. (Metonymy of cause, instrument for effect).
31. 2 Sam. 12:1-17 (Parable).
32. Eccles. 12:3-7 (Allegory).
33. Ez. 13:10-15 (Allegory).
34. Ez. 17 (Fable-riddle, enigma).
35. John 1:29 (Metonymy of subject, possibly metaphor).
36. Jer. 2:13 (Metaphor).
37. John 7:37-38 (Metaphor).
38. Isa. 1:8-9 (Simile).
39. Isa. 53:6-7 (Simile).
40. 1 Cor. 3:10-15 (Allegory).
41. Acts 24:5 (Hyperbole).
42. 1 Cor. 14:19 (Metonymy).

Give yourself a twofold exercise. First look up the location of each of these passages and find those in a concordance that do not have the text given. Then give yourself a test over figures by putting these examples before you without the identification given you in the list.

Begin to build up a list of figures of speech as you read the scriptures and find them being used.

The Interpretation of Prophecy

The subject of prophecy is one of the most exciting subjects that can be introduced in any conversation or study. For years men have spent time and made money as they have gathered great crowds of people to "prophetic conferences" and have produced innumerable books on "prophecy." Indeed, it has been such a fertile field for imaginative and speculative interpretations produced that the very term prophecy has come into disrepute for many people. There is wide-spread misunderstanding about Biblical prophecy; and liberals even deny that there is such a thing as genuine, inspired prophecy reaching beyond the capabilities and knowledge of man. Thus, there is a grave necessity to develop a sound hermeneutics for the interpretation of this subject matter which composes a very large part of the Bible.

Earlier a chapter was devoted to the consideration of the covenants and how God has been working through the covenants with men to achieve His will. All of history is moving toward the goal of the kingdom of God. Prophecy has a great deal to do with

covenants, and the outworking of prophecy has often been realized in the covenant relationships between God and man. The New Covenant of Christ is the culmination of all prophecy and is the final covenant of redemption establishing the Messianic kingdom. Whether or not there is a future phase of that kingdom to be realized upon the earth after the return of Christ is a subject of much debate among Christians.

It needs to be emphasized that for the most part, given the difficulties of interpreting prophecies, the position that one occupies relative to prophecies yet to be fulfilled must be one of caution, humility, and open-mindedness. God has not made an exact and correct knowledge of the fulfillment of prophecy in the future a condition of salvation. Therefore, no one should make it a test of fellowship. It may well be that in the fulfillment which God will surely bring about that no one will have had all of the details correct and all of the parts of the prophecies worked out exactly right. Christians need to agree upon all they can in prophecy but not allow opinions about it to become divisive and matters of conflict.

I. THE NATURE OF PROPHECY

The interpreter will be helped if he has a knowledge of the teaching of the Bible on prophecy. Some books on hermeneutics go into this subject, but it is more background than having to do with the actual interpretation of prophecy. Serious students will want to study materials such as those presented by Mickelsen and Freeman.¹ The position that Bible-believing people have to maintain is that prophecy is a supernatural phenomenon occurring throughout the scripture. It is a part of the revelation and the inspiration of the Bible which is affirmed by scripture, verified by Jesus Christ, and confirmed by the apostles. Those who deny supernatural revelation to the prophets of the scripture are in error and in unbelief. One of the compelling proofs that the Bible is a supernatural work of God is the many predictions of prophecy and their exact fulfillment in history.

Peter gives the Christian a very cogent statement of the source of prophecy as he admonished Christians:

And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to 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 (2 Peter 1:19-21).

This passage has been subjected to some misinterpretation by the Roman Catholics in denying to the individual Christian the right of interpreting the word of God. It has no such meaning for it is not talking about exegeting prophecy. It is written as an assurance that God's will is going to take place and that Christians can be confident of the future because of the fulfilled prophecies which they read about in the scripture. The unfulfilled predictions concerning the future surely will be realized at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the consummation of the ages.

All of this is true, says Peter, because no prophecy (revealed teaching) of scripture (the written word) is of man's own understanding or ingenuity. A revealed teaching of God both as to His will for the present and His determination for the future never comes from a man's own efforts to gain insight into these things. Verse twenty-one makes it very clear that *interpretation* in verse twenty refers to an act of human will. Peter declares that the true origin of all revealed teaching in the word of God is the Holy Spirit who moved men to speak God's word.

This neatly dovetails with Paul's own assertion of the inspired nature of God's word, "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV). Thus, Christians are to rejoice in the floodlight which God's revelation through His Holy Spirit casts upon the meaning of history and the events of life. God is in control of history, and God has revealed definite things about the future and the ultimate consummation of His plan.

Another important point to bear in mind in regard to prophecy is that prophecy is constantly misinterpreted as meaning predictive prophecy, the divine disclosure as to all the things that are going to happen in the *future*. It is a grievous error that the word has come to have almost entirely the sense of prediction or dealing with future events, whereas the truth of the matter is that most prophecy (the revealed truth of the will of God) has to do with the present circumstances and the people to whom it was originally addressed. Most of the writing which is classified as prophetic is didactic in purpose and prose in its literary form. It is variously estimated as to how much of prophecy is didactic and

how much of it is predictive, but it is probably true that only between twenty-five and thirty percent of all prophecy has to do with *future* events. The prophet spoke for God to his generation primarily, and this is called forthtelling in distinction to foretelling which has to do with the future.

The didactic statements of God's revelation are not as difficult to interpret and can be worked through with considerable accuracy using the earlier generic laws and the factors of the correct method. It is predictive prophecy that has given people so much difficulty in explaining accurately and where tremendous speculation and eisegesis has taken place to the detriment of sound, Biblical theology. Since this type of writing embraces only from twenty-five to thirty percent of the scripture, it can be seen that a serious imbalance exists when some people spend so much of their time upon predictive prophecy and so little time upon didactic prophecy, the gospel and New Covenant teaching. Problems in predictive fulfillment and interpretation of future events clearly must be kept within the bounds of humility and tentative conclusions.

Also, at least half of all predictive prophecy has already been fulfilled in Christ and His *ecclesia*, the New Covenant. It is clearly an error for anyone to spend most of his time in dealing with prophecies of events which have been unfulfilled, as nearly as can be determined. It is good for the interpreter to have a sound hermeneutics in regard to prophecy so that he is able to exactly and carefully determine the meaning of the prophecies and predictions of the future as he comes across these in the scripture and at the same time to have principles that will enable him to detect the speculations and reckless eisegesis of those who are inordinately fond of futuristic events.

II. DIFFICULTIES IN INTERPRETING PROPHECY

All writers in hermeneutics are agreed that there is no easy and sure way to arrive at conclusive solutions concerning the meaning of predictive prophecies which are yet unfulfilled. All interpreters are nibbling at the edges of these predictions and striving to penetrate to their core, but as yet no one has developed an infallible integration which commends itself to a majority of Christian students. When one begins to speak with great assurance in this field, to be dogmatic, and to identify details with precise events to take place in the future, it is probably the best

thing to forsake his company. In the field of predictive prophecy, it is the part of wisdom to know that you do not know very much and that God can do some surprising things to the neat diagrams and eschatological schemes which men have drawn for Him to follow.

The difficulties spring from several sources. First, it is evident that prophecy is given with poetic and figurative language, often with figures of speech which are not always easy to interpret. There is the air of mystery and enigma surrounding many predictions which, while helpful to those who hear them, yet require earnest thought to understand the exact meaning of those prophecies before they become realities. Many of the Jews of Jesus' day failed to identify Him as the Messiah in spite of all the evidence which was given in predictions and which Jesus fulfilled. It was not so clear to them that they had no choice in the matter as to identifying Christ as the Messiah.

Prophecy predictions have a quality of ambiguity about them and are often fragmentary or short, without great elaboration. It is not that God wants to confuse people, but it is the nature of predictive prophecy that it is not crystal clear until such a time as there is an inspired interpretation of it or its fulfillment is definitely stated in scripture. This is borne out by the fact that the Old Testament writers themselves did not understand the predictions which they wrote by inspiration, for Peter comments,

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made a careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow (1 Peter 1:10-11).

Besides the nature of predictive prophecy, there is the area of man's finiteness and pride. These are severe hindrances to readers grasping all the truth that God has disclosed in prophecy. Human beings are imperfect, and they think imperfectly. Self-will and pride can overtake an interpreter easily and cause him to misjudge the truth of scripture or to be so inflated by a sense of his own ability that he begins to dogmatize in regard to his own opinions and desire.

Men have been remarkably quick to set dates for the return of Jesus Christ in clear violation of Jesus' own stern warning that no one would know the day nor the hour when He would return (Matthew 24:36, 44). Cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses have shown their lack of submission to the word of God by setting dates

for the return of Christ and being proved false in both instances, 1914 and 1975. There are a number of evangelical scholars who claim to believe the Bible who also are trying to set dates, and by being literalistic they claim that they are not violating the command of Christ because they are not trying to set the day and the hour but only the season. Apparently there is to their mind freedom to try to guess the season when Jesus will come back, which clearly violates the intention of Jesus Christ to remove all types of speculation about His return. Dr. Charles Taylor published a book, *Get All Excited, Jesus Is Coming Soon*, which predicted that more than likely Jesus would return on September 6, 1975 because the evidence all pointed to that day. It is now known that this was a false interpretation. However, Dr. Taylor has simply done his calculations over again and has come up with the "real possibility" that September 25, 1976 would be the day of the so-called rapture of the church. Now this also has been proved to be false. Such foolishness and idle speculation has no value in interpretation nor any value for getting Christ's work done in the world while it is still called today.

A third consideration that makes predictive prophecy hard to interpret with certainty is that these predictions are scattered over many centuries of time and are found in various books and different contexts. They are not given systematically and neatly compiled in a logical fashion so that one could move through them with assurance. Also, there are so many of these pieces to be gathered, interpreted in the light of their context, and put together that it requires years of study to begin to have a fairly comprehensive grasp of the whole. Even after years of study, a system of interpretation that is proposed by such scholars does not meet with the general acceptance of many scholars; and serious questions are asked which seem to be beyond answering until the fulfillment makes everything plain.

An uncritical consideration of prophecy has led some people to affirm that prophecy is simply history written beforehand with the implication that it can be read off just as certainly and easily as history is read. This is quite a defective view of prophecy and shows a shallow acquaintance with predictive prophecy. Always many particulars are required to write up any adequate history of an event, yet predictive prophecy lacks such particulars and details which would be necessary if it were at all of the character of history. If predictive prophecy were, indeed, history written before, then it is amazing that there are so many different views of

its meaning. This rather naive notion probably springs from the fact that such an interpreter has read some predictions like Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 in the light of the history of Christ's crucifixion and assumes that he understood these prophecies *before* their fulfillment in a complete way.

III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

While there are those who contend for some special and unique principle for interpreting prophecy, most scholars seem to agree that the philological method is capable of being consistently applied to predictive prophecy and with good results. The principle of looking for the literal meaning as most likely the intention of the author is the proper place to begin the investigation of the meaning of predictive prophecy. Davidson is very clear in his position that proper interpretation begins with a literal understanding of the words until it is clearly impossible to hold such in the light either of further revelation or the context:

This I consider the first principle in prophetic interpretation — to read the prophet literally — to assume that the literal meaning is *his* meaning — that he is moving among realities, not symbols, among concrete things like people, not among abstractions like *our* Church, world, etc. If we make this assumption, then we know what we have before us. We have a known relation of things, and we can comprehend what is said concerning it.²

Thus, the interpreter must seek a possible literal meaning before he will take up the possibility of a figurative or symbolic meaning. One should be able to give reasons why it must be figurative rather than literal. This does not mean that a forced literalism or overliteralizing is acceptable. That which is symbolic and figurative must be identified as such and allowed its proper interpretation.

Second, the interpreter must learn to interpret predictive prophecy from the inspired interpretation of the meaning of such predictions. One is on excellent ground when he is able to point to a clear fulfillment of a prediction, and all can learn much from the way the scripture was fulfilled. Acts 2 is quite instructive in this regard as Peter indicates the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy beginning on that day with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and the subsequent manifestation of spiritual gifts among the early Christians. Peter also applies Old

Testament passages given through David to David's greater son, Jesus (Acts 2:25-28, 34-35).

When it is stated by Joseph in the interpretation of the dreams by Pharaoh that it was repeated in two different forms and that this meant "that the matter is determined by God and God will quickly bring it about" (Genesis 41:42), the exegete has a point of interpretation for consideration of other prophecies that are given in a repeated or duplicate form. The principle seems to be established that this is for emphasis or that it is soon to come.

In Acts 1 Peter refers to the fulfillment of prophecy concerning Judas that was spoken by David (Acts 1:20). Later Philip explains Isaiah 53 to the eunuch as being fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Acts 8:32-35). Paul indicates the fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy concerning the calling of a people who were not the people of God as fulfilled in the calling of the Gentiles through the gospel (Romans 9:24-26). In Hebrews 8 the author quotes the prophecy made through Jeremiah about the coming of a new and final covenant and indicates that it has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ and His New Covenant. (A further discussion of the meaning and various ways that the predictions have been fulfilled will be made in a later section.)

Third, from the example of the interpretation of the Old Testament by Christ and the apostles a very significant adjunct to the literal method of interpretation is discovered; for Christ and the apostles used a typological interpretation of a number of Old Testament prophecies. It is, therefore, to be accepted as a legitimate and valid way of interpreting predictive prophecy. It is not allegorizing, reading in concepts that were not in the mind of the original author.

The Lord in His teaching noted some things in the Old Testament which were fulfilled in Him, not literally, but in a typological manner (Luke 24:25-27). He told Nicodemus that as Moses had lifted up the serpent for the saving of the people, even so would He be lifted up on a cross (John 3:14-15). He appealed to all to come and drink of Him so that rivers of living water would flow from them, that is the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-38). Likewise, He talked to the woman at the well about the living water that He could give her (John 4:10). To the multitude who came to Him at Capernaum after the feeding of the 5,000 He presented Himself as the true bread (manna) from heaven which would bring men life (John 6:32-51). Furthermore, He is the good shepherd who

lays down His life for the sheep (Psalm 23; Zechariah 13:7; John 10:11, 14, 16).

Paul also sees the fulfillment of a number of things in the Old Testament in both Christ and Christians. Christ is the Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7), and the rock from which Israel received water in the wilderness "was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). Christians are now the "Israel of God" replacing physical Israel (Galatians 6:16). The writer of Hebrews is very strong in stressing the fulfillment of the types and shadows of the Mosaic Covenant in the great High Priest, Jesus Christ.

All of this points to the use of typology and the validity of a typological interpretation when done within the biblical guidelines. It builds on all the material given earlier on typology in which it was pointed out that God designed certain events, persons, institutions, and things in the Old Testament that have a fulfillment in the New Testament, not in a literal or direct manner but in an antitype which answers to the type. This becomes an extremely important principle in interpreting various materials throughout the Old Testament which are fulfilled in Christ and the church. In this area the most difficult debates take place over the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, not in the literalness of the kingdom but in the essential antitype of the *ecclesia* which is the spiritual kingdom of Christ, not Davidic in its form but with David's greater son as its head. Much of Old Testament teaching and prediction is found in the typological interpretation.

The typological interpretation is further supported as a balanced principle between those interpreters who force a literalizing sense upon scriptures without proper reasons and those who overspiritualize, which leads to allegorizing. The typological is a wholesome balance between these two extreme positions and properly applied gives due weight to both the literal sense when required and allows the proper application in a typological sense when required.

IV. RULES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

With these guiding principles in mind, the serious student of prophecy and especially its predictive aspect should find the following rules helpful in discerning the proper interpretation of the words of the prophets.

1. Apply all of the information which you have learned about

figurative language, types, and symbols. Prophetic writing involves these elements, especially in the apocalyptic writings. You should seek to determine what the figures are and the symbolic terms or imagery used. Comparison with all the prophetic literature is desirable to establish the meaning of these but always in the light of the context in which the particular author is using them.

2. Carefully consider the language that is used and the terms employed. James Orr has called attention to this important aspect of prophetic writing:

While, therefore, prediction of the immediate future is relatively definite, the vision of events more remote — especially of those belonging to the consummation of God's kingdom — becomes more general in form, and greater freedom is allowed in shaping it in symbol and metaphor. The *idea* becomes the main thing; the particular *form* of the idea — the clothing of imagery or detail it receives — is less essential. There is even here, no doubt, great difference of degree. Under the guidance of the divine Spirit, prophecy is sometimes quite startling in the individuality and definiteness of its prediction of even remote events. . . .

. . . It follows from what has been said that, in the prediction of distant events to which existing conditions no longer apply, there is no alternative but that these should be presented *in the forms of the present*. This is a principle which runs through all prophecy where the future state of the kingdom of God is concerned. It would have served no end, and is, under ordinary conditions, psychologically inconceivable, that the prophet should have been lifted out of all the forms of his existing consciousness, and transported into conditions utterly strange and inapprehensible by him. Such a revelation would, in any case, have been incommunicable to others.³

Orr indicates that the vocabulary and terminology used by an author is relevant to his day but that the *content* of that which is to take place in the future may well be something beyond or modified from the original statement. This rule has been referred to as the distinction between the form and content. The form of the message may be Mosaic in its terminology but Messianic in its content. This enters into the rationale for the typological interpretation; for the words are not intended to have their ordinary, literal meaning but a deeper spiritual application.

In the prophecy, which is clearly Messianic, in Isaiah 11:11ff, the recovery of the people from their scattered condition is said to be recovering them from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam,

Shinar, and Hammath. It is obvious that these are ancient names which no longer have historical reality in this predicted future time. It is necessary to take these as simply designations which have reference to future nations from whom all the people of God will be gathered into the Messianic kingdom.

The improbability of a literal fulfillment of this prediction in Palestine is strengthened by the later verses which are also used typically:

And the Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt; and He will wave His hand over the River with His scorching wind; and He will strike it into seven streams, and make men walk over dry shod. And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant of His people who will be left, just as there was for Israel in the day they came up out of the land of Egypt (Isaiah 11:15-16).

While there is no doubt that God could very easily bring about the physical transformation indicated, in the light of the context discussing the Messianic age with its universal salvation for all the people of the world, it seems more likely that this is a symbolic indication that the access to the kingdom of Christ is going to be opened to all. The type of the Exodus is secured in the greater antitype of the gathering of all of those for whom Christ died into the church.

Again, consider Malachi 1:11:

“for from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name will be great among the nations,” says the Lord of hosts.

This prophecy looks forward to the Messianic age, for it was not fulfilled in the Jewish economy. The use of the words incense and grain offering are terms understood by the people to whom Malachi directed his word but which have a particular reference to the worship offered to God in the Messianic age yet not in these peculiar Mosaic forms.

Everything that can be known about the culture and history of the people at the time that the author wrote provides valuable information for correct interpretation. The terms which the author uses must be understood in the light of his audience and his vocabulary. Naturally, the exegete is going to identify the figurative and symbolic elements of the prophecy as noted in rule one. The use of symbols and images may be used in the same form by other prophetic writers; but, again, these forms may have

different content as indicated by the context of the later writer. The beasts in Daniel are not identical in meaning with those in John's Apocalypse. It is of critical importance that the interpreter know the terms which his author is using and to understand their content and significance for him.

3. Determine the historical circumstances and situation out of which the prophecy has been given. It is essential to have as comprehensive a grasp as possible of the political and social conditions which existed at the time prophecy was given to understand its words and the intention of the author. Also, the fact must be recognized that the inspired writer was not given a universal or comprehensive view of all that was to transpire in the future; and yet, his understanding as a man within the culture of that day must not be allowed to distort the meaning which the divine Author expressed. The knowledge of the historical situation may also enable one to determine whether or not the prophecy has been fulfilled in some subsequent historical event, say within the Old Testament period. It is not always what the inspired author could have understood from the terms which he used but what God intended through these terms to teach about the future events that must be sought as the true meaning.

4. The context of the prophecy must be determined if an accurate understanding is to be obtained. The frame of reference or subject matter of the prophecy must be found in the light of the immediate context and the larger context of the document. The subject of the prophecy and to whom it may refer must be ascertained. The audience to whom it was addressed in the first place and what they might have been expected to learn from it will add valuable assistance to understanding the prophecy in its most precise meaning intended by the author.

5. As always, correct interpretation is greatly enhanced by a thorough study of all the parallel passages which are relevant to the subject of the particular prophecy under examination. The Law of Harmony demands that no prophecy be given a meaning which is out of harmony with other clear statements of scripture or the indication that a prophecy has been fulfilled. Terry calls attention to this matter in the progressive unfolding of the prophecy of the Messiah particularly in regard to the coming of the Christ and His nature.⁴ Beginning with the great prophecy in Genesis 3:15 with the seed of the woman successive revelation indicated that this seed was to come through Abraham and eventually through the house of David. A description of the

Messiah is enlarged by prophecies through the latter prophets leading to a definite outline of the Messiah, sufficient for His identification when He came by those who were believers. There are prophecies about Christ as the suffering servant and the sacrificial lamb that are parallel, while on the other hand there are parallel passages relating to the Messiah's power, conquering prowess, and kingdom. These parallels are extremely valuable in securing a more adequate understanding of any one of the passages.

6. The interpreter of predictive prophecy needs to realize the centrality of the person of the Messiah and His reign over all. As noted in other connections, Christ is the hub of the wheel from which all the spokes of prophecy radiate, hold together, and derive their significance. James Orr has given another canon of interpretation covering this aspect:

... A second principle of interpretation relates to the element of *time* in prophecy. Here the fact to be remembered is that the one thing immovably certain to the prophet — that with which he starts — is not the way by which the goal of the kingdom of God is to be reached, but the goal itself. Whatever might betide in the interval, there is no dubiety about *that*; God's purpose shall be fulfilled, His kingdom shall triumph, righteousness shall be supreme, and shall fill the earth.⁵

The central theme of the prophet is the reign of the Messiah, and this is the greatest point within all predictive prophecy. Mickelsen declares that the finality of God's revelation in Christ now colors all the earlier revelations, transforming the concepts of the Old Testament into an adequate and accurate picture of the Old Covenant completed in Christ and His kingdom.⁶ This is strongly insisted upon by Girdlestone:

To study the prophets without reference to Christ seems as unscientific as to study the body without reference to the head. The Spirit of Christ was in the Prophets all the way through (1 Peter 1:11), and each book is to be read as part of a great whole.⁷

7. The interpreter must exercise great care in determining the fulfillment or the probable fulfillment in the future of any prophetic passage. The genuine prophet always spoke the truth, and fulfillment was a characteristic of the genuineness of his inspiration. However, it must be observed that there are five ways in which a prophecy may be fulfilled and properly interpreted as fulfilled. A prophecy can be literally and directly fulfilled in the

time of the prophet or at some future time. Again, the prophecy may be essentially fulfilled in its central thrust apart from strong physical or literal features or in other cases typologically fulfilled in a different form or person. In some cases the prediction may be conditional, and the prediction may *not* be fulfilled because the conditionality involved in the prediction was met by those involved. Finally, there are some predictions which have multiple fulfillment, that is a minor fulfillment and a major fulfillment which may be separated by a considerable period of time and yet both be intended by God as fulfillment in His inspired utterance. Which one of these five kinds of fulfillment is involved may not be made clear by the prediction itself. The intelligent exegete must consider the prophecy in the light of all the principles which are given and determine whether or not a prophecy has been fulfilled and if so in what manner.

It is obvious that many prophecies have been *literally* fulfilled. Elijah predicted a drought which came and remained for three and a half years until he prayed for rain (1 Kings 17:1). Jeremiah's prediction of the seventy years of captivity for Judah in Babylon was literally fulfilled. Matthew notes the literal fulfillment of Micah's prediction concerning the birth of the Messiah at Bethlehem as fulfilled directly in Jesus Christ's own experience (Matthew 2:5-6; Micah 5:2). Thus, the rule must always be that the literal is first assumed to be the form of the fulfillment; and it is only when clear indications from the context, the application of the Law of Harmony, or an inspired interpretation shows that it cannot be taken literally that this kind of fulfillment is given up. Solid reasons must be presented to show why one must leave the literal interpretation to go to a secondary interpretation.

It is clear from an examination of the recorded fulfillment of various predictions that all prophecies were not intended to be precisely fulfilled in every detail or in a rigidly literal manner. As has been indicated earlier, prophecy is not like history; and it is to be expected that fulfillment can be satisfactorily seen when *the essence* of the prediction is accomplished. A good example of this is to be seen in the case of the prophecy by Elijah concerning the death of Ahab corresponding to the death of Naboth which he instigated. Elijah declared, "Thus says the Lord, 'In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs shall lick up your blood, even yours'" (1 Kings 21:19). This prediction was fulfilled at the battle of Ramoth-gilead; for Ahab was mortally

wounded by an arrow, and his blood ran down into the bottom of the chariot. At evening he died; and his body was taken to Samaria for burial, and "they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood . . . according to the word of the Lord which He spoke" (1 Kings 22:38). It is clear that the prediction laid no stress upon the precise place where the dogs were to lick the blood of Ahab as they had that of Naboth but that dogs were to lick up his blood as they had that of Naboth. Thus, the divine punishment came in an essential fulfillment of that prediction.

Along with the essential way of fulfilling a prophecy is to be noted the *typological*, in which a prophecy or a prediction given in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Covenant in not precise or literal terms but in an antitypical form. Thus, the prophecy of Elijah who was to come before the great and terrible day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5) has been typologically fulfilled in the person and ministry of John the Baptizer as declared by Jesus Himself (Matthew 11:12-14; Mark 9:11-13).

Still another example of a typological fulfillment is found in the prediction recorded by Amos concerning a future restoration of the tabernacle of David (Amos 9:11-12). This prophecy is declared to be fulfilled by James at the conference in Jerusalem but in an essential way and not a literal way (Acts 15:13-19). James declares that the prophecy referred to a restoration of the house or kingdom of David, and in that restoration the Gentiles would be admitted. There was no literal building up of an edifice for David, nor does it refer to a temple; for the actual word used refers to a tent or temporary shelter. Yet, James indicates how this prophecy was fulfilled in his day through the admission of the Gentiles into the *ecclesia* of Christ.

This principle of a typological fulfillment particularly of Old Testament Messianic prophecies concerning the person of the Messiah as well as His kingdom is seen by many exegetes to have been fulfilled typologically in the New Covenant of Christ and the establishment of the *ecclesia*. This is denied by other exegetes who look for a literal fulfillment of these kingdom prophecies. It is a moot question that has not been satisfactorily decided and probably will not be on the interpretation of the prophetic passages alone. The Law of Harmony and the entire theological significance of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant are of far more weight in settling this question than the interpretation of particular predictions.

In certain cases the conditionality is noted as in Jeremiah's prediction to King Zedekiah concerning the certain fall of Jerusalem and what the king could do about it by surrendering ahead of time to the Babylonians (Jeremiah 38:17-18). It was up to Zedekiah to make the decision which the Lord had placed before him through the prophet, and by obedience he could have spared his own life and the city of Jerusalem. He chose not to do so, and the prophecy was fulfilled in his death and the destruction of the city.

One final feature of fulfillment of prophecy is found in a *multiple fulfillment* of a prophecy, an earlier and a later fulfillment or a lesser and a greater fulfillment. A prophecy can have an initial phase of fulfillment and later on a complete fulfillment such as in regard to the return of the people of God from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem, but this return and restoration may go beyond into the Messianic restoration of all things in a completed kingdom.

Yet, this must not be taken as a double sense or that the scripture has two or more meanings. Sound hermeneutics repudiates any such position; because if there is to be truth and certainty, there must be one and only one meaning in any one passage. The mystical method of interpretation, which discovers hidden and manifold meanings in any scripture that is interpreted, is false. It can only lead to confusion in worthless speculations of the mind. Where ambiguity exists there can only be uncertainty and perplexity. Thus, the multiple fulfillment of prophecy does not agree with or allow a multiple sense. It is not that prediction-fulfillment A may be fulfilled by X, Y, or Z but rather that fulfillment A may also be fulfilled later by A¹, that is by a deeper root of reality and truth than was first disclosed in initial fulfillment. Such a prophecy is not one thing and then later a different thing but something that is very similar and related to the same thing.

Thus, in the idea of a restored kingdom the near image may be that of Solomon or David while the completed fulfillment will be the image of Christ. This is borne out in 2 Samuel 7:12 where Jehovah promises to "raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Samuel 7:12-13). This first of all refers to Solomon, who did come forth as the successor of the line of David and built a house of worship, a temple (thus fulfillment A); but

how much more truly is it fulfilled in David's greater son who was able to build the house of God which is the church of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15) and whose throne is forever (thus A¹). Solomon did not live forever, and the house that he built for Jehovah has long since disappeared; but the "temple" of David's greater son has endured and will endure forever. (A typological fulfillment is also seen in regard to a physical house — temple — and a spiritual house — the Body of Christ.)

This phenomenon of prophetic scripture is referred to by some Roman Catholic scholars in the descriptive word *compenetration*. This indicates that the fulfillment of the prophecy flows from the same words and that the events or fulfillments are related one to the other. The near fulfillment and the distant fulfillment dovetail together and inhere within the original statement of the prophecy. An illustration of this may be found in the use of Habakkuk 1:5, "Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days — you would not believe if you were told." The prophet goes on to explain that God is going to rear up the pagan and ruthless Chaldeans to punish His own people, and that will be a matter of astonishment to the Jews. Later this same prophetic statement is used by Paul in the synagogue at Antioch when he declares that the Jewish believers must take heed to that prophetic word in Habakkuk, but now Paul applies it to the entrance of the Gentiles into the kingdom which was going to be an astonishment to the Jews (Acts 13:41). Thus, the prophecy is a warning against unbelief in the astonishment which a prophecy would bring about and was fulfilled first in the coming of the Chaldeans to punish Israel and later was fulfilled in the entrance of the Gentiles into the *ecclesia* by the will of God.

The Bible does have enigmas and allegories, hyperboles, and *paronomasia*; and these are recognized figures of speech not to be confused with the assertion of a double sense in the scripture. Their meaning is usually clearly indicated from a study of the context, and they have an appropriate place in figurative usage. Allegories are to be allegorically interpreted if correctly understood, and types are to be typologically interpreted.

The safe procedure to follow in regard to a multiple fulfillment of scripture is to find the inspired interpretation and application of such a prophecy. If a prophecy is declared to have been fulfilled, as for example, in Acts 2:16 and 15:15, then there seems

to be no reason to look for any other fulfillment to come in the future. This is the period of the new dispensation, the last days, and the final covenant of God with man. Matthew is clear in his inspired interpretation of the prophecy in Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son." Matthew declares that, when Jesus was returned from Egypt after the death of Herod, this was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Hosea (Matthew 2:15). This is a very clear example of a double fulfillment, for Christ is the very essence of the meaning of Israel.

There seems to be a consistent pattern in the scripture concerning multiple fulfillment in a first and second fulfillment of the same nature and usually a near and a distant future fulfillment. There seems to be no third fulfillment of the scripture, and that seems to be explained by the fact that Christ is the end of prophecy, that all of these things have culminated in Him and His *ecclesia*. There is no scriptural encouragement to look for still another fulfillment. Some believe that Peter's statement on the day of Pentecost that Joel's prophecy had been fulfilled means that it was only partially fulfilled in a minor way and is to be actually fulfilled in some future millennial age. This does not appear to be the best position to take relative to the declaration of the inspired interpreter though it is true that Joel's prediction encompasses the entire age from Pentecost to the day of judgment of all which has not yet come to pass.

Basically, predictive prophecy is fulfilled one time and one time alone. There are unique predictions of future events, and those events are unique. When once fulfilled, no other fulfillment is necessarily implied; but, at the same time, it is noted that God by His own design and plan has, in some instances, developed a lesser and a greater fulfillment of a prediction. This is known or understood by the fact of inspired interpretation, and the matter must be left there without additional speculation on the possibility of other multiple fulfillment predictions.

Prophecy is a tremendous area of interest and concern to the student of scripture and especially to the New Testament Christian. With discernment in the use of the rules and principles set forth in this chapter any serious student of the word ought to be able to come to exegetical conclusions which will be accurate interpretations of the meaning which God through the prophets has placed in these words and that can meet critical testing by others.

NOTES: THE INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY

1. See the following books:

Fairbairn, Patrick. *Prophecy Viewed in Respect to Its Distinctive Nature, Its Special Function, and Proper Interpretation*. Reprint. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976.

Freeman, Hobart. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1968.

Lockhart, Clinton. *The Messianic Message of the Old Testament*. Reprint. Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1905.

Mickelsen, A.B. *Interpreting the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963.

Payne, J. Barton. *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy (The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment)*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1973.

2. A.B. Davidson, *Old Testament Prophecy*, ed. J.A. Paterson (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1905), pp. 67-68.

3. James Orr, *Problem of the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), pp. 461-62.

4. M.S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1883), p. 408.

5. Orr, *op. cit.*, pp. 462-63.

6. Mickelsen, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

7. R.B. Girdlestone, *Grammar of Prophecy*, p. 107 quoted by Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), p. 267.

8. Orr, *op. cit.*, pp. 463-64. Quotation is from Jeremiah 18:7-10.

QUESTIONS

1. T F There is definite need for a sound hermeneutics for prophecy because of the abuse of Biblical prophecy by many.
2. T F A correct understanding of prophetic events in the future is required for salvation.
3. T F The covenant of Christ is the culmination of all prophecy.
4. T F Bible-believing people must affirm that prophecy is the supernatural act of God in revealing His truth and plan.
5. T F 2 Peter 1:19-21 teaches that individuals must not interpret the Word of God, for only authorized leaders can do so.
6. T F Prophecy is simply history written beforehand.
7. T F In predictive prophecy there are two or more meanings which are equally true.
8. T F It is best, in keeping with scriptural pattern, to allow a multiple fulfillment but not a third fulfillment.
9. ____ Prophecy means: a) predictive of future event, b) teaching, c) more prediction than teaching, d) more teaching than prediction, e) none of these.

10. ____ Predictive prophecy may amount to only: a) 10%, b) 20%, c) 30%, d) 40%, e) 50% of all prophecy.
11. Probably of all predictive prophecy, at least _____ has already been fulfilled. a) $\frac{1}{3}$, b) $\frac{1}{4}$, c) $\frac{1}{6}$, d) $\frac{3}{4}$, e) $\frac{1}{2}$.
12. The goal toward which all history is moving is the _____.
13. 2 Peter 1:19-21 and _____ neatly dovetail in their assertion of supernatural inspiration of the scriptures.
14. Prophecies might be fulfilled in one of five ways: many of them _____, some _____, many fulfillments in the New Testament _____, sometimes not fulfilled because of the _____ element, and some with more than one fulfillment, a _____ fulfillment.
15. Complete the following *rules* for interpreting prophecy: a) Apply all the information you have learned about _____ language. b) Carefully consider the language used and the terms employed distinguishing between the _____ and the _____, for example, Mosaic and Messianic. c) Keep in mind the centrality of the _____ and His _____.
16. State three reasons why there are difficulties especially in interpreting predictive prophecies.
17. In addition to the clear literal fulfillments of prophecy, the _____ fulfillments, as indicated by inspired interpretations, are considerable in number.
18. In the prediction of future events to which existing conditions no longer apply, the author has to present these in the forms _____.
19. Give two illustrations from scriptures that show the truth of the above principle.
20. What does the word "compensation" mean, and is it a valid concept in reference to Biblical prophecies?
21. What is the difference between the multiple fulfillment of a scripture and an allegorical or mystical interpretation of that text?
22. T F Because there are so many conflicting views on some predictive prophecies, it is best for the Bible student to not spend time with prophetic interpretation.
23. T F The careful application of hermeneutics and the correct method will go far to clearing up the conflicting views on prophecies.
24. T F The clear statement from Jesus for men not to set dates for His second coming has been sufficient to prevent people who say they follow the Bible from setting dates.
25. T F The inspired statements of apostles and others as to the actual fulfillment of a predictive prophecy have always settled the question for everyone about the fulfillment.

How Hermeneutics Can Help Remove Difficulties and Alleged Discrepancies in Scripture

All readers of the Bible sooner or later encounter in their reading statements which trouble them in interpreting because they appear to contradict other statements of scripture. It may be that these alleged contradictions are brought to the attention of the Bible student by reading in the publications of men or in talking to those who will attack the Bible as a book with many discrepancies and errors. There are those who reject the Bible as the word of God because they feel that its statements are not historically accurate, though many times these are mere suppositions that have been handed down from unbeliever to unbeliever. Nevertheless the Bible student is faced with the need

of understanding scriptures that seem to create difficulties and the possibility of error in a fair and rational way.

Hermeneutics is obviously designed to provide maximum help in correctly understanding the meaning of scriptures. For example, the Law of Harmony has been appealed to in an earlier section as requiring the interpretation of a passage of scripture in such a way that it will not conflict with other undoubted scriptural teaching. Employing the Law of Harmony when alleged discrepancies are proposed in scripture may make it clear that there is no essential discrepancy and may be only an apparent discrepancy in words which may have minimum divergency and raise the possibility of obscurity or misunderstanding though not error. If the laws of hermeneutics are actually applied as they should be, many of these alleged difficulties in scripture will vanish like the morning mist in the face of the sun. However, it is valuable to have some specific information to work hermeneutically with these alleged contradictions in scripture both for the sake of the interpreter himself and to help others as they, too, may encounter problem passages involving what seems to them to be error.

It has been pointed out earlier that it is wrong to use the apologetical method which attempts to "whitewash" all the passages of scripture which seem to be less than ethical and Christian in the entire scripture. While Christians contend that there are no errors within the original text of the sacred oracles, all have to face honestly those passages which various people will point to as causing them great difficulty in reconciling the meanings of the passages. The Bible interpreter, assured as he is that it is the actual truth from God, will deal with them with the expectation of removing the apparent inconsistencies. At the same time, there is no effort to explain away matters which are in fact impossible to be resolved with present resources and knowledge.

I. THE FUNDAMENTAL BASIS FOR RESOLVING ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES

Basic Presupposition

Throughout this book it has been stated that a basic presupposition of this work is that the scripture, composed of sixty-six canonical books, is infallible (totally trustworthy) in its meaningful message and is inerrant (not having any faults or

errors) in the original text. While it is true that no copy of the original text has been preserved, yet the teaching of scripture indicates that God's revelation is like Him, true and without imperfection. The postulate that the original copy was perfect seems logical, for it is altogether within God's ability and God's will to give to man an inerrant and infallible revelation of Himself. This cannot be ruled out *apriori*.

Reliable text. With the conviction that present copies of copies of scripture rest upon originals that were not in error and which earnest textual criticism has restored to a remarkable degree of perfection, the Bible interpreter is assured that he is dealing with a reliable and authoritative scripture that should be selfconsistent and rationally defensible. God is declared to be the author of scripture from the beginning to the end of the Bible, and He is responsible for its contents and truthfulness. The constant teaching of scripture is that man is a sinner in rebellion against God and that he is prone to question the word of God, to reject God's authority over him. Once the mind of man is convinced that the scripture is not only worthy of the Absolute Person and Intelligence behind all things as Creator, but that the scripture asserts and constantly reenforces the fact that it is from God Himself as ultimate author, the interpreter has no other recourse but to submit fully to the teaching of God's word as determined by sound hermeneutics.

Thus, while not using the apologetical method of interpretation, the exegete is nevertheless set for "the defense of the gospel" and for the upholding of the authority and infallibility of the word of God as over against the assertions, charges, and findings of finite and sinful man (Philippians 1:16). While it involves an element of faith commitment beyond the certainty of formal demonstration to accept the scripture written by men as inspired by God and without error, yet every other position that is taken must also involve a faith commitment which goes beyond the factual evidence. When the alternatives involve the choice between a book that insists it is the word of God revealed through inspired men carried along by the Holy Spirit of God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21) or the acceptance of the contradicting voices of fallible, often inconsistent, short-sighted, and erring mortal men even the greatest geniuses of the race, surely no intelligent person will have any difficulty in deciding which one to follow as ultimate authority.

True testimony. As a result of this fundamental position in regard

to the scripture, it is necessary to take the testimony of the Bible upon all questions with the utmost seriousness and with the presumption that, carefully read and interpreted, its testimony is true and final. What C.S. Lewis wrote about faith may also be said of scripture — “assent to a proposition which we think so overwhelmingly probable that there is a psychological exclusion of doubt, though not a logical exclusion of dispute.”¹ Men are going to raise questions about the scripture and serious objections which cannot in every case be refuted with logical rigor, but the basic conviction that the scripture is the one certain source of all truth coming from God will stand in the face of much criticism even though men do not have sufficient knowledge in every case to eliminate the seeming contradiction between the various reports of events that are given. The principles given below are designed to assist in reducing the unresolved difficulties to a minimum.

Meaning of Inerrancy

Bernard Ramm notes in his excellent chapter entitled “Problem of Inerrancy and Secular Science in Relation to Hermeneutics”² that the almost continuous and consistent testimony of believers from the times of the apostles to the present has been to affirm and defend the inspiration, infallibility, and authority of the word of God based upon an original text without error. In all of the creeds of all the major denominations clear and strong affirmations concerning the inspiration and infallibility of the scripture as the word of God are made. It is only within the recent past that these statements have been challenged by rationalistically influenced interpreters and by the growing apostasy from submission to the word of God.

Not all clear. Ramm notes that one’s view of the inerrancy of the scripture must not be something that is imposed from without on scripture or a human, abstract theory forced upon the scripture but rather the conclusion reached by an inductive study of all the relevant passages within the scriptures themselves. He further observes that a belief in inerrancy does not mean that all the Bible is clear. It requires diligent study on the part of the student of scripture, and it is not an easy book of simple truths which require little study or severe thinking. The author of Hebrews rebukes the Hebrew Christians for their dullness of hearing which prevented them from seeing the fullness of the meaning of the revelation given to them (Hebrews 5:11). A belief in inerrancy

does not guarantee that the interpretation of scripture is going to be easy or perfectly clear in every single passage in the book.³

Cumulative revelation. Also, Ramm notes that a belief in the infallibility and inerrancy of the scripture does not mean

... that the Bible speaks all its mind on a subject in one place. It is the total Bible in historical perspective which is inerrant. The monogamous ideal of marriage is not clearly set forth till the pages of the New Testament.⁴

The fact of cumulative revelation must be borne in mind as God discloses more and more of His truth to man as he is capable of receiving it. That which was taught in elementary and simple forms in the Old Covenant is true but not exhaustive. It is in the full light of the New Covenant revelation through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit that final truth on the nature and will of God is disclosed. That which is partial and true does not necessarily contradict that which is comprehensive and also true.

Not literalness of detail. Again, Ramm has pointed out correctly that belief in the total trustworthiness of the scripture

... does not mean *literalness* of detail. All of the speeches in the book of Acts are very short, and we are persuaded that Peter and Paul talked for more than one or two minutes. We have in Acts a faithful digest of these speeches and not the *ipsissima verba* of Paul.⁵

Not perfect text. "Belief in the inerrancy of the Bible," states Ramm, "does not demand the original manuscripts nor a perfect text."⁶ While it would be wonderful to have the original manuscripts, yet in the providence of God they were not preserved. If they had been, very likely they would have been idolatrously worshipped even as the brazen serpent of Moses was and had to be destroyed. In spite of not having them, a reliable and altogether trustworthy text based upon those original copies is not excluded. The conviction based upon the nature of God as perfect and all truth lends confidence to the position that the present copies have carefully and accurately transmitted the original text. The work of textual criticism has shown up the textual corruptions in most cases and has eliminated them. Just because the inerrant text has been transmitted with some corruption in its copying by human beings does not overthrow the inerrancy and infallibility of the text nor deny the reality of inspiration.⁷

Bible Vindicated

The reliability of the Bible having been severely criticized and

searchingly investigated with the result that it has been vindicated from the charges of error means that today the Bible statements must be taken as true when interpreted accurately in context and with the Law of Harmony. Anyone who accuses the Bible of being in error must be prepared to establish this by substantial arguments that leave no question as to their cogency. Until such an allegation of error upon the scripture is proved beyond a shadow of doubt, the substantiated and vindicated truthfulness of the Bible will continue to stand.

Allegations not proof. This brings to mind the fact that it is easy for men to allege contradictions and discrepancies in the Bible but extremely difficult to prove them. A notable trial was held in 1939 in New York City in which Dr. Harry Rimmer was involved. William Floyd, an atheist, in New York City sued Rimmer for a thousand dollar reward that had been offered to anyone who proved an error in the Bible. The atheist claimed that he had established several errors; and when Rimmer's foundation would not pay the money, Harry Rimmer was taken to court. The judge heard the plaintiff's case and alleged proofs of the errors within the scripture; yet Dr. Rimmer, the defendant, was not allowed to testify! The reason was that the judge found the plaintiff's case to be inconclusive and that he had not established a single error which Dr. Rimmer had to refute. The Honorable Justice Benjamin Shalleck said to the atheist, "You have wasted the time of this court for a day and a half, and you have failed to prove one single item!"⁸

Small number of errors. Even radical and hostile critics of the Bible do not have an extensive list of allegations or errors when compared with the immense number of statements made within the Bible. Marcus Dods was able to list only six contradictions in the gospel to show their lack of infallibility and historicity.⁹ Others have listed a handful of alleged errors, which is startling in the light of the ingenuity of sinful man driven by a desire to prove his case against the infallibility of scripture that they turn up only with a handful of objections and not pages and pages of them. These are actually more difficulties in the text and in the interpretation of the text than they are glaring errors which might be fatal to the position of an inerrant scripture.

Answered many times. Furthermore, these alleged errors have been known for centuries and have been used against the Bible by generation after generation of unbelievers while all the time reasonable explanations of these difficulties have been offered by

highly competent and intelligent men who do not have to take a second seat to any of the infidels who have attacked the scripture. What it actually boils down to is whether a person has a heart that is surrendered to God, humble and teachable like little children said the Lord, or whether there is the pride and conceit of men who want to be autonomous and self-sufficient standing in judgment upon the word of God.

It should also be borne in mind that the Bible, though often attacked with the most scathing criticism by brilliant and critical minds with every desire to find and establish error in the Bible, has been so often vindicated by later discoveries whether in archaeology or history. A number of books have been written pointing out the errors of the destructive critics of the Bible, and these are available to the serious and openminded seeker after the truth.¹⁰ The past failures of the critics teach all to take *new* allegations of error in the scripture with a great deal of skepticism and to demand proof of the most positive and convincing nature before the allegation is accepted.

Proper Attitude to Take

The proper attitude to take toward such problems and allegations is to seek for probable answers to the objections from the increasingly helpful fields of archaeology and historical studies. Where this is now inadequate, it is not wrong for the exegete to propose that many of the untranslated archaeological finds may provide the very knowledge to clear up the difficulties. This has taken place in a most remarkable way in recent times through the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls which have amazingly confirmed the accurate transmission of the Old Testament text and refuted the allegations of many that a text transmitted over so many millennia must be very corrupt. The Ugaritic literature has been extremely valuable in knocking the props right out from under many of "the assured results" of negative criticism of the Old Testament. More recently the amazing riches of the finds at Tell Mardikh are opening up a whole new area of confirmation of the Biblical text and teaching going back to the time of Abraham. Jerusalem, Sodom, and Gomorrah along with the names that are recognizable as names that are found also in the Biblical text (such as Abraham) are mentioned.

Time lapse. A second consideration in cases that are not immediately resolved by reasonable proposals is to recognize that

men living this long after the events may lack the data that would clear up the difficulty if available. The defender of Biblical inerrancy is not obliged to answer *every* supposed discrepancy to the entire satisfaction of the negative critic in the face of the fact that he is so far removed from the time when those events actually took place. Again, the allegation must be shown to be conclusive before it really becomes a detrimental factor in accepting the scriptures as infallible.

Profound truth. A third factor is that there are things in the scripture that are dealt with that are too profound or transcendent for mortal minds to grasp even if God had explained them. This would certainly be true in regard to the triune nature of God and the two-fold nature of Jesus Christ in one personality. These mysteries are true but are too great for man to figure out for himself. Such things are accepted because Christians trust God and the truthfulness of His revelation.

Defective reading. A fourth point to take into consideration is that it is possible that the present reading is defective and not the true reading as found in the original because of scribal errors. This is not an easy escape from answering the problem, but it is quite a legitimate possibility in a few cases. Of course, it cannot be the one and only standard answer to all the allegations of error.

Don't know. Fifth, the exegete may simply have to wait for more understanding and for more evidence to be brought to light in the future. It is not wrong for the defender of the inspiration and authority of the scripture to have to say occasionally, "I do not know the answer." No one in this world knows all the answers to the objections which men can thrust at the positions held by other men whether in theology or philosophy. No man is infallible and has perfect knowledge.

II. THE CAUSES OF DIFFICULTIES AND THE SOURCES OF DISCREPANCIES

Names

There are a number of causes for alleged discrepancies in the scripture, but not a few of them are actually the carelessness of readers who are not serious about understanding the scripture or able to apply sound hermeneutical laws. One of the common sense rules of hermeneutics that would help is "read on and read on." In other words, get the context; and let the scripture interpret itself. People may not note that the same name may be

used for more than one individual or for several different things so that Saul is used of an Old Testament king and of the apostle Paul. In the New Testament there are a number of women who are called Mary, and yet they are different people. There are two different items which are called the "ark." On the other hand, it is true that several different names are given to the same persons or things. Simon is also called Peter, Cephas, and Simeon.

Carelessness

Careless reading is often at fault. For example, a statement is related to a certain occasion or time but may not be applied equally to later circumstances. When God declares that everything that He created was very good (Genesis 1:31), there is no contradiction when He later, after the fall of man into sin and the growth of sin in the world, declares that He was sorry He had created man and was grieved over his sin (Genesis 6:6). A good reader will realize that it makes a great deal of difference *who* makes a statement, for it is God who declares that man will die if he eats of the tree (Genesis 2:17), while the devil declares that man will not die by eating of the tree (Genesis 3:4).

Design

A sound grasp of hermeneutical principles and their proper application can swiftly clear up a great many minor allegations of discrepancy. The intelligent exegete will seek to determine the author's purpose and point of view which will make him aware of why he selected the material that he used while not employing other material that was available to him. Each author will have his own method of arranging his material as in the case of Matthew where he puts the material concerning Christ in a topical arrangement, and Mark proceeds chronologically. People have accused the Bible of discrepancy in the account of creation or claim that there are two stories of creation, Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. A little attention to the fact that Genesis 1 is chronological and that Genesis 2 is topically arranged means that there are not two dissimilar accounts of creation but supplementary to one another according to the arrangement chosen by the author. The author is the one who has the privilege of arranging his material as it seems best to him.

Time

In the area of the *usus loquendi* of an author, the different ways

of counting time must be considered for in some cases in the Old Testament the Babylonian method of keeping time may be used and in others the Jewish method. These would cause what would appear a discrepancy in the description of the same event. Roman time is sometimes found in the New Testament whereas in other cases it is Jewish time. Again, the particular idiom that is used in a culture or language must be taken into account or there can easily be what appears to be a discrepancy. Many Westerners have been perplexed by the statement concerning Jesus that He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth when they understood this as a rather literal period of time not realizing that Jewish idiom allowed for parts of days to be used for whole days and that the Jews were not precise in the use of cardinal figures.

Grammar

Closely associated with the cultural limitation and *usus loquendi* is the grammatical usage that may not reveal itself readily to a reader in the English Bible. Such a difficulty is illustrated in the apparent contradiction between Paul's statement in Acts 22:9 concerning his experience on the road to Damascus, "And those who were with me beheld the light to be sure, but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me." Luke, on the other hand, seems to declare the opposite to have been true, "And the men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one" (Acts 9:7). Attention to the Greek text indicates that there is a definite difference in the grammatical construction giving rise to harmony between these two statements. The statement by Luke is in the partitive genitive case while the statement by Paul is in the accusative case. This simply means that when Luke speaks of hearing the voice, he is saying they heard something of the sound of a voice and were surprised because they could see no one. On the other hand, Paul says that they did not hear the meaning of the words; they did not get the message. Thus, there is no contradiction between these statements when they are carefully studied in the original grammar.

Compression

Another source of difficulties in regard to the scripture can be accounted for by the great compression of the narrative. When one stops to think how many events have not been selected for

comment and the severe limitation of space in reporting notable and exciting events in the scripture, it is apparent why the reader is able to mistake some lack of detail as a discrepancy. The Holy Spirit simply did not will to give an exhaustive account of many of the events in the Old Testament and New Testament. Modern readers are left to infer things from the narrative or to realize that some things were done that were not given in complete detail. Luke does not give an exhaustive account of the various conversions of men and women to Christ so that one does not hear exactly the same commands followed by exactly the same results in the case of those who obeyed the gospel.

Scribal Errors

That some scribal errors have crept into the manuscript over the centuries of transmission is not a surprising point to anyone who thinks, and yet these errors in the transmitted text may be the occasion for discrepancy in the minds of the readers. An illustration of this is found in Mark 5:1-15 which in the King James Version gives the term the country of the Gadarenes, which is at Gerasa as was supposed whereas in the New American Standard the country is given as the Gerasenes. The difference would be a village located on the Sea of Galilee into which the more than 2,000 swine could rush into the sea and a place located thirty-five miles from the Sea of Galilee. Textual critics have confirmed the correct reading to be that of the Gerasenes.

No doubt a scribe was not paying attention to the reading when he wrote in the Hebrew text of 1 Samuel 13:1 that "Saul was a year old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years over Israel." This seems so unlikely and so out of line with the rest of the scriptures that it is impossible to hold that this is a correct reading. The translators usually supply from the information available that Saul was probably forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-two years over Israel. It is most essential to have the finest restored text in the original language or the very best translations possible to eliminate errors like this. Most scribal errors have been detected and removed through the careful processes of the textual critics. When one realizes that the Hebrew uses the letters of the alphabet as numerical amounts and the similarity between the appearance of these letters especially as transcribed by hand, one can see why so many of these alleged discrepancies occur in numerical matters.

Style

Still another source of seeming contradiction may be found in the failure to understand the Hebrew style of reporting and ways of expressing things. This may be seen in the report of the number of souls who went down into Egypt, for the number seventy is derived by counting the two sons of Joseph born to him in Egypt yet who are said to have come into Egypt (Genesis 46:26-27). The writer may have done this for some purpose not known now though it is probable that these men later become heads of families and so hold prominent positions. When Jacob is listed along with his sons and daughters plus one daughter and two great grandsons as "all his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three" (Genesis 46:15), it may seem peculiar to the western mind. However, the interpreter must allow for the peculiar cultural and personal style in considering such matters. If the author was interested in establishing the number seventy, then he has a perfect freedom in establishing it the way he saw fit to do it in that particular style of writing.

The abridged genealogies of Christ are another point in Hebrew style, and one simply has to admit the freedom of the writer to compose his materials for his purpose in the best way he saw fit. Matthew clearly organizes his genealogy of Christ into three groups of fourteen names, and he does this deliberately though he knows that he is omitting several important names which could be included.

Critics' Imaginations

From these considerations it becomes evident that while there are sources of discrepancy in these various areas of writing and transmission, yet most of these can be cleared up by careful attention to the text, the language, the grammar used, and the allowance for the *usus loquendi* of particular times, authors, and cultures. Genealogies can be abridged without making them false or giving erroneous information. These areas, while significant, are subject to definite explanation which leaves one of the major sources of alleged discrepancies in the scripture to be the imagination of hostile and destructive critics who attempt in every way possible to make some faults in the word of God, to establish some errors any way that they can so as to break the trustworthiness of the word of God and to minimize its authority over them. If one wants to find fault with any particular matter,

whether it be a history or a report, he can usually satisfy his mind that there are errors there. The solution of alleged errors will be probable for those who are openminded and who are willing to accept reasonable explanation whereas those who are determined to establish error will not be satisfied with only reasonable probabilities.

Scientific Theories

A sizeable number of alleged discrepancies come into the field of the findings of science which are alleged to be in contradiction with Biblical statements. This has been dealt with earlier in the text concerning the relationship between science and the Bible. Since all truth is one and harmonious and all truth comes from God whether it is found in the intelligible creation or the written revelation, the presumption is that there will be no contradictions between science that is true to its own empirical laws and the assertion of scripture interpreted hermeneutically.

It would require too much space to consider the question of scientific positions and Biblical positions, and this actually belongs more to the field of apologetics. Certain principles can be suggested and will be under a future listing. Actually, the question of evolution versus creation, a relatively short period of time for man's existence versus a long period of time for man, and the question of miracles are among the really critical areas of alleged discrepancy. These can be resolved up to a point by careful exegesis of the Bible and by the recognition that science is theoretical and speculative in regard to origins such as that of life for which it has no adequate explanation whatsoever.

III. POSITIVE VALUES WHICH ACCRUE TO THE BELIEVER FROM ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES

Instead of these alleged discrepancies and contradictions being nothing more than a sorrow and burden to the sincere interpreter of scripture, certain positive values and results of this area of investigation have been pointed out. John Haley has offered five values which are summarized as follows by Terry:

- (1) They stimulate intellectual effort, awaken curiosity and inquiry, and thus lead to a closer and more extensive study of the sacred volume.
- (2) They illustrate the analogy between the Bible and nature. As the earth and heavens exhibit marvelous harmony in the midst of great variety and discord, so in the Scriptures there

exists a notable harmony behind all the seeming discrepancies. (3) They prove that there was no collusion among the sacred writers, for their differences are such as would never have been introduced by their design. (4) They also show the value of the spirit as above the letter of the word of God, and (5) serve as a test of moral character. To the captious spirit, predisposed to find and magnify difficulties in the divine revelation, the biblical discrepancies will be great stumblingblocks, and occasions of disobedience and cavil. But to the serious inquirer, who desires to "know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xii, 11), a faithful study of these discrepancies will disclose hidden harmonies and undesigned coincidences which will convince him that these multiform Scriptures are truly the word of God.¹¹

IV. PRINCIPLES VINDICATING THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE SCRIPTURES

The author is indebted to I.B. Grubbs for the data which is developed into these principles which should prove helpful in removing alleged discrepancies from the minds of those who are earnestly seeking to understand the word.¹²

1. Since all truths are mutually consistent and must harmonize, all alleged discrepancies between science and the Bible are to be reconciled without forcing an arbitrary or false position upon either science or the Bible. A syllogism points out the position to be held by Christians: The universe is a harmonious system of interacting members under law. Truths are the propositions which express the mental apprehension of the realities of the universe. Therefore, scientific and scriptural truth, so far as they are parallel, disclose the same teaching. Truths do not conflict. Since God is the author of the Bible and the author of physical creation and since He is one, it is certain that when all the objective scientific data is in and verified and the scripture is clearly understood as to its meaning intended by the author, these will not be in conflict. The wise interpreter should realize that much scientific data has no relationship or relevance to Biblical data. They are operating in two different fields of discipline and knowledge, and yet there are times when they will overlap or impinge upon one another. It is these few times that must be diligently worked on to remove all error and contradiction to the full measure of the ability of all sincere seekers after the truth.

2. Reconcilable differences do not warrant the alleged conflict.

When it is quite possible to show how some of the above sources or discrepancies are soon removed, there is no genuine conflict. Men must not will to allege contradiction when they know full well that there are available ways that are both logically and hermeneutically sound to remove the apparent contradiction.

3. In explaining any alleged conflicts, it is sufficient to prove that the condition of things presupposed by any proposed explanation is possible. All that the interpreter has to show is that the proposed explanation is not unreasonable and can fit in with the probable condition at that time. When Matthew writes (27:5) that the priests bought the potters' field with the money that Judas had thrown in the temple and because of the blood money it was called *Akeldama* (a field of blood), this does not contradict the statement by Luke (Acts 1:18-19) that this field was called *Akeldama* because Judas' body was broken open and his blood was shed on this spot. Both of these statements can be true and the one may reinforce the other in that the field defiled by the blood of a traitor to such a one as Jesus may have made the price of the land cheaper when the priests bought it. When men act in the behalf of someone else as their agent, that action may be referred to as the action of the person himself. Thus, the purchase of the field by the high priest with Judas' money, which they refused to put back into their treasury, was the action of Judas after all.

Another example would be the explanation for Belshazzar in Babylon during the time of Daniel and is Nebuchadnezzar said to be his father (Daniel 5:2). Hebrew *usus loquendi* designated any ancestor as father and did not employ the term grandfather. The probable explanation is that Nabonidus, a usurper following Nebuchadnezzar, was the father of Belshazzar, and that Belshazzar was a co-ruler with his father. Note that Daniel is offered the third rulership in the kingdom, which would fit neatly with the idea that Nabonidus and Belshazzar were the first and second rulers (Daniel 5:16). Nabonidus, to strengthen his hold upon the throne, could very well have married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar which would make Belshazzar the actual as well as the quasi-legal grandson of Nebuchadnezzar through his mother.

4. Statements cannot conflict or contradict each other unless they are dealing with the same subject and have the same frame of reference. Some have declared that there is a contradiction between Galatians 6:2 and 6:5, for the one statement indicates that saints are to "bear one another's burdens" while the other

declares, "each man shall bear his own load." The first thing to note in this alleged conflict is that the word *burdens* (*bare*) in the second verse is a different Greek word from *load* (*phortion*) in the fifth verse. Paul is talking about two different things, the subject of 6:2 being that of a mutual responsibility of loving service for brothers and sisters in Christ, acting out of love. But in 6:5 he is talking about the responsibility that each Christian in the day of judgment will give an account of his stewardship to God which no one else can do for him.

It has been alleged that Exodus 20:13, "You shall not kill," is in direct contradiction with Numbers 35:19, "The blood avenger himself shall put the murderer to death." It is important to note first that the word in Exodus 20:13 is not the general word for kill but to murder. All taking of life by violent action of the individual is morally wrong. In Numbers 35, the action is a legal execution of the individual who is guilty of murder. It is an act of the society through the avenger of blood rather than through an individual acting on, his own initiative or authority.

Again, in Luke 12:4 Jesus teaches the disciples, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do," while in John 7:1 it is reported that "Jesus was walking in Galilee; for He was unwilling to walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him." It should be noted that Jesus laid down a principle in the Luke passage; and when it was His time, He went to Jerusalem unafraid though He knew that death awaited Him. In John 7:1 the situation is one of the prudence on the part of Jesus that He might complete His ministry before His death. This is borne out by the context when His brothers urged Him to go to Judea, and He declares, "My time is not yet at hand; but your time is always opportune" (7:6). Jesus was under the will of the Father and was not to expose Himself needlessly to the violent action of the men in Judea until it was His time.

Another clear example of this rule of noting the frame of reference is found in 1 Corinthians 10:33 where Paul affirms "just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved." Yet in Galatians 1:10 Paul forthrightly cries, "Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men I would not be a bond servant of Christ." It has been alleged that Paul contradicts himself, for in writing to the Corinthians he boasts about his seeking to please all men

whereas in Galatians he affirms that he does not try to please men. Of course, it is obvious from the context that in the Corinthian passage he is talking about adapting himself socially as far as possible to the individuals he was working with that he might save them through the gospel (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:19-22). It was his unselfish way of doing things that was under consideration, while in Galatians the very gospel of Christ was at stake with the preaching of a false gospel. Here Paul stood resolutely against any such apostasy and declared that he was seeking to honor God above men. There can be no compromise of the gospel to please men; but, as in Corinthians, there can be a great deal of freedom and yielding on the part of the faithful Christian who is seeking to win someone to Christ through the gospel.

5. Passages or statements do not conflict unless one affirms what another denies. There must be a clear opposition or contradiction to any assertion which makes it conflict with the first statement. If there are only general statements or affirmations concerning a particular matter, this does not put them necessarily into contradiction. Matthew 8:28 affirms that there were two men who were demon possessed and met Jesus as He came into the country of the Gadarenes, but Luke tells of one man who met Jesus and who declared his name was Legion because he had that many demons (Luke 8:27). Since Luke does not deny that there were two men and only singles out one for particular attention, there is no conflict necessary between these two. A writer is free to make a selection of his materials for his particular purpose, and a statement that a man met him is true in spite of the fact that an additional and subordinate person was also involved with this first man.

John reports that Jesus went out of Jerusalem "bearing His own cross to the place called the place of the skull" (19:17), but Luke says that "when they led Him away, they laid hold of one Simon a Cyrenian, coming in from the country and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus" (23:26). You must keep in mind the brevity of the reports. It is not affirmed by John that Jesus bore His cross all the way to the place of the skull but "went out bearing it." Luke does not record that Simon alone bore the cross all the way from the place of trial to the place of the skull. Therefore, this reconcilable difference is resolved by the generally accepted inference that Jesus fell under the weight of His cross and that Simon of Cyrene was pressed into service to carry it the rest of the

way for Jesus. Here it is well to recall the third principle (page 459) that it is sufficient to prove that the condition of things presupposed by any proposed explanation is possible.

6. Truthful accounts of the same event may vary in important details. This is so widely illustrated throughout the synoptic gospels that it requires very little documentation. Comparison of John 12:1-8 with Matthew 26:6-12 and Mark 14:3-8 illustrates how the three writers, two of them eyewitnesses and the third the amanuensis or writer for Peter, viewed that particular episode of Mary's anointing the feet of Jesus from different perspectives and gave different details. A complete harmony of all of these details can be made in a satisfactory way removing any ground for the alleging of contradiction. Again, the feeding of the 5,000 is reported by the synoptic writers as well as by John (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15). The writers are agreed upon the major event and the major details, but they have been free to give their own individual report of what took place.

7. Different events may resemble each other in many important details. Confusion and a feeling of contradiction can arise if people are not careful in noting that different events may be similar but still are unique and distinguishable. In Genesis 12:19 Abraham says that his wife is his sister rather than the actual truth that Sarah is his wife. In Genesis 20:23 he again says the same thing; and in Genesis 26:7 Isaac declares of his wife, "She is my sister." All three of these episodes are different; two of them involve Abraham, and one involves Isaac. In Genesis 12 Abraham and Sarah are involved with Pharaoh while in Genesis 20 Abraham and Sarah are involved with Abimelech, king of Gerar. Later Isaac is involved with Abimelech at Gerar though he is called the king of the Philistines. This is also an example of a title like Pharaoh being used rather than a proper name which could lend itself to a seeming contradiction.

In Matthew 5:34 the teaching of Jesus is "Make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God" and much later on to the Pharisees in Jerusalem Jesus gave a similar statement (Matthew 23:22). The narratives are certainly of different events. Matthew records two separate incidents when a dumb man demon-possessed was brought to Jesus who healed him, and the multitudes marveled (Matthew 9:32; 12:22). One must exercise care in understanding that different events may be very similar, but similarity does not make things identical.

8. Apparent conflict can be removed if one or the other of the statements should receive a significance different from that which occasions a discrepancy and this change in meaning is hermeneutically sound. As noted earlier in this text, there is every reason to believe in the truthfulness of the Bible above any other in the world; and this means that every effort should be made that can be made legitimately to remove apparent discrepancies. It is far more likely that men are at fault in understanding and interpreting the statements than that the fault is with the statements themselves.

A number of years ago two airplanes appeared to be in a flight pattern which would result in a collision with one another. The radar operators could see that the planes were a thousand feet apart, but the pilots seeing each other's plane pulled into another course to avoid collision and actually collided. At times various scriptures may seem to be on a collision course, but further study will reveal that they are either on different subjects or that the meaning that caused the difficulty is not the only meaning that could be attached to the words.

One of the best known illustrations of this type of conflict is found in the supposed contradiction of Paul's justification without works and James' insistence that men are justified by works. Careful attention to the frame of reference and to the actual words used can lead a person to see that there is no conflict in the doctrinal teaching of these inspired writers. The apostle Paul is very clear in his statements that "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in his sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20) while in Galatians 2:16 he writes:

... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.

In Romans 4 Paul uses Abraham as the example of one who is justified apart from the Law through his faith in God.

James is equally definite in his assertions that Christians are saved not by faith alone, "Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith (James 2:24 ASV). Again, he declares:

Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. . . . Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well; the demons also believe,

and shudder. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren (James 2:17, 19-20 ASV)?

At this point James uses the very same person as proof of his proposition that Paul had used as the proof of his proposition, namely Abraham,

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect. . . . For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead (James 2:21-22, 26 ASV).

While these statements seem to be on a collision course that cannot be avoided, yet a serious study of the context indicates that the frame of reference of Paul is quite different from the frame of reference that James had in mind. Paul is talking about justification before God which is by trusting in the righteousness and salvation of Jesus Christ completely apart from any merit on the part of believers which might be claimed through works of self-righteousness. Paul is quite clear that he is talking about the works of *the Law* or a justification by human action; do these things and you shall live (Romans 10:5).

On the other hand, James is speaking to Christians who are to maintain a life of faithful obedience producing the works of faith as a *consequence* of their salvation. In no way does James indicate that men are saving themselves by righteousness of their own or by merit of their own works. He is concerned to oppose an easy believism which even today is widely promoted. James is saying that the faith that saves is the faith that obeys as in the case of Abraham. The writer of Hebrews illustrates such a faith in the eleventh chapter in talking about the great acts of faith of various men who responded to God's commands. They not only believed them, but they obeyed them. A barren, intellectual affirmation that one believes in Jesus is not sufficient.

On the other hand, Paul is showing that men can never deserve on their own to be saved from sin by doing the requirements of the Law or by keeping a set of regulations. This ends in condemnation, because no one can keep the Law perfectly. No conflict exists between these writers; for Paul is looking at those who would become Christians through the grace of God by Jesus Christ, and James is talking about those who are Christians and are to live lives consistent with the expectations of Jesus Christ.

James does not deny the justification by faith in Jesus Christ as the fundamental condition of salvation, nor does Paul deny the place of works of faith in the life of the Christian. There is no conflict between these inspired writers, but rather each complements what the other is teaching.

Jesus taught men that they were not to call "anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven" (Matthew 23:9). Later we find the apostle Paul declaring in 1 Corinthians 4:15, "For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." These two verses may seem to some to be in contradiction, and yet they are not. The apostle Paul did not say that the Corinthians should call him "father" and look to him as their spiritual authority rather than God, the Father. He is only reminding them that though they have many who have taught them, yet he is the one who led them to Christ and brought about their spiritual birth. Thus, Paul is emphasizing his priority in converting the Corinthians and not his spiritual authority over them.

When Jesus taught the disciples, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16), He was not contradicting what He said in warning men, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 6:1). It is clear that the motivation is the differentiation between the two verses, for in the one the works are done that they may glorify the heavenly Father whereas in 6:1 the actions are done to draw attention to one's self.

Men have seen an apparent contradiction between the statement of Jesus, "Do not judge lest you be judged yourselves. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it shall be measured to you" (Matthew 7:1-2) and Jesus' statement to the multitude who were questioning Him and accusing Him, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24). To the disciples Jesus was instructing them on fair judgment that is not censorious and was warning that with the attitude that they judge they will be judged, whereas in the later situation facing a hostile audience who was not willing to see the truth of Christ, Jesus warned them to judge honestly and according to evidence.

It is not wrong to make a righteous judgment according to the facts and the truths involved while recognizing man's judgment is not infallible or final.

9. When statements seem to conflict, that which is definite, more complete, and clearer in meaning must be made the standard for the interpretation. In the accounts of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the account by Luke in Acts 9 is the more complete account while those in Acts 22 and Acts 26 are abbreviated. When Paul declares in his speech that Ananias came and said certain things to him about his witness, Luke in his more complete report declares that the Lord had first spoken these things to Ananias and sent him to Paul with that very message.

Some have been troubled by an apparent contradiction between some of the assertions of the apostle Paul concerning his inspiration which seem to conflict with other assertions of a total inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In writing to the Corinthians Paul comments, "But this I say by way of concession, not of command . . . But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away" (1 Corinthians 7:6, 12). In these verses Paul is taken to mean that he is only giving his human opinion and that he is in no position to give God's word. The Lord has not told him what to say, so he is speaking on his own as an uninspired man.

In the same chapter, however, Paul says, "I think that I also have the Spirit of God" (7:40) while in a later part of the letter to the Corinthians he declares, "If any man thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize the things that I write to you are the Lord's commandment" (14:37). Then, in a great passage on the inspiration of the apostles Paul writes:

To us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. . . . Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:10, 12-13).

In the light of these clear and comprehensive claims to inspiration, the interpreter is forced to examine the two verses in the seventh chapter that have been supposed to indicate Paul's lack of inspiration. When this is done in context, it is clear that Paul is giving an *inspired* concession or advice and not an *inspired* command. It is not the character of inspiration but the nature of

the statement as advice rather than command that is indicated. Likewise, in 7:12 Paul has no recorded saying of Jesus while on earth touching the matter of separation and divorce between a believer and an unbeliever; so in this case he is giving *inspired* instruction but not that based on a saying to be found within the gospel record.

10. In the apparent conflict between statements in the Bible and modern scientific views, the interpreter must carefully discriminate between the language of scripture and the technical language of modern science. Since the Bible was written as a revelation to all men in all cultures, God, of course, is going to use popular and nonscientific language to describe the phenomena of nature. While using nonscientific language, the truthfulness of the statements is not destroyed when recognized as culturally conditioned but not culturally restricted. To be nonscientific in statements is not necessarily to be antiscientific. The language of the Bible is phenomenal, describing things as they are observed by ordinary men. There is no attempt in the scripture to present scientific theories as to the actual nature of the physical world. That the sun appears to come up in the morning and to set in the evening is the universal observation of mankind even though scientists indicate that this is not what actually happens astronomically. Even scientists often use the popular designation.

The Bible interpreter must remind the scientist that the scripture is given to present the eternal truth of God for the spiritual welfare of man, for reconciliation and relationship with God, and that the Bible was never intended to be a textbook of science. Similarly, the Biblical interpreter needs to remember that the scripture frequently in matters of science (such as in the origin of the world in Genesis 1) tells what took place and who did it rather than describing the processes of how it came about scientifically. These were of subordinate interest to Moses' overriding purpose to emphasize the creatorship of God and His absolute purpose in creating all things for His use and glory.

CONCLUSION

The various discrepancies and alleged errors in the scripture are to be worked out honestly and soundly with hermeneutics and logic and with the conviction that, when all the evidence is in, the scriptures will be found to be free of error and to be true. Almost all of these alleged errors in the Bible can be cleared up by reasonable explanation and by the employment of the Law of

Frame of Reference and the Law of Harmony. At the same time it needs to be recognized that many objections to the Bible are grounded in rationalistic and humanistic pretensions to truth which claim superiority to God's revelation. Such a conceit actually is grounded in a basic unbelief in God and rebellion against His authority. What rationalistic critics say must be evaluated from the consideration of their own bias and presuppositions though their arguments must be investigated for any validity that they may hold.

The truth of the matter is that the Bible has stood all the tests of time, all the criticisms of infidels, and the relentless attacks of hostile critics who seemed determined to destroy the Bible as the unique and final revelation of God to man. The Bible still stands with its integrity and infallibility established by all the tests it has had to pass. It is the conviction of Christians that it will continue to stand, for Jesus Christ said, "Heaven and earth may pass away but My word shall never pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

THE ANVIL

Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had?" said I,
"To wear and batter all those hammers so?"
"Just one," he answered, and then, with twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

"And so," I thought, "The Anvil of God's Word,
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows were heard,
The Anvil is unchanged, the hammers gone."

John Clifford

NOTES: HOW HERMENEUTICS CAN HELP REMOVE DIFFICULTIES AND ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES IN SCRIPTURE

1. C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Proposes a Toast and Other Pieces* (London: Collins Clear Type Press, 1965), p. 61.
2. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), pp. 201-14.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 202-204.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 207-208.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Harry Rimmer, *That Lawsuit Against the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1940), p. 87.

9. Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

10. See the following books:

Dehoff, George W. *Alleged Bible Contradictions Explained*. Murfreesboro, Tennessee: Dehoff Publications, 1950.

Haley, John W. *An Example of the Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*. Andover: [n.n.], 1874.

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

Powell, Gordon. *Difficult Sayings of Jesus*. Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1962.

Ramm, Bernard. *The Christian View of Science and the Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954.

Sire, James W. *The Universe Next Door*. Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1976.

11. M.S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1883), p. 532.

12. I.B. Grubbs, "Biblical Interpretation," (unpublished).

QUESTIONS

1. T F There are apparent contradictions in the Scriptures.
2. T F The Law of Harmony is of great value in removing some of the alleged discrepancies.
3. T F Every position which men hold relative to the authority and infallibility of the Bible involves an element of faith commitment which goes beyond the factual evidence.
4. T F Today the case is that the Bible has been exhaustively investigated and has been vindicated again and again so that the burden of proof must rest upon the accuser of scripture.
5. T F Belief in inerrancy of the Bible requires either the original manuscripts or a perfect text.
6. T F The allegation of error is the same as establishing that error as fact.
7. T F The alleged errors of the Bible have, for the most part, received good and sufficient answers from Bible-believers.
8. _____ obviously provides maximum help in dealing with these misunderstandings of scriptural statements.
9. The basic presupposition that Bible-believing Christians begin with is that scripture is _____, which means _____ and _____ in the original text.
10. Also, the conviction is held, grounded in rational evidence, that the present copy of the past copies of the original is a highly _____ text.

11. List five preliminary responses to the allegation of error.
12. List ten causes or sources of alleged discrepancies.
13. List five positive values which accrue to the believer from the existence of these alleged discrepancies.
14. List ten rules for vindicating the scriptures from alleged error by sound exegesis.
15. From a scriptural teaching about man, what could you conclude as to man's eagerness to question the word of God and reject its authority?
16. Do you believe that you should be set for the "defense of the gospel"? How are you fulfilling this need?
17. Are you able to obey the injunction of the Holy Spirit as given in 1 Peter 3:15?
18. The number of alleged errors in the scriptures among scholarly critics is surprisingly: a) large, b) small, c) none, d) very large.
19. What has been your experience with dealing with difficulties you have experienced in the past from your Bible study? What have you done with them?
20. Do you think that the Bible-believing Christian must answer in full every alleged discrepancy in the Bible especially after the lapse of about 2000 years?
21. Explain how the grammar helps to clear up the alleged discrepancy between Paul's statement about his conversion (Acts 22:9) and Luke's statement (Acts 9:7).
22. What are the three most critical and unresolved areas of conflict between science and the Bible now?
23. In what way have you experienced a positive value or gain from encountering difficulties in the Bible or having them thrown at you by those who do not believe the Bible?
24. What does it mean (principle three) that in explaining any alleged conflicts it is sufficient to prove that the condition of things presupposed by any proposed explanation is possible?
25. If God wanted to give man an inerrant and infallible revelation of Himself, what could prevent Him from doing so?
26. T F It seems reasonable to believe that God's revelation would be worthy of Him and hence true, inerrant and infallible.
27. T F Belief in the inerrancy of the Bible means that all of the Bible teaching is plain and clear.
28. T F Belief in the inerrancy of the Bible means that all the teaching of God in its fullness will be found in one place.
29. T F Belief in the inerrancy of the Bible does not require literalness in detail such as word for word reporting of speeches.
30. T F One thing the Bible-believing Christian must not say is, "I don't know."

Theories of Language and the Interpretation of Religious Language

This area is a very difficult one for many to grapple with, and the author has no illusions that he is capable of answering many of the questions in this area. Indeed, all that is sought is to introduce the reader who is interested in this problem area to some thinking and some books on this subject.

In recent years considerable emphasis has been given to the course of study entitled "Semantics." This is a study of words (signs) and their meaning (what they stand for or designate). Mortimer J. Adler asserts that there is nothing really new in this study:

It is as old as Plato and Aristotle. It is nothing but a new name for the scientific study of the principles of linguistic usage, combining grammatical and logical considerations.

The ancient and medieval grammarians, and an eighteenth century writer such as John Locke, could teach the contemporary "semanticists" a lot of principles they do not know, principles they need not try to discover if they would and could read a few books.¹

He further notes that the times in the past when men were least skillful in reading and writing were times when men talked the most about the unintelligibility of the literature of the past:

When men are incompetent in reading and writing, their inadequacy seems to express itself in their being hypercritical about everybody else's writing. A psychoanalyst would understand this as a pathological projection of one's own inadequacies on to others. The less well we are able to use words intelligently, the more likely we are to blame others for their unintelligible speech. We may even make a fetish of our nightmares about language, and then we become semanticists for fair.

The poor semanticists! They do not know what they are confessing about themselves when they report all the books they are unable to understand. Nor does semantics seem to have helped them when, after practicing its rituals, they still find so many passages unintelligible. It has not helped them to become better readers than they were before they supposed that "semantics" had a magic of "sesame." If they only had the grace to assume that the trouble was not with the great writers of the past and present, but with them as readers, they might give semantics up or, at least, use it to try to learn how to read. If they could read a little better, they would find that the world contained a much larger number of intelligible books than they now suppose. As matters now stand for them, there are almost none.²

It appears that semantics is mainly a new dress for the old arts of grammar, rhetoric, and logic often with a contempt for the past and a snobbish appeal to moderns who like to think they are the only smart people who ever lived. Recently Dr. Adler has written a book that is the climax of his years of study of the problems of language, *Some Questions About Language: a Theory of Human Discourse and Its Objects*.³ He deals with what he considers the two or three most fundamental of the philosophical questions. It is recommended reading for the serious student. Also, the advanced student might consult Frederick Ferre's book, *Language, Logic and God*⁴ for some significant thought on the valid use of theological language in the face of the severe denial of the linguistic analysis school of philosophy which dominates so much of modern philosophy.

There are serious problems in interpretation and the use of language which in this century have been debated as never before. All the answers are not now in sight, but the interpreter who holds that language is a valid and workable means of communication between intelligent men is not put out of business

by the modern skeptical theories of language. The intelligent Christian is not compelled to abandon his confidence in the validity of religious language set forth in the Bible, God's use of man's language to communicate transcendental truth. The student will find a helpful introduction to some of these "Crucial Issues" in Mickelsen's text.⁵

The student may obtain a competent knowledge of "the new hermeneutic" by the discussion favoring it in a volume entitled *The New Hermeneutic* edited by James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr.⁶ Carl F.H. Henry has opposed its threats to sound understanding of an author and objective truth. His material may be studied in the article, "The Interpretation of the Scriptures: Are We Doomed to Hermeneutical Nihilism?" Henry comments,

The crucial issue today is whether, in the face of rival theories of textual interpretation, any universal canons of exegesis remain to be affirmed. If biblical language is not to be regarded as conveying objectively valid information, but is simply the medium through which God confronts man internally with the possibility of new self-understanding, then the significance of Scripture lies no longer in its shared cognitive message but only in private internal response. If, as Bultmann contends, the New Testament as it stands is to be considered neither true nor untrue, but rather the mystical frame for an existential experience of its hidden import, then no universally valid cognitive meaning whatever attaches to the Bible.

If we are to escape hermeneutical nihilism we must deliberately disown the whole series of exegetical compromises that have brought biblical interpretation to its present sorry state. Modernism prepared the way for this present predicament, and dialectical and existential theologies, despite their efforts to escape a rationalistic reduction of revelational realities, worsened rather than solved the problem.⁷

Ludwig Wittgenstein⁸ has been a key thinker in the matter of the use of language, and Francis Schaeffer has some valuable comments about his work. Schaeffer points out that Wittgenstein limited language and logic to the "lower story" of natural science while in the "upper story" he put silence, for there language has no meaning. Schaeffer declares,

What we are left with, let us notice, is an anti-philosophy, because everything that makes life worthwhile, or gives meaning to life, or binds it together beyond isolated particulars is in an "upstairs" or total silence.

Thus we are left with two anti-philosophies in the world today. One is existentialism, which is an anti-philosophy because it deals with the big questions but with no rationality. But if we follow the later Wittgenstein's development, we move into linguistic analysis, and we find that this also is an anti-philosophy, because where it defines words in the area of reason, language leads to language and that is all. It is not only the certainty of values that is gone but the certainty of knowing.⁹

Modern man utterly despairs of finding meanings and values because language supposedly cannot give man any real knowledge of these items of the upper story. There is no person to speak on these vital issues of life. It was this very idea of silence that Schaeffer says gave him the title for his book, *He is There and He is Not Silent*. God is real, and He has spoken! This is the only way out of modern man's desperate dilemma, and Christians have the message for meaningful existence. Thus, modern philosophers, abandoning any hope for valid answers to the great questions that mankind asks, seem to be admitting that philosophy is incompetent to answer the ultimate questions. This is good in that men can be encouraged to study that which has the answers to the real questions, the Word of God.

These ex-philosophers turned grammarians are much like those peculiar people mentioned by C.S. Lewis who had a mental limitation compelling them to regard a painting as composed of little dots of pigment which had been put together as a mosaic.¹⁰ These people might study a painting, make elaborate statistical lists of the number and patterns of pigments, work out the relationships between these patterns, and end up declaring that this is the way and the only way the artist could have painted the masterpiece. They would be sadly mistaken, for the artist was following no such principles of composition and painting. Moreover, if they declared their statistical patterns of pigment gave the true meaning of the painting and that the only true way to study a masterpiece is to be microscopically analytical, they would end up with no understanding of the real beauty and meaning of the painting.

Modern philosophy, rejecting God and His revelation, are able only to analyze language and find no valid meaning for life and eternity. Modern philosophy is bankrupt in its effort to enable sinful, lost man to make sense out of God's universe. Paul's words ring true today:

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:20-21).

It seems to the author that the solution to most of the negative attack and denial that human language can be used meaningfully of God and spiritual, supernatural qualities is in recognizing the fact of God's own use of these terms of human language to communicate to man His love, truth, and will. Man could never reach God, but God came down to man, accommodated Himself to man, and so communicated truth, though not exhaustively or absolutely to man. This is precisely what Christians believe took place in the God-breathed (*theopneustos*) revelation given to men by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

Clark H. Pinnock confirms this thought along with the idea of the incarnation which marks God's involvement with the world of men:

In an effort to discredit verbal inspiration, appeal is often made to the nature of language. Human language is supposed to be incapable of communicating revealed truth, and unfit to be the vehicle of divine revelation. The American theologian Horace Bushnell regarded language as decrepit, and words as faded, indistinct metaphors tied to their history, so that, at best, language could only be a poetic attempt to express the inexpressible. It is, of course, *not* any inability of language which is bothering Bushnell, for he never had any difficulty communicating his own views. (Skepticism toward language has no future as an argument, because it casts doubt on the sentences of the one proposing it!) His real hang-up is a form of metaphysical dualism he holds to which denies the possibility of God revealing Himself in finite language. *Finitum non est capax infiniti*. This is not a problem a Christian should have, however, because the incarnation cleared it up once and for all. The absolute has appeared in the phenomenal realm where He may be met (1 Jn 1:1-3), and Scripture is a veracious language revelation.¹¹

While some men are arguing over how to *write* recipes others continue to *bake* the wonderful cakes and pies that delight and nourish people regardless of how words ought to appear in recipes. In like manner, while the philosophers or

ex-philosophers (no longer believing in or pursuing wisdom) argue about language and its inability to convey supernatural meaning to men, others will be speaking the words of life as given by the One who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes unto the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6). Common people, dying and hopeless, will gladly receive His life-giving words as they did when He was on earth while the intelligentsia will continue to reject Him and His message as being quite unthinkable.

NOTES: APPENDIX A

1. Mortimer J. Adler, *How to Read a Book* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), p. 86.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

3. Mortimer J. Adler, *Some Questions About Language: a Theory of Human Discourse and Its Objects* (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1976).

4. Frederick Ferre, *Language, Logic and God* (Harper Torchbooks; New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1961).

5. A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), pp. 54-79.

6. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (eds.) *The New Hermeneutic* (Vol. II of *New Frontiers in Theology*. 3 vols.; New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

7. Carl F.H. Henry, "The Interpretation of the Scriptures: Are We Doomed to Hermeneutical Nihilism?" *Review and Expositor*, LXXI (Spring, 1974), 197ff.

8. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company Incorporated, 1922).

9. Francis Schaeffer, *He is There and He is Not Silent* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1972), pp. 52-53.

10. C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 117.

11. Clark H. Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), pp. 90-91.

Tests and Exams

A TEST TO SHOW THE NEED OF HERMENEUTICS

Please read these and answer them as accurately as you can with the knowledge that you have of them.

1. T F The sons of God referred to in Genesis 6:1 are not angels.
2. T F By "Lucifer" in Isaiah 14:5-15 the author meant the devil.
3. T F In 2 Corinthians 5:11, Paul is encouraging us to try and win men to Christ when he wrote, "I persuade men."
4. T F In 2 Timothy 2:15, "study to show thyself approved" means to study the Bible and theology.
5. T F In Revelation 3:14, Christ is called the "beginning of the creation of God" and by this we learn that Christ is the first of the creatures made by God.
6. T F The foolish virgins who forgot their oil represent Christians who neglect or do not have the Holy Spirit, for "oil" represents the Holy Spirit.
7. T F 1 Corinthians 2:9 — "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not . . ." — does not have primary reference to heaven.
8. T F Galatians 3:28 declares there is "no male or female in Christ," and this means that women can be evangelists or elders.

9. T F Every promise in the Book is not mine.
10. T F Since Jesus said he would be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights, he could not have been crucified on Friday and raised on Sunday.

A SHORT TEST

1. T F Exegesis means to take all the meaning that the author intended by his words.
2. T F There is less need of employing hermeneutics in a book on math than in a book of history.
3. T F Our Lord used the principles of hermeneutics in His teaching.
4. T F The exegete is responsible for the character of the author's thought.
5. T F Teaching and preaching today is not notable for its sound hermeneutical foundation in Professor Ensign's opinion.
6. T F The Bible as a book is one of the easiest books to understand if studied.
7. T F Certainty is of the heart not of the head is the thesis of Professor Ensign's essay on "Faith and Reason."
8. T F Hermeneutical principles are almost universally recognized as inherent in the nature of thought and language.
9. T F Different hermeneutical *methods* do not exist for all are agreed on the correct method.
10. Hermeneutics is necessary because there are obvious problems (obstacles) to bridge such as _____ and _____.
11. The Law of Reproduction in hermeneutics is that the interpreter is to reproduce with _____ and _____ the _____ of the author, the _____.
12. Because hermeneutics is a science both _____ and _____ are excluded from its application.
13. Write out the full definition of hermeneutics per Ensign. (overleaf)
14. List the five (5) factors (parts, elements) of the correct method.
15. How is the correct method validated?

MAJOR TEST 1

- I. TRUE or FALSE. Encircle the T if true, the F if false.
1. T F Paul told Timothy that salvation was involved with hearing the teaching and persevering in it.
 2. T F All scripture is inspired of God.
 3. T F From Paul's letter to Timothy we see that the great point is to get people to read the Bible without any concern as to accuracy.

4. T F We teach more by words than we do by example.
5. T F No human being is an infallible or perfect interpreter of the scriptures.
6. T F A person may be in Christ, a Christian, and yet be quite mistaken in his understanding of much of the Bible.
7. T F Any method will do if you know the principles.
8. T F The English word hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word *hermeneuo* which means to make a good study.
9. T F Our Lord used the principles of hermeneutics in teaching his disciples.
10. T F Hermeneutics is valuable for Bible interpretation but does not apply to other books.
11. T F The aim of hermeneutics is to equip the sincere seeker after truth with the finest tool to overcome difficulties and lay hold on the exact meaning of the author.
12. T F The intention of God to reveal Himself to man was accomplished in His self-disclosure in Christ and the Bible.
13. T F Since God is the ultimate author of the scriptures, the Law of Reproduction of the author's thought is not violated when later writers go beyond the human author's thought.
14. T F The word "exegesis" means to "fill up with meaning, to elaborate."
15. T F Exegesis is the result of the application of sound hermeneutics.
16. T F The human reason is not superior to divine revelation.
17. T F The ordinary, earnest reader of the English Bible will miss most of the meaning of the writers.
18. T F Sin is the root of all the obstacles to correct interpretation.
19. T F God expects men to understand His word enough to obey Him and go to heaven.
20. T F The more a student of the Bible knows of the original language the more readily he will understand the thought of the author.
21. T F The fact that the *King James Version* is called the authorized version means that it is the best translation we have.
22. T F Paul's "natural man" (1 Cor. 2:14 KJV) is any person in or out of Christ with an unspiritual, immoral standpoint.
23. T F Perhaps the most serious obstruction in the way of misinterpretation is following a false method.
24. T F There is no way in which faithful Christians are to seek to please others.
25. T F To keep down errors and heresies, it is best for the professionally trained leaders to dominate Bible teaching and interpretation.
26. T F The Bible rightly divided is the alone and all sufficient creed for the church today.

27. T F It is right and appropriate to seek a harmonization of scientific data and biblical data.
28. T F God, being the Author of both nature and the Bible, is a strong assurance that both will be in agreement.
29. T F The correct method of hermeneutics holds that there are usually two meanings of a passage but only one application.
30. T F The Law of Frame of Reference is necessarily involved with the context of the passage.
31. T F The Law of Frame of Reference will not allow the words, "Suffer little children to come to me," to mean that infants are to be baptized.
32. T F The Law of Harmony requires the interpreter to gather all that the Scripture says on a subject before deciding the meaning of one passage.
33. T F Without a knowledge of the original languages a person is unable to accurately understand the scriptures.
34. T F The Word of God has been given in a cultural setting.
35. T F That which is true continues to be true in any culture.
36. T F Ordinarily the meaning of the words which are most immediately gathered from the construction and context by the intelligent reader will be the true meaning.
37. T F The Word of God in its meaning for our day is severely limited by the cultural conditioning of the authors.

II. MULTIPLE CHOICE. Place the letter of the most nearly correct answer in the blank space provided.

1. _____ The most serious problem in interpretation is a) language, b) time, c) textual, d) the interpreter himself.
2. _____ The Bible's statements about nature and science are a) sometimes true, sometimes false, b) anti-scientific, c) scientifically stated, d) non-scientific and popular.
3. _____ The statements of the Bible hermeneutically interpreted will be found to be in contradiction a) seldom, b) frequently, c) never, d) only four or five times.

III. FILL IN THE BLANKS.

1. As the *science* of interpretation, hermeneutics clearly and sharply excludes both _____ and _____.
2. Hermeneutics brings the learning mind of _____ into uninterrupted contact with the _____ of God.

IV. LISTING

1. What are the three major areas of qualifications which a superior interpreter needs to have?

2. List five types of books beside the Bible which are recommended for the serious student to own.

3. What are the three ways Adler teaches us to read a book to really understand it?

4. List four definite factors which help us interpret the Bible.

V. SHORT ANSWERS. Answer briefly but completely.

1. What does Grubbs declare is the "business of the interpreter"?

2. Schodde declares that the business of the interpreter is "to reproduce" what?

3. What did McGarvey mean by the "self-authenticating nature of the scriptures"?

4. What is the one great objective obstruction to interpretation?

5. What false prejudgment is described by the idols of the market (forum)?

6. What false prejudgment is described by the idols of the theatre?

7. How do you know that Paul was not talking about women becoming elders or evangelists when he said, "There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ"?

VI. DEFINITIONS

1. State in full the definition of hermeneutics.

2. State the Law of Reproduction.

3. State the Law of Harmony.

4. State the Law of Frame of Reference.

MAJOR TEST 2

I. TRUE or FALSE. Encircle T if statement is true, F if false.

1. T F The Bible is only a part of the faith which is still being delivered to the saints.

2. T F All human beings are teachers in some ways.

3. T F Among Bible-believing scholars there has been widespread agreement over the actual meaning of most of Scripture.

4. T F All that is required to work out difficulties which divide believers today is simply the use of sound hermeneutics.

5. T F Our Lord did not use the principles of hermeneutics in teaching his disciples.

6. T F People are using many of the principles of hermeneutics long before they know there is such a subject.

7. T F Hermeneutics is valuable for Bible interpretation but does not apply to other books.

8. T F The ordinary, earnest reader of the English Bible will miss most of the meaning of the writers.

9. T F God expects men to understand His word enough to obey Him and go to heaven.

10. T F God's truth is so great and sure that a sincere person can use almost any translation of the Bible and find out how to be saved, to please God, and go to heaven.
11. T F Resource books and tools can be used with complete assurance and safety.
12. T F An evil heart of unbelief has little effect upon one's comprehension of the Scriptures.
13. T F Paul's "natural man" (1 Cor. 2:14 KJV) is any person in or out of Christ with an unspiritual or humanistic standpoint.
14. T F Perhaps the most serious obstruction in the way of misinterpretation is following a false method.
15. T F It is not right and appropriate to seek a reasonable harmonization of scientific data and Biblical data.
16. T F The Law of Harmony can be used in Biblical study in a much surer way than in the study of any other book.
17. T F Without a knowledge of the original languages a person is unable to accurately understand the Scriptures.
18. T F The Word of God has not been accommodated to man.
19. T F That which is truth continues to be true in any culture.
20. T F Ordinarily the meaning of the words which are most immediately gathered from the construction and context by the intelligent reader will be the true meaning.

II. SHORT ANSWERS. Give the word or words required for an accurate, *complete* answer per text.

1. What was it that Paul told Timothy was "able to make him wise unto salvation"?
2. By what parable does Jesus teach that men have adequate access to the will of God through the Scriptures?
3. Schodde declares that the business of the interpreter is "to reproduce" _____.
4. What is the one great *objective* obstruction to interpretation?
5. What false prejudgment is described by the idols of the tribe?
6. What false prejudgment is described by the idols of the theatre?
7. By what hermeneutical principle do you know that Paul was not talking about women becoming elders or evangelists when he said, "There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ?"
8. Give an example of *Christ's* use of the Law of Harmony.
9. List four specific reasons why the Christian wants to know and use hermeneutics.
10. List five *types* of books beside the Bible which are recommended for the serious student to own.
11. List seven major *subjective* weaknesses.
12. As the *science* of interpretation, hermeneutics clearly and sharply excludes both _____ and _____.

13. (Circle the correct answer) The text of the New Testament writings has been restored to a remarkable exactness to the original text with a question or doubt about only one word out of a) 100, b) 500, c) 1000, d) 1500, e) 2000.

14. Professor Ensign's thesis in his paper (p. 45) was that of _____.

15. List four *educational* qualifications which help us interpret the Bible.

16. List five (out of six) *positive* factors (not qualifications) that *help* us understand the Bible correctly.

17. What law is Paul using in Romans 9:12-15? "It was said to her, the older will serve the younger. Just as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." Law of _____.

18. What law had the Corinthians failed to apply that Paul had to correct their understanding? "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, . . . But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother. . . ." Law of _____.

19. Because God was gracious and condescended to reveal Himself through man's word, cultural thought patterns, and forms of human experience does not mean that this linguistic-cultural-historical context destroyed the objective truth of God's revelation; for truth can be and is _____, especially when God wills it so.

20. State in full the definition of hermeneutics.

21. State in full the Law of Frame of Reference.

22. State in full the Law of Harmony.

MAJOR TEST 3

I. TRUE or FALSE. Encircle T if statement is true, F if false.

1. T F *Hermeneuo* means "to interpret, to explain."

2. T F The Greek word from which we get our English word hermeneutics does not appear in the Greek New Testament.

3. T F The word "exegesis" means "to lead or to draw out."

4. T F When a person does not understand the Bible, the inspired Scripture is never at fault.

5. T F The correct method of hermeneutics holds that there is only *one* meaning of a passage and only *one* application.

6. T F Hermeneutics must be studied before any exegesis is possible.

7. T F The basic method and basic laws of hermeneutics may be gathered from examples of exegesis in the New Covenant scriptures.

8. T F Our Lord used the principles of hermeneutics in His teaching, for He was truly human.
9. T F The principles of hermeneutics were invented by scholarly men.
10. T F The greatly increased knowledge of the Bible today has made the study of hermeneutics less necessary.
11. T F No man today is an infallible interpreter of Scripture.
12. T F All men are interpreters by the nature of their creation in the image of God.
13. T F One has the choice as to whether he will interpret the Bible or whether he will simply take it as it reads.
14. T F Thorough-going use of sound hermeneutics could do much to rid the *ecclesia* of Christ of divisions.
15. T F Hermeneutics, honestly and objectively applied, can only give one man's subjective opinion.
16. T F An excellent way to determine the correct interpretation of a passage is to count the scholars for a given position and accept the view of the majority of such authorities.
17. T F The Law of Frame of Reference can be used without knowing the context of any verse.
18. T F That which is called "the Analogy of Faith" by some is basically the same as the term "the Law of Harmony."
19. T F Though divided over many things, people have always agreed upon the correct method of interpretation.
20. T F In refuting the devil's suggestion to throw Himself from the temple on the basis of scriptural teaching, Jesus used the Law of Reproduction.
21. T F To refute the interpretation of Jesus' words — "Suffer little children to come to me" — as meaning infant baptism, the Law of Reference would be most useful.
22. T F The Law of Harmony can be used in Biblical study in a much surer way than in the study of any other books.
23. T F It is all right to seek a systematically consistent harmonizing of scientific knowledge and Biblical knowledge.
24. T F There is no valid, objective method of interpretation widely accepted today.

II. SHORT ANSWERS. Give the word or words required for an accurate, complete answer per text.

1. Using the definition of hermeneutics for information we can state that the principles and rules are founded (derived from) _____.
2. These are validated by _____.
3. But they are really productive of good interpretation when they function within _____.

4. Write out in correct terms the Law of Harmony.

5. Hermeneutics is a part of the Christian worldview and is ultimately true because of the Christian worldview whose ultimate postulate (presupposition) is _____.

6. List the one most important *objective* help that an exegete must begin his work with.

7. List seven *major* obstructions to sound interpretation.

8. State the Law of Reproduction, the task of the exegete: to reproduce _____.

9. List two of Bacon's idols and describe the nature (origin) of these two.

10. List three *spiritual* qualifications per text which would help interpretation.

11. What two major items are excluded by the fact that hermeneutics is a science?

12. Hermeneutics is vital because it enables one to "bridge over" serious obstacles or difficulties which exist in human communication such as: a. _____, b. _____, c. _____.

13. Under the five governing principles it is noted that there is the principle of accommodation. What does this *correctly* mean?

14. State three positive helps other than qualifications.

15. Grubbs well stated the *aim* of hermeneutics: All that hermeneutics can do or aims to do is to place the faithful, open-minded seeker after God in a position where the _____.

A MID-SEMESTER EXAMINATION

I. TRUE or FALSE. Encircle the T if true, the F. if false.

1. T F The allegorizing method is wrong even though there are allegories in the scriptures.
2. T F Paul approved of the allegorizing method because he used it in Galatians.
3. T F Allegorizing is now an historical curiosity as no one would think of using it today.
4. T F Allegorizing is a relatively harmless and interesting way to handle the scriptures.
5. T F The literalistic method is false because it abuses the literal method through forcing the literalistic meaning upon figurative or spiritual truth.
6. T F Every statement in the scripture is approved of God and is true.
7. T F A great value of historical survey is that it may remove an interpreter's provincialism.
8. T F The grammatical-cultural method has been in use through the years but has usually been overshadowed by other methods.

9. T F The Protestant Reformers broke with the false Roman Catholic method and turned toward the grammatical-cultural method.
10. T F The Protestant scholars in time fell under a strong influence from the rationalistic-dogmatic method.
11. T F There is no real peril to sound interpretation in the belief in illumination.
12. T F The dogmatic method gave rise to the destructive rationalistic method.
13. T F The principles are in control of the method.
14. T F False methods have been the most significant cause of misinterpretation of the scriptures.
15. T F The literal (philological) method is generally recognized as good for biblical interpretation but not in other fields.
16. T F Even the enemies of Jesus were able to correctly interpret His statements in spite of their hatred of Him and His penetrating truth.
17. T F It is good to select one translation and ignore others.
18. T F A valid and objective method having wide acceptance exists and is available to all those who want to understand the actual thought of the inspired authors of the Bible.
19. T F Without a knowledge of the original languages a person is unable to accurately understand the scriptures.
20. T F It is possible to describe spiritual and things beyond the senses without the use of metaphorical language.
21. T F Sin is the root of all the obstacles to correct interpretation.
22. T F An evil heart of unbelief has little effect upon one's comprehension of the scriptures.
23. T F There is no way in which faithful Christians are to seek to please others.
24. T F To keep down errors and heresies, it is best for the professionally trained leaders to dominate Bible teaching and interpretation.
25. T F The Bible rightly divided is the alone and all sufficient creed for the church today.
26. T F God, being the Author of both nature and the Bible, is a strong assurance that both will be in agreement.
27. T F There is no perfect translation of the Bible.
28. T F All resource books and tools can be used with complete assurance and safety.
29. T F The ordinary, earnest reader of the English Bible will miss most of the meaning of the writers.

II. MULTIPLE CHOICE. Place the letter of the most correct answer on the line provided.

1. _____ The Bible's statements about nature and science are

a) sometimes true, sometimes false, b) anti-scientific, c) non-scientific and popular, d) scientifically stated.

2. _____ The statements of the Bible hermeneutically interpreted will be found to be in contradiction a) frequently, b) only four or five times, c) seldom, d) never.

3. _____ The Roman Catholic interpreters have been almost entirely under the domination of the method designated as a) allegorical, b) literal, c) rationalistic.

4. _____ The idea of a miraculous (supernatural) work of *illumination* is a) biblical teaching, b) a Protestant concept, c) a Roman Catholic view, d) found only among mystical interpreters.

5. _____ There have been a) four, b) five, c) three, d) two great schools or systems of exegesis.

6. _____ The Biblical system of interpretation is the a) allegorical, b) dogmatic, c) mystical, d) literal, e) none of these.

7. _____ The greatest threat to sound interpretation today is from the method of a) rationalistic, b) philological, c) allegorism, d) hierarchical.

8. _____ Terry thought that a knowledge of the history of interpretation is of a) little, b) considerable, c) inestimable, d) no value.

9. _____ The Roman Catholics use the hierarchical method, but the Protestants do a) far too much, b) even more, c) not at all, d) sometimes.

10. _____ Which one of these does NOT belong in a classification of Dogmatic methods? a) pietistic, b) apologetical, c) literalistic, d) hierarchical, e) rationalistic.

III. SHORT, DIRECT ANSWERS.

1. Doedes' description of the mystical-allegorical school of interpretation is _____.

2. What was the principle used in the apologetical method?

3. How does the mystical interpreter's aim or procedure differ from that of the allegorist?

4. The rationalistic interpreter violates the right use of reason, for he puts human _____.

5. State four reasons for rejecting the nine false methods.

6. Where was the chief center of allegorizing located?

7. Where was the chief center of the correct method (philological) located?

8. If hermeneutics is to be recognized as a science, what must it offer to those using it? (2 parts)

9. The correct method is commended and verified as the valid method of interpretation by its use in the field of _____ and its practical use in the _____ themselves.

10. Who was the first specific exegete in the Old Testament to expound the Scriptures hermeneutically?

11. What four uses does Kevan find the New Testament writers making of Old Testament statements and records?
12. What should one believe about the authorship of the Bible?
13. Give a Biblical reason *why* one should so believe.
14. What should one believe about his personal ability to understand God's revelation?
15. List three reasons for employing the science of interpretation.
16. Define hermeneutics in full.
17. The correct method is defined under these five major terms.
18. What is idol of forum (market)?
19. What is idol of tribe?
20. List four *major* factors which *help* one interpret the Bible correctly (*not* qualifications).
21. The Law of Harmony states _____.
22. State two biblical examples.
23. The Law of Frame of Reference states _____.
24. What is the *right* meaning of the principle of accommodation in regard to God's word?
25. How many meanings may any one passage correctly be given?
26. How many applications may any one passage receive?
27. What Law will indicate that Paul was not talking about women becoming elders or evangelists when he said, "There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ"?
28. The greatest *Christian* allegorizer was _____.
29. Though not carried out in practice the two basic tenets of Protestantism are true, the _____ and the right of _____.
30. The "father of rationalistic interpretation" is _____.
31. The "father of modernism" is _____.
32. The most destructive rationalistic interpretation has been done by _____ with his demythologizing.
33. The correct (philological) method was used especially by the *Jewish* group _____, the *Christian* preacher-scholar at Constantinople, _____, and the Protestants following the scholarly _____ (1761).
34. From the o-h-projection we learned that the *orthodox* view of the New Covenant Scriptures is that they originated with Jesus and passed through the _____ into written form by the power of the _____, but the *rationalistic* modern view is that they only passed through the _____ and then through the _____, so they must be sifted by scholars today to arrive at truth.

A FINAL EXAMINATION

I. TRUE OR FALSE. Encircle the T if the statement is true, the F if false.

1. T F The inductive method may use a deductive process in its full operation.

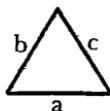
2. T F The greater the number of relevant facts reported for consideration the stronger the induction one can make.
3. T F The Old Testament Scriptures were written in Aramaic.
4. T F The Bible-believing Christian holds that there is only one *genre* used in writing Scripture.
5. T F There are examples of inductive reasoning in the New Covenant Scriptures.
6. T F The term *diatheke* is poorly translated in the New Covenant Scriptures by "covenant."
7. T F It is valid to assume that when God gave His revelation that He succeeded in His intention so perfectly that every intelligent person can get to heaven.
8. T F All verbal parallels are real (valid) parallels.
9. T F Exegesis is chronologically prior to any adequate theology of a subject.
10. T F A doctrine of Scripture must not be constructed from an uncertain textual reading.
11. T F Accurate description of the religious language in the Bible would include "revelational" but exclude "analogical."
12. T F Truth cannot contradict but is always one and harmonious.
13. T F An interpreter's world-view (mind-set) will have little influence on his ability to interpret the Scriptures.
14. T F The word "mystery" in the Scriptures means something quite intelligible when unveiled.
15. T F The gospel does not appear in any form in the Old Covenant Scriptures.
16. T F The *usus loquendi* of a word is of far less importance than the etymological meaning.
17. T F All covenants with man are conditioned on obedience of faith.
18. T F Typology is legitimate interpretation only when the New Testament specifically designates it.
19. T F Belief in the inerrancy of the Bible leads us to affirm there are no contradictions in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

II. LISTING. List in accurate, adequate terms the answers called for.

1. Three valuable ways to study *words* are a. _____, b. _____, c. _____.
2. *Usus loquendi* in hermeneutics is also called *designation* and means to _____.
3. This may be determined in five (out of nine) ways for any writer: (i.e. antithesis or contrast)
4. List five (out of nine) reasons per text for *giving* of the Old Covenant.
5. List five (out of nine) rules for interpreting *sentences* correctly.

6. List three (out of six) *kinds* (do not give examples) of TYPES such as, "actions".

7. List the three valid parallels to which appeal may be made for help in interpretation



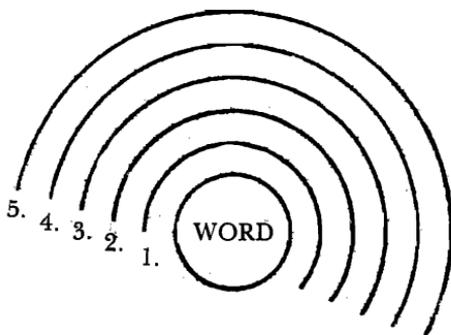
8. List the following contrasts between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant as given in the syllabus:

<i>OT</i>	<i>NT</i>
a. _____	Priesthood _____
b. _____	as to sin _____
c. _____	character _____
d. _____	basis _____
e. _____	written on _____

9. List five rules for the interpretation of *figurative language* per text.

II. COMPLETION. Fill in the blanks with the most accurate term(s) to correctly complete the statement or give the required information.

1. Five circles of context should be considered in correctly interpreting a *word*.



2. On the basis of the Bible's own testimony, we affirm that the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom took place on (date) _____ and is recorded in (book and chapter) _____.

3. Classifying books as poetic, apocalyptic, historic, etc. is very important in determining their _____, technically _____.

4. Complete these rules for interpreting words: Words when used _____ do not express _____ meanings and vice versa.

5. Words which are used to prescribe the duties of religion have _____.

6. _____ generally and _____ always are to be understood in a literal sense.

7. It seems paradoxical, yet Christ used parables both to _____ and _____ truth.

8. The true interpreter steers a straight course between the Charybdis of _____ and the Scylla of _____ by using the method *precisely* set forth by the *one* word _____.

9. Davidson and others conclude that the proper principle for the interpretation of prophecy is the _____ unless the New Covenant Scriptures suggest the _____ principle as it does in a number of instances.

10. The basic figure of speech out of which an allegory is formed is a _____.

11. The use (substitution) of one word for another it suggests is the figure of speech called _____.

12. Terry said that while rules are helpful in the determination of figurative language, in the end it comes down to one's _____.

13. What do we mean by figurative (tropical) language?

14. Grubbs pointed out in principles vindicating consistency of thought that "In explaining alleged conflicts it is sufficient to prove that the _____ is possible."

15. There is scholarly emphasis today that in Jesus' parables the central truth is almost always related to _____.

16. Predictive prophecy must be interpreted especially with an attitude of _____.

17. Predictive prophecy fulfilled is a clear proof that the _____.

18. Predictive prophecies have been fulfilled in three (out of five) ways: a. _____, b. _____, c. _____.

IV. MULTIPLE CHOICE. Place the letter of the most accurate term on the line provided.

1. _____ Alleged discrepancies in the Bible are a) simply not real, b) a severe problem for the believer in the Bible as the word of God, c) of some positive value, d) many in number.

2. _____ The Holy Spirit used the Greek word to describe the new covenant: a) *neos*, b) *kleos*, c) *kairos*, d) *kainos*, e) *naos*.

3. _____ because it means a) divinely given, b) new in time, c) true, d) superior, e) new in its nature.

4. _____ The etymological meaning of a word is its a) true, b) present, c) figurative, d) root, e) spiritual meaning.

5. _____ The Bible, because of the attacks upon it, is today in a a) stronger, vindicated position, b) weaker position, c) position essentially unchanged, d) unchallengeable position, e) seriously damaged position.

6. ____ An *emblem* is a special kind of symbol in that there is always a
a) deeper meaning, b) spiritual meaning, c) scriptural origin, d) sharp
distinction, e) natural resemblance between it and what it represents.

7. ____ A symbol differs from a type in that a symbol has no
essential reference to a) time, b) divine reference, c) truth, d) spiritual
value, e) visible items.

8. ____ The correct meaning of 2 Peter 1:20-21 ("no prophecy of
scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation," etc.) is: a) only the
church has the right of interpretation, b) no one can contradict another's
free interpretation, c) all scripture must be interpreted by the law of
harmony, d) only inspired men can interpret prophecy, e) scripture is
written by men who are moved by the Holy Spirit.

9. ____ Religious language, pre-eminently that used in the Bible,
has validity because it has a *literal* base in a) the physical world, b) the
heart, c) God's reality, d) man's creation, e) philosophical proof.

10. ____ The richest book in typology in the New Covenant
scriptures is a) Revelation, b) John, c) Hebrews, d) Matthew, e) Romans.

11. ____ The limitations of the correct method are: a) due to human
failures, b) inherent in the method, c) only in the mind of the critic,
d) seen only in prophecy, e) heavy objections.

12. ____ According to Ensign an inductive study of the angel of
Jehovah passages leads one to the conclusion that the angel is: a) created
angel, b) a special messenger of Jehovah, c) the Holy Spirit, d) the
second person of the Godhead, e) Jehovah Himself.

V. MATCHING. Match the following figures of speech by putting the
letter of the correct figure before the scripture which it describes. You
may look up the passages listed as such in an unmarked Bible. (Some
figures will occur more than once.)

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. ____ my arrow is incurable | a. enigma |
| 2. ____ the manna was like coriander seed | b. metaphor |
| 3. ____ Jehovah, our rock, our fortress | c. metonymy |
| 4. ____ they have Moses and the prophets,
let them hear them | d. allegory |
| 5. ____ the number of the man is 666 | e. simile |
| 6. ____ you are the temple of the Holy Spirit | f. parable |
| 7. ____ John 15:1-8 | g. personification |
| 8. ____ 2 Samuel 12:1-7 | h. irony |
| 9. ____ Genesis 4:6-7 | |
| 10. ____ 1 Corinthians 4:8-13 | |

VI. DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION. The correct method is
comprehensively described in FIVE terms. *State* these five terms and
after each write an accurate description of the *nature* and/or the *function*
of that part of the correct method in arriving at valid exegesis. (Five
adequate, accurate, and pointed paragraphs)

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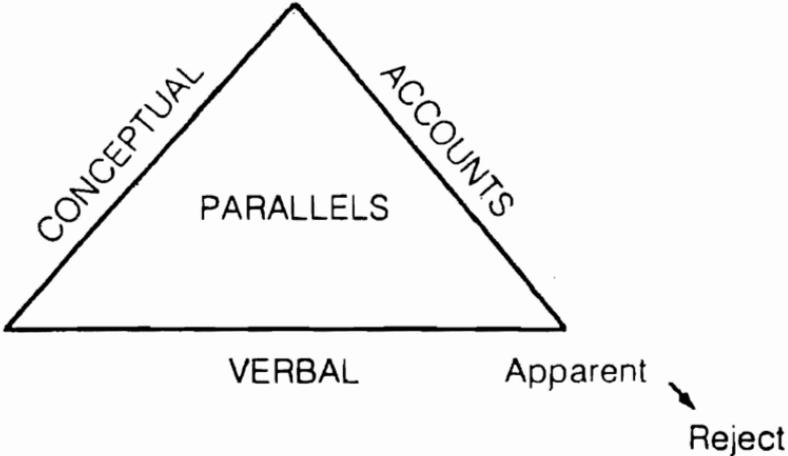
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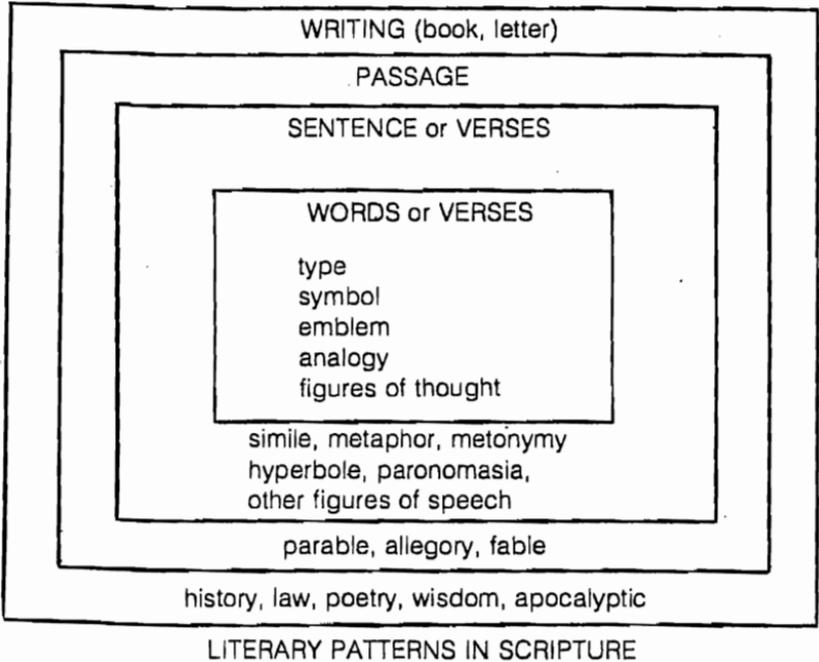
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