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Hermeneutics

Radical, Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity



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Who Needs Hermeneutics?

Have you ever wondered why godly, Holy Ghost filled men of God differed on their interpretation of certain passages of Scripture? The issue here is one of hermeneutics. It is not that either one is lacking in sincerity or love for God, they are just not approaching it with the same set of rules for interpretation. Hermeneutics is the study (or the science) of interpretation. It is an effort to seek out guidelines, that we can agree on, as we try and interpret the Bible. The Greek word, from which, it is derived is found in 1 Cor. 12:10, in the phrase, “interpretation of tongues.” The verb form, is found in Luke 24:27, “*And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself*” (NKJV).

Paul exhorts Timothy to “*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2:15, NKJV). The word translated, “rightly divide” here, is *orthotomeo*. It is a compound word, from *orthos* (straight, upright) and *tomeo* (to cut). It is found, only here, in Scripture, but in extra-Biblical literature it meant, to cut a path in a straight direction. This is what we want to do with Scripture. We must not be careless with our interpretation, rather we need to “rightly divide” it with great care, with a surgeon’s precision, playing close attention to context, rules of grammar, and sound hermeneutical principles. In 2 Corinthians 4:2, Paul mentioned that he was “*not handling the Word of God deceitfully.*” We want to treat the Word of God with the utmost respect.

The apostle Peter, tells us that “*no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation*” (2 Peter 1:20). So, “This is what this passage means to me” will not work! There must be a way for others to check out what you are saying. When you come up with some strange doctrine, there needs to be a way for me to check it out. Every false teaching uses Scripture to support itself. How can we tell what is the right interpretation and what is the wrong interpretation? Titus 2:1, tells us, to speak the things which become “sound doctrine.” Ephesians 4:14, warns us about being “carried

about by every wind of doctrine.” If we don’t have a way to check these things, then anybody’s doctrine is as good as the next individual’s. Without some type of guidelines to go by, people can create whatever teachings that they want to. How will we know whether or not it is “sound doctrine?”

In 2 Peter 3:15-17, we read:

15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation -- as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, as written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which, are some things hard to understand which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also, the rest of the Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

The word translated “twist” in this passage, was used of twisting someone’s arms or legs for torture. They were forcing their limbs to go in directions that they were unnatural, that they were not designed to go in. What a picture Peter used, for those who were “twisting” the Word of God, already in his day. These individuals were using Paul’s own words, but in a way, contrary to that which he intended. We find an example of this in the book of Romans, where Paul says, *“And why not say, “Let us do evil that good may come?” -- as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just”* (Romans 3:8). Paul had been preaching about grace and about how God will forgive sin, but people twisted his words, to say that it was OK to sin, that we should *“do evil that good may come.”*

We want to be careful not to do this! We do not want to twist God’s Words to make them mean what we want them to, but instead, we must be careful listeners and allow the text to speak to us. We need to let the text change our thinking and not the other way around! We should never start with what we believe and then look for Scriptures to

support it. Rather, we need to get what we teach out of the book. I had a teacher in Bible school who used to say, "I may be wrong; Bro. So-and-so may be wrong; but, the Bible is ALWAYS right.!" The Bible, alone, is our final authority. Jesus said, "*My Words will judge you in the last day*" (John 12:48). At the Great White Throne judgment, it said, that the books were opened and everyone was judged by the things written in the books (Rev. 20:12).

The Bible is the only God-given authority which man possesses; therefore, all doctrine, faith, hope, and all instruction, for the Church, must be based upon, and harmonize with, the Bible.

It is of utmost importance, that our doctrine comes from the Bible. And it is equally important, that we learn to interpret it correctly, that we "rightly divide the Word of truth" and teach things, which become "sound doctrine." And it is for this reason, that a study on how we are to interpret Scripture (hermeneutics), is so important.

The Hermeneutical Spiral

Communication is a process, by which, one person (called the sender) attempts to convey a message to another person (called the receiver). He does this by encoding a message into symbols that the receiver will understand and then giving the message to the receiver. Now in normal communication, the sender and receiver will alternate, both responding to the message, and in turn, sending another message thereby, taking on the role of each other.

But here we are discussing the interpretation of text where there is no feedback of the receiver back to the text. (The text does not *hear* the receiver and learn from him). But, the text only speaks his message to the receiver. The receiver, in turn, decodes the message and attempts to exegete (interpret) its meaning.

Now when the receiver approaches the message, he brings along with him his own presuppositions. This, is both, inevitable and necessary. In order to understand anything, a certain amount of presupposition (or preunderstanding) is needed. Without this, how would one make sense of the symbols? What meaning would he ascribe to the words that he is reading or hearing? In order to even begin interpretation, he must have some understanding of the basics of communication already.

But, as the receiver (interpreter) uses his pre-understanding to exegete the meaning of the message, his understanding deepens or even changes. In his mind, the meaning unfolds and this new meaning becomes his new pre-understanding for further interpretation. He will now use his new insights and his present point of view when he looks back at the message. As the receiver continues to learn, he builds on his previous knowledge and grows in understanding as he progresses.

Now, the receiver must keep the author's intended meaning as his goal, at all times. He must seek to discover what was meant by the one who put it there. If he does anything less, he is creating and not interpreting. His attempts should be to exegete or "draw out" meaning from text and not to force meaning upon it.

One might assume, since he comes to the text with pre-understanding, that this is impossible. However, his pre-understanding, is only there to help him understand what the author meant, not to influence him away from that. He must use his prior knowledge of the author and the background of the text, as well as, his knowledge of language and rules of grammar. In other words, his pre-understandings are not his own opinion and beliefs, but are the basic elements of knowledge that are required, if he is to accumulate anymore knowledge. They are there to help him understand the text.

As he understands the text, this knowledge is added to his pre-understanding and he can learn more from the text. The second time around, he can take a closer look at what it is saying. However, it is vital that he start with the "big picture." He needs to first stand back and get an overview of what the text is saying before he attempts to zero in

on a specific part. From his position here, he can get the main idea and get a feel for the general tone of the text. This is the movement from macro-exegesis to micro-exegesis.

Starting with micro-exegesis would be like looking at a painting with a microscope without ever having stood back and admired the painting as a whole. You lose the beauty of what it is all about. When you “stand back,” you can see the picture better. Even so, the interpreter needs to look at the whole of a text before he attempts dissecting its parts. He must ask himself how each part fits into the rest of the text.

To apply, this to exegeting Scripture, this would be to first look at the Bible as a whole, then to observe which Testament the passage is in. From here, he would look at all the books written by this particular author, then to the specific book. After this, he should look for divisions within the book. Now, this may correlate to chapter division, but most probably, will not. From here, he would look to paragraph divisions, then to sentences, and finally, to studying specific words.

A SHORT GUIDE TO BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Why is interpretation necessary?

Often you hear people say: “Just read the Bible and do what it says!” The problem with this attitude is, that different people, even though they read the same Bible, come to very different conclusions about what it actually says!

Many people, also tend to think of the Bible, as God’s little instruction book for life,” While this statement has a kernel of truth - the Bible certainly does contain much teaching on how to live - it is far more than just an instruction manual. It is the written record of God, revealing in history, who He is, what He is like, who we are, what we are

like, and what He expects of us. This is the overall message of the Bible, in a nutshell, and it should always be kept in our minds, as we read the Bible.

The Bible was originally written to people who lived in a different place, in a very different culture, at a different time and period of history, and who spoke different languages. It also contains several different types of literature (called genres).

Because the Bible is God's Word, in history, revealed to people in history, it means that each passage has a historical context - a particular author, audience, purpose, and occasion. On the other hand, since the Bible is also the Word of God, its contents are also, eternally relevant.

Therefore, the goal of interpretation is not to come up with the most unique interpretation (unique interpretations, are usually wrong), but to discover the original intended meaning of a passage - the way the original audience understood it. The task of discovering the original intended meaning, is called exegesis.

The key to doing good exegesis, is reading the text very carefully, paying close attention to the details it describes, and asking the text the right questions. This is critical to finding the correct interpretation. Bad interpretation, results directly, from bad exegesis.

Basic Tools

One of the easiest and most effective ways of identifying ambiguities and differences of opinion, in interpretation, is to read different translations - preferably, as many as possible. There are three basic types of translations: literal (word-for-word translation), dynamic (thought-for-thought), and paraphrase (rephrasing of an existing translation). Here is a list (not exhaustive) of useful translations:

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* *King James Version (KJV)*. First published, in 1611, and revised in 1769, it was the best selling Bible, up until 1987. However, it is based on very late, original manuscripts and the language it uses, is antiquated. In 1982, it was revised again, the Shakesperean English was removed and the new work was republished, as the New King James Version (NKJV).

* *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*. Produced, by the Lockman Foundation, in 1971, it was a revision of the American Standard Version (ASV), of 1901. The translators all committed to the inspiration of Scripture, strove to produce a literal translation of the Bible, reflecting the actual wording and grammatical structure of the original languages. However, it is not particularly easy to read. The NASB was revised, in 1995.

* *Revised Standard Version (RSV)*. Published, by William Collins Publishers, in 1952, it is also a revision of the ASV. The RSV was revised and republished, in 1990, as the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). However, this revision tends to be far more liberal, particularly in the Old Testament.

* *New English Bible (NEB)*. A completely new translation from the original languages, produced by the Church of Scotland and published, in 1970. The goal, was to produce a fresh translation, in modern English, although the idiom, is extremely British. The NEB was revised and republished, in 1989, as the Revised English Bible (REB).

* *New International Version (NIV)*. Published, in 1978, it is a completely new rendering of the original languages, done by an international group of more than a hundred scholars from the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. It is a thought-for-thought translation and makes full use of modern

English idiom. Since 1987, it has outsold the King James Version. The NIV was revised, in 1984.

* *Jerusalem Bible* (JB). Published, by the Dominican Biblical School of Jerusalem, in 1966, it is the first complete Catholic Bible, to be translated from the original languages, and is the English counterpart to the French translation, entitled *La Bible de Jerusalem*. It also includes, the Apocrypha and Deuterocanonical books, and many study helps. The JB, was revised and republished, in 1986, as the *New Jerusalem Bible* (NJB).

* *The New American Bible* (NAB). Published, in 1970, this was the first American Catholic Bible to be translated from the original languages. It tends to be more conservative and more faithful to the original text, than the JB.

* *Good News Bible* (GNB). Also known, as *Today's English Version* (TEV). It was published by the American Bible Society, in 1966, and produced by Robert Bratcher, a research associate of the Translations Department of the American Bible Society. It uses modern simple English, which, for the most part, accurately reflects the meaning of the originals.

* *Living Bible* (LB). A paraphrase of the ASV, in modern speech, produced by Kenneth Taylor. The intention, was that anyone, even a child, could understand the message of the original writers. It tends to be a little too interpretive.

* *New Living Translation* (NLT). A complete revision of the Living Bible. A team of highly respected scholars, checked each verse against the original languages, to ensure its accuracy. However, it has been criticized for its unevenness and inconsistent renderings.

* *The Message* (TM). A colorful paraphrase, which is highly interpretive - almost to the point of being a devotional commentary. In some passages, the

phrasing is brilliant, and in others, terrible.

* *Amplified Bible* (AMP). This translation inserts synonym's, in brackets, for most of the key words, in each verse. This is a faulty linguistic practice, since a word only ever means one thing, in any given context. Not only do the presence of the synonyms make the text difficult to read, they also encourage the reader, to choose whichever synonym happens to take their fancy or support their preconceived idea.

* *New English Translation* (NET). Published, by the Biblical Studies Press, this is the most recent English translation (1998), and even then, only the New Testament, is currently available. It is in modern English, is faithful to the originals, and reflects the best of evangelical scholarship. It also includes, masses of lucid text and study notes.

I would suggest that the KJV, NIV, NLT, NRSV, or NET be used for such a purpose. These translations are in English, are generally very accurate, and format the text, in paragraphs and stanzas, showing the text's logical divisions and making it easy to read and follow the author's train of thought. I would also suggest that the *Amplified Bible*, and *The Message*, be only used, as a last option, and certainly not chosen, as a primary translation.

Bible Dictionaries, are also, a must. The *New Bible Dictionary* or *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, is probably, the best value. The very best (but, also the most expensive), is the six volume, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, which is almost, an encyclopedia. The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ISBE), is also an outstanding work.

Commentary sets, are also necessary, in order to check your interpretation and gain help on difficult passages. Commentaries, vary greatly in quality, depending on the series it belongs to and the particular author. The most useful and accessible sets for the layman, are the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (EBC), the *NIV Application Commentary* (NIVAC), the *Bible Speaks Today* (BST), and the *Tyndale Commentary*

(TOTC and TNTC). The more advanced interpreter, may also wish, to consult the *New International Commentary* (NICOT) and NICNT), *New International Greek Testament Commentary*, and *International Critical Commentary*. For help on evaluating and selecting commentaries, see Fee & Stuart, pp. 246-254.

The Interpretive Process

Presuppositions & Pre-understandings

No one, is ever completely, unbiased. Everyone approaches the Bible with presuppositions and pre-understandings or preconceived ideas about what the text means. However, this is not necessarily a problem, provided you are conscious of them and aware of how they may influence the way you read and interpret the text. Indeed, many interpreters come unstuck, at this point, because their presuppositions and pre-understandings, often rule out a priori, various interpretive options.

The Interpretive Cycle

The process of reading and interpreting the Bible should be cyclic. A reader approaches a passage of Scripture with presuppositions (e.g. the Bible is the inerrant Word of God), and usually has, a pre-understanding about what the particular passage can or cannot mean. These presuppositions and pre-understandings, along with the context, influence the reader's understanding of the passage, and help them derive their interpretation. This interpretation, then effects the reader's presuppositions, and becomes part of their pre-understandings, the next time they read this passage. If our exegetical information, reasoning, and judgments are thought through again and reassessed each time we go through the cycle, then the accuracy and correctness of our interpretation will improve.

Phases of Interpretation

1. Identification

Different literary genres (kinds of literature) are interpreted in different ways, so the first question to ask is: "To which category of literature does the text you are interpreting belong? Below are brief descriptions of the different genres found in the Bible:

Historical Narratives. These describe actual historical events from God's perspective. They tell us what God is like (His character and nature), what God likes/dislikes, how He deals with people, who obey and honor Him, and how He deals with those, who disobey and hate Him. Narratives gives us principles and lessons, not commands, patterns or laws. Historical Narratives are found, in Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. In the New Testament, they can be found, in parts of the Gospels, and the book of Acts.

Poetry and Songs. These are expressions of emotion to God. They allow us to express, to God, our feelings of happiness, joy, trust, hope, security, as well as feelings of discouragement, guilt, suffering, fear, anger, despair, and repentance. They also assist us, in expressing our love and appreciation, for God, or our need, for forgiveness. Poetry and Songs, allow us to relate, to God, on our own level. They show us how to communicate, with God, and how to honor and worship Him. In the Old Testament, these writings are found, primarily, in the Psalms and Song of Songs.

Legal Writings. These writings indicate God's high moral standard, His idea of justice, principles of common sense government, principles of common sense, health and safety, and His pattern and order for acceptable worship. These laws, are NOT directly applicable, to Christians today i.e., they are not meant to be legalistic instructions and commands, to Christians. Such legal writings can be found in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Wisdom/Wise Sayings. These writings indicate, God's view of wisdom, as opposed to man's view of wisdom. They contain wise sayings, and practical advice on how to live life and avoid trouble and hardship. Wisdom literature, can be found primarily, in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job.

Prophecy. Prophecy is God's message to a particular person, a particular group of people, and sometimes, to all humanity. It is not necessarily foretelling the future - in fact, the vast majority of prophecy, in the Bible, speaks of the present. Prophecy, is found primarily, in the Old Testament, from Isaiah to Malachi.

Teachings of Jesus. These are direct statements of truth, from Jesus, concerning the nature and character of God, the kingdom of God/Heaven, what God expects of us, principles of righteous living, and the ways, in which, Jesus fulfills the OT prophecies. They are not exhaustive "DO's and DON'T's," but rather, serve as examples and paradigms (patterns), from which, we can derive underlying principles, to apply in other situations. These teachings are found in parts of the Gospels i.e., Matthew - John.

Parables. Parables, are stories, with a punch-line. Parables are, not so much, illustrative, but rather, provocative. They are designed, to draw people in and hit them with something unexpected, in the same way a joke does. Most parables have only one message or central idea, and even if multiple messages are present, one of them will be the chief idea. Note also, that they are not perfect analogies! Parables, are also found, in parts of the Gospels.

Letters. These, are generally occasional documents i.e., they were written with a clear purpose to a well-identified audience. However, some letters (called Epistles) were written to a larger group of people. The letter/Epistle writer, presents arguments to correct, rebuke, defend, instruct, praise, and encourage their readers. Letters/Epistles, form the vast majority of the New Testament, from Romans to Jude.

Apocalypse. This includes the book of Revelation, and also large parts, of Ezekiel and Daniel. Revelation is a vision of warning and encouragement to the early Church, as it was going through immense persecution.

2. Observation.

In the same way that the three most important factors, in real estate, are location, location and location, the three most important factors, in exegesis, are context, context, and context. Understanding the context, is the key to understanding what you are reading. Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart also point out “the only proper control for hermeneutics, is to be found, in the original intent of the biblical text.”

There are two aspects of the context of a passage: the historical context and the literary context.

Historical Context. The Bible was written over a period of time, dating from approximately 2,000 B.C., (Job) to 95 A.D (Revelation). It was set in a different country/continent and a vastly different culture and society, from our own, therefore, we must be careful not to make 20th century “western world” assumptions, about the situation. Consult Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks in order to find out about the manners and customs of the various nations, at that time, in history. Use your imagination and try to put yourself in the shoes of the people involved. Make observations about who? what? when? where? and how?

Literary Context. This is the position of the text you are reading, in relation, to other texts. What verses come before? What verses come after? What situation, event, statement, or argument led up to this passage? What situation, event, statement, or argument followed or resulted from this passage? What book is the text in? Whereabouts in the book? What Testament is it in? Why is the text in this position? Why is it in the Bible at all? What difference would it make if it was left out?

The following are some suggestions on making observations depending on the genre of the passage you are interpreting:

Historical Narratives. Choose a complete narrative and read it in a single sitting. Make (mental) notes as you are reading, and ask: What is happening? To who? When? Where? WHY? (The most important question!). What can I learn about God? What can I learn about the other characters involved?

Poetry and Songs. Read a complete Psalm or Song, in one sitting, taking (mental) notes as you are reading. What is being said about God? What is being said about humanity? Is the writer pleading for something? Are they pouring their heart out? If so, about what? Are they praising God? Are they angry with God? What mood does the writer seem to be in? Joyful? Happy? Angry? Fearful? Anxious? Distraught? Discouraged? Does the writer's mood change?

Legal Writings. Read a collection of related rules/regulations, in one sitting. What rules/regulations are being put in place? Why? What situations/circumstances do they cover? Are they for moral reasons or are they concerned with administration/government and personal hygiene? Can you see any pattern being established? Is a feast, offering, or ceremony being described? If so, what seems to be its purpose or significance? Never stop asking WHY?

Wisdom. Read as much of Proverbs/Job/Ecclesiastes, as you can in one go, taking (mental) notes, as you read. Consider what you think the central message of the text is. What advice is given? What warnings are given? What comparisons are made? Compare the proverb you are reading with other similar or related proverbs (similar or related proverbs could be anywhere in the book of Proverbs). If there are similar/related proverbs, how do the proverbs differ? Do they relate to slightly different situations? Do they address different aspects of a problem or situation? If two proverbs say the opposite thing (and there are several) why would this be? Do you think the statement made or the advice given, is good? Why or why not? You must also remember, that

proverbs, are not always globally applicable, to every person and every situation. They are guidelines and “rules of thumb,” not absolute rules, statements of fact, or direct promises.

Prophecy. Read a single prophecy (called an “oracle”) in one sitting. Try and establish the historical setting. What circumstances, in history, provoked this Prophetic Word from God? What does it say about God? Is the prophecy positive or negative? Is it a warning? About what? Is it a condemnation? For what? Is it an encouragement or a message of hope? About what? Is it a promise? To do what? Prophecy is some of the hardest literature to read. Knowing the historical context, is essential to really appreciate what is being said. It may be necessary to consult a commentary or Bible handbook, if you are struggling.

Teachings of Jesus. Read a complete section of teaching (called a “pericope”) in a single sitting, taking (mental) notes, about what is being taught. What message is He communicating? What subject is He talking about? What is He actually saying about it? Is it a command? Is it a warning? Is it an exhortation/encouragement? Is it a promise? Does it give us a better understanding of who God is? Does it give us a better understanding of what we are like?

Parables. Read a single parable and the surrounding dialogue, in one sitting. Try to determine the central thought of the parable. What message is it communicating? Keep in mind, the CONTEXT! This is a big clue to identifying the central thought. What events prompted Jesus to tell this parable? How did the hearers react to it? Did they understand it? Focus on the central thought - don’t focus on all the minute details - they are not meant to be important. Read ahead - some parables are interpreted for you, by Christ, later on in the Gospel.

Letters. Read them like any other letter. Start at the beginning - stop at the end. If possible, read a letter right through, in one sitting. Identify the major issues/arguments of the letter. Focus on one of the major/issues/arguments. What is the point of each

paragraph? What does each paragraph contribute to the current issue/argument? Why did the writer include a particular paragraph? What difference would it make if it were not included? Don't pay too much attention to the chapter and verse divisions or the chapter headings - they're NOT inspired! Words/phrases such as, "Now about," "Concerning," and "Finally," often indicate, a change of argument/subject.

Apocalypse. Read the books of Daniel and Ezekiel first. Revelation uses lots of imagery from these books. Identify as much as possible, the use of imagery (by comparing Revelation with Daniel and Ezekiel). What is the imagery used to communicate in Revelation? What kind of message is being communicated? Hope? Encouragement? Warning? What does the text say about God and about Jesus Christ? What does it say about Satan? What does it say about the Church (New Jerusalem)? You will definitely want, to consult some good commentaries, in these matters. Revelation, is the most difficult book in the Bible to read and understand.

3. Prayer, Meditation, & Wrestling

Pray, meditation, and wrestling are things the reader should do throughout the entire interpretive cycle, not just before you begin or when you are about to deliver your talk/sermon/speech.

Meditation does not mean, emptying your head of everything - quite the opposite, in fact. It means, filling your mind with all the information required, to make decisions about what the text says, how significant it is, and how it should be applied today. When looking at a difficult passage, you may need to really pray about, and wrestle with, the various alternatives.

4. Determining Meaning

What do the particular key words or phrases mean? Pay attention to those elements that are repeated in the current passage or used elsewhere by the same author.

What is the significance of a particular key word, phrase, or sentence? Does the element carry any special significance, given the historical and social context? What does it contribute to the overall meaning of the text? How would the meaning of the text be affected, if this particular element was left out?

Determine the relationships between the key words and phrases. Especially look for the following connecting words:

Contrast	but, however, even though, much more, nevertheless, yet, although, then, otherwise
Condition	if, whoever, whatever
Comparison	too, also, as, just as, so also, likewise, like, in the same way
Correlatives	as....so also, for....as, so....as
Reason	because, for this reason, for this purpose, for, since
Result	so then, therefore, as a result, thus, then
Purpose	that, so that, in order that
Temporal/Time	now, immediately, just then, until, when, before, after, while, during, since
Geographical	where, from

Is there a progression in the story, account or argument? Is there a climax?

What is implied by the use of particular terms, phrases, or sentences? Any implications, must be clear and reasonable - be careful not to exaggerate or over extend what the text says, in order to support a preconceived idea. (see lesson on Presuppositions and Pre-understandings).

Note also, Gordon Fee's and Doug Stuart's warning: "A text cannot mean what it never meant."

Ultimately, the test of a good interpretation, is whether it makes good sense of the

text and its context.

5. Application

Is there a command to obey? Is there an error to avoid? Does the passage point out sinful behavior or attitudes that may be present in your own life? Is there an example to follow? Is there a promise to claim? Does the passage highlight an aspect of God's nature and character, which you had not seen before?

The Goal of Interpretation(or, The Responsibility of the Interpreter)

Communication, by definition, is the transference of an idea or group of ideas from one party to another. The manner, in which, this occurs, is negotiable; it may be written, oral, or even, kinetic. Presumably, the originator of an idea seeks to convey his meaning with clarity and precision, so that, by means of the particular type of message chosen, the thought that was created in his mind might reemerge intact, in the thoughts of his target audience. The goal of the interpreter, then, is rudimentary: reconstruct the original intent of the author, in order, that his meaning may remain intact.

Without the sender's intended meaning as the conscious goal of interpretation, the message (or meaning thereof) itself becomes arbitrary. Meaning, in turn, descends into a quagmire of relativism; confusion, and discord or - at the least - disagreement, are the inevitable results of a subjective approach to interpretation. Stated another way, if there does not exist, an ultimate authority to govern a text (Biblical or otherwise), then its meaning, is simply anyone's guess.

According to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, an interpreter who reads his own meaning into a Biblical text:

Greatly relativizes the Bible's teachings. Since . . . the Bible's teachings are the product of a series of ancient cultures and their primitive or pre-critical views, then they can have no necessarily abiding authority, for modern people. . . The reader's perception of the text, *not the text itself*, is the ultimate basis of authority for the meaning of the text.

In 490 B.C., the Greek general, Miltiades, enjoyed victory over the Persians, in the Battle of Marathon. A messenger was sent to run, twenty-five miles, to bring word of the victory, to Athens. The sender, of course, entrusted the runner with an important message. He expected the Athenians to receive the news literally, as fact, interpreting it, as an actual event that happened. If the sender's meaning was negligible, then why would he have ordered the messenger to undertake, such an urgent and perilous task?

Even a jester or a deceiver, expects the recipients of his message, to trust that it is true. In 1937, Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre, broadcast a radio adaptation of H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*. This radio drama masqueraded, as an actual news broadcast, reporting events of an extraterrestrial invasion of Earth. It cleverly mixed in, music programs with fictitious "breaking updates" of the Martian devastation. Many, in America, accepted the drama, as truth and panicked, accordingly. It had a tremendous impact upon the listening audience, primarily because of the assumption, that the news reporter said what he meant, fantastic though it may have seemed. The radio listener was not expected to assign his own meaning to the broadcast. If he did this, then the dramatic effect, that Mr. Welles had intended to produce, would have been void.

A final illustration, is more relevant, to today. Consider the universally understood language of traffic stoplights. Suppose that a single driver determined that, to him, red, meant roll down the windows, yellow, meant put the car in reverse, and green, meant to get out of one's car and do a cartwheel. This driver, easily could cause an accident. If a multitude of drivers, were each, to adopt their own meanings for the colors, then certainly, chaos would ensue.

As one can conclude from the preceding illustrations, the receiver-based method of interpretation, can be a disastrous - if not dangerous - position. Our behavior and actions are informed by the information we accept, as being true. By appropriating “relative truth,” the individual interpreter’s understanding, rather than the Bible itself, becomes the springboard, from which, worldviews are forged and crucial, life-altering decisions are made.

When one’s subject, is as important as the Word of God, one must diligently seek, to discover the intended meaning of the author, who is ultimately, the Lord Himself. As Fee and Stuart warn, “Otherwise, Biblical texts can be made to mean whatever they mean, to any given reader. But, such hermeneutics becomes pure subjectivity, and who then is to say, that one person’s interpretation is right, and another’s is wrong? Anything goes.” The goal of the interpreter, then, is to reconstruct to the best of his ability, the message that the original

writer meant to convey, by what he had written. One is forbidden to interpret the Bible, according to his own fancy; unfortunately, a reader-based method of interpretation, does precisely this, thereby replacing the Word of God, with the whim of man.

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The Interpretation of Parables, Allegories, and Types

1. Introduction

Figurative language is used in various ways, in both Testaments, and is an integral part of Biblical literature. The most common and most important forms of figurative language, are parables, allegories, and types. Although there may be some overlap in the nature of these language forms, there are also important distinctions, particularly, in the function they perform.

The purpose of this lesson, is to examine the nature and characteristics of parables, allegories, and types. Their significance for Biblical interpretation and their limitations and dangers, will also, be examined.

2. Parables & Allegories

2.1. The Differences Between Parables & Allegories

Parables, are short stories, that are told in order to get a point across, and occur in both Testaments, of the Bible. The word, "parable" (Gk. *parabole*), was generally used, in reference to any short narrative, that had symbolic meaning. (Louw & Nida 1989, p.391) There are many stories and sayings of Jesus in the New Testament, that are identified as parables, but not all of these are parables, in the true sense. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35), may be regarded as a true parable, because it is a complete story with a beginning, ending, and plot, but the Leaven in the Meal, is a similitude. "You are the salt of the earth," is a metaphor and "Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes," is an epigram (Fee & Stuart 1993, p.136-137). When "parable" is used, in this section, it refers to the true parables.

A true parable, then may be regarded, as an extended simile (Blomberg 1990, p.32). It is a story, that resembles real-life natural situations and does not contain any mythical

or supernatural elements (Kuske 1995, p. 97). These stories were told, in order to catch the listener's attention and provoke a response. (C.H. Dodd 1961, p.16), defines a parable as: "a metaphor or simile, drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer, by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought." They often embody a message, that may not be communicated, in any other way (Marshall & Tasker, in New Bible Dictionary: Parables).

An allegory, however, is quite different. It is essentially, an extended metaphor (Kuske 1995, p.94) and uses a story or event (often, mythical and supernatural), to illustrate a point (Marshall & Tasker, in New Bible Dictionary: Parables). They are stories with 2 levels of meaning: human activity and Spiritual reality (Blomberg 1990, p.15). Allegories encode, relatively static series of comparisons, that the author wishes to communicate and always need to be interpreted (Blomberg 1990, p.35).

Allegories, are much less common, in the New Testament, but are more frequent in the Old Testament. In an allegory, virtually every person, thing, place, and event has a symbolic meaning (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 140). Examples of allegories, are the visions in Daniel 8:1-11 (which is interpreted in Daniel 8:20-26), and Ezekiel 1. In the New Testament, nearly every chapter of Revelation, contains allegorical visions.

Throughout the history of the Church, there has been great debate over the level of allegory, used in parables. Some have suggested that they are essentially allegories (Blomberg 1990, p.68, my emphasis), while others emphatically, state the opposite (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 138). However, it must be admitted, that the line between parables and allegories, is a fluid one (Marshall & Tasker, in New Bible Dictionary: Parables).

2.2. Interpreting Parables

2.2.1. Context & Setting

Jesus told parables to be understood and He told them to common people (Luke 15:3, 18:9, 19:11) (Fee & Stuart 1993, p.136). The telling of parables are historical events, but it is unlikely that the content of the parable, was historical (Kuske 1995, p. 97). However, this does not mean they are irrelevant or that the truth and message they communicate, is unreliable.

The points of reference or points of comparison (also called, the tertium) of a parable, are usually indicated by the historical setting and situation and by the literary context (Kuske 1995, p. 95). The original audience, would have immediately, understood the points of comparison when Jesus spoke them (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 139-140). Therefore, the interpreter needs to hear the parable, as the original audience heard it. The original audience and their customs and culture, needs to be studied in order to grasp how they would have heard, understood, and reacted to a particular parable. The interpreter needs to understand what the various people, places, and objects meant and the significance they had, to the audience (Wenham 1989, p.16). For example, most people are not aware of the dangers of putting new wine into old wineskins or the dangers of traveling the Jericho road (Wenham 1989, p. 15). The interpreter, must also be aware, of any Old Testament allusions, in parables (eg. Mark 12:1-12 and Isaiah 5).

The difficulty in interpreting parables, is because our modern western society, is so far removed in time and culture from the original audience (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 137). The historical distance, is not only chronological, but social, political, and religious (Wenham 1989, p. 15).

Parables, always occur, as part of a larger context (Klein et al. 1993, p. 272). Therefore, they need to be interpreted within this larger literary context and with respect to other parables and other sayings and events. This is particularly true, of the parables of Jesus, which must be interpreted in relation to His proclamation of the Kingdom of God (Wenham 1989, p. 16). It should also be noted, that no one parable contains the

entire Gospel (Marshall & Tasker in New Bible Dictionary: Parables).

2.2.2. *The Meaning of Parables*

Historically, most Christians have interpreted parables, as allegories, but modern scholarship has rejected this practice (Blomberg 1990, p. 15-16), because it ignores the realism, clarity, and simplicity of parables (Blomberg 1990, p. 32). Although parables do have some allegorical elements, these are the exceptions, not the general rule (Blomberg 1990, p. 17). These allegorical elements, are called the points of reference or points of comparison (Klein et al. 1993, p. 337).

Some parables go very close to being allegories, because most of the details in the story are intended to represent something or someone else (i.e., they have many points of comparison). However, even these parables are not allegories, because of the function they perform (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 138). The parable in Luke 7:40-42, is not allegorical, although it appears that way. The purpose of the story is not found in the points of comparison, but in the intended response (of Simon and the woman) (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 140).

The details of a parable, must be interpreted with strict reference to the points of comparison, so the focus remains, on the central meaning of the parable. Sometimes, none of the details are important and do not need interpreting (eg. The Good Samaritan). Sometimes, a few of the details are significant (eg. Parable of the Tenants) and sometimes, all the details are important (eg. Parable of the Weeds) (Kuske 1995, p. 95-96).

The interpreter, must also, be sensitive to the shape and form of a parable. The assumption of 1 single point, per parable, is not always true (Wenham 1989, p. 17). Some parables are simple and some are complex. Simple parables, will just have one central message, but complex ones, may have a central message and several related messages (Wenham 1989, p. 17). For example, the Prodigal Son teaches, that God

accepts repentant sinners, and also, that God wants faithful people to accept repentant sinners (Kuske 1995, p. 97). In fact, the majority of parables, make exactly 3 points (Blomberg 1990, p. 21).

A parable, may also have, multiple shades of meaning, depending on the perspective of the hearer. When Jesus told the parable in Luke 7:40-48, the messages received by Simon and the woman, would have been very different (Klein et al. 1993, p. 338). Simon received a message of rebuke, but the woman, a message of acceptance and forgiveness. Also, Jesus told some parables (with modifications) on different occasions, to different audiences, in order to provoke a different response (eg. Parable of 10 minas - Luke 19:10-26, and Parable of 10 talents - Matthew 25:14-28) (Kuske 1995, p. 98).

2.2.3. *The Function of Parables*

Parables do not serve to illustrate Jesus' teaching with `picture words` and they were not told to serve as vehicles for revealing Spiritual truth - although, they most certainly, end up doing this. Parables were told, to provoke a response - to address the audience, capture their attention, show them up, and cause them to decide, and act (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 138). The parable, Nathan told to King David, in 2 Samuel 12, is a clear example. David "burned with anger" at the man who stole the poor man's ewe and wanted immediate and summary justice. When Nathan revealed, that this was what David had done, he felt remorse and repented. In this respect, a parable is like a story, with a punch line. The unusual twist in the story, is what gives the parable its impact and biting force (Wenham 1989, p. 14). Parables jolt people into seeing things in a new way, bringing them to a point of decision, and action (Marshall & Tasker in New Bible Dictionary: Parables).

Jesus' parables capture the listeners attention, bringing them face to face with His message, which would have been much less effective, if stated normally (Wenham 1989, p. 13). He did not use them, to illustrate general truth, but to force people to determine their attitude toward Him and His message of the Kingdom of God (Marshall

& Tasker in *New Bible Dictionary: Parables*). This is reflected, in the fact, that parables often break the grounds of realism and conventional expectation. For example, no Jewish father would lovingly greet and accept a wayward son, (as in the Prodigal Son) (Klein et al. 1993, p. 337).

Interpreting a parable, in some ways, destroys what the parable is. It is like interpreting a joke. The immediacy of the parable, is what makes it so effective, in provoking people. Explaining the points of comparison of a parable is like explaining a joke. The impact is lost (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 138-139).

Mark 4:10-12, seems to be a difficult passage to understand, regarding the function of parables. This passage seems to indicate, that parables cloud and hide the message, rather than make it clear (in contrast to the parallel passage in Matthew 13:13). However, the conjunction translated as, “that,” “so that,” or “in order that,” in modern translations, (Gk. *i{na*), is in fact, a result clause, not a purpose clause (Moule 1953, p. 142-143).

Therefore, it would be better translated as, “as a result of the fact that.” Jesus told parables, as a result of the fact that, “they may be ever seeing, but never perceiving, and ever hearing, but never understanding.”

2.2.4. *Limitations & Dangers*

The basic danger with interpreting parables, is mistaking their function and context. Often, too much is read into the details of the story and instead of functioning to provoke a response, it becomes an allegory, which is essentially, a vehicle for truth. The Parable of the Unjust Judge, intends to communicate, that we should be persistent in our pleading to God for justice - not that God is unjust or that we can change His mind, by constantly hassling Him. Therefore, it is far more likely, that parables will be over-interpreted than under-interpreted (Kuske 1995, p. 98).

The problem with this kind of allegorical interpretation, is that rarely do two interpreters agree on the meaning of every detail in the story. Too often, the meaning given to details, reflects understandings of Christian doctrine, from a later period, than Jesus' Ministry. No one in Jesus' time, could have expected to associate the innkeeper in the Good Samaritan with the Apostle Paul (Augustine's interpretation) (Blomberg 1990, p. 31-32).

2.3. Interpreting Allegories

Allegories, are illustrations, and always require, interpretation. They, are generally, interpreted by the Biblical text, itself. A clear example, can be found, in Daniel 8. Daniel sees a vision of a ram with 2 horns, one being longer than the other and a goat, with 1 prominent horn between his eyes, that breaks off, giving rise to 4 smaller horns. From one of these horns, another horn came, which eventually became extremely powerful, and caused great destruction. These images, are precisely interpreted, later, in the chapter. The ram represents the Kings of Media and Persia (Daniel 8:20) and the goat represents the King of Greece, the large horn being the first King (Daniel 8:21), which history records, as Alexander the Great. The four horns represent the four Kingdoms that emerge from Alexander's Kingdom and the single horn, which eventually becomes very powerful, represents a stern-faced King, who is a master of intrigue.

3. Types

3.1. Types & Typology

“Successive epochs of salvation-history disclose a recurring pattern of Divine activity, which the NT writers believed to have found its definitive expression, in their own day” (Bruce in New Bible Dictionary: *Typology*).

Typology is, “a way of setting forth, the Biblical history of salvation so that some of its earlier phases are seen, as anticipations of later phases, or some later phase, as the recapitulation or fulfilment of an earlier one.” In the language of typology, the earlier

series of events, is called the type, and the later series of events, is called the anti-type (Bruce in *New Bible Dictionary: Typology*). (Klein, et al. 1993, p. 130) defines typology, as “the recognition of a correspondence between New and Old Testament events, based on a conviction of the unchanging character of the principles of God’s working.” Buchanan (1987, p. 3) notes, that typology relates one historical event to another, not in details, but in basics.

A type, is a picture or pattern of something, that lies in the future (Kuske 1995, p. 99). Types can be people (eg. Moses - Deuteronomy 18:15), places (eg. Most Holy Place - Hebrews 9:3, 8, 12), an office (eg. High Priest - Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 9:6-7), festivals (eg. Day of Atonement - Hebrews 9:25-26), an event (eg. Israel being called out of Egypt - Matthew 2:15), an object (eg. bronze snake - John 3:14), or an animal (Genesis 22) (Kuske 1995, p. 99-100).

3.2. Interpreting Types

3.2.1. Meaning, Purpose, and Function of Types

Use of typology rests on belief, that God’s ways of acting, are consistent throughout history. Christ and the New Testament writers, considered many of God’s former actions recorded in the Old Testament, as ‘types’ of what He was now doing, in Christ. This does not mean, that the Old Testament writers, intended to communicate a typological message, and probably were not even conscious, that what they wrote had any typological significance (Klein et al. 1993, p. 130). Types, would most probably, not have been recognized by the original audience either, but were pointed out, by Christ, and the New Testament writers (Luke 24:27, 44, 1 Corinthians 10:6-11).

Typology, seeks to discover and make explicit, the real correspondences in historical events, which have been brought about, by the `recurring rhythm` of Divine activity (Lampe 1957, p. 29). The typological relationship between the two Testaments, is summarized by the epigram, “The New is in the Old, concealed; the Old is in the New, revealed.” The Bible, is a unity, and through typology, the Bible speaks of Christ, in

almost every part (Lampe 1957, p. 12). In the New Testament, Christian salvation is presented as the climax or culmination of God's Mighty Works in the Old Testament (Bruce in New Bible Dictionary: Typology). Therefore, types are, in a sense, a vague kind of prophecy. Types teach us, how God works and saves. They prepare us, to recognize the person and Work of Christ. Many events in the Old Testament, were not recorded primarily for themselves, but for what they foreshadowed. They were images, in and through, which the Holy Spirit indicated, what was to come in the New Covenant) (Lampe 1957, p. 10). However, this does not mean, that typological events were not historical (Lampe 1957, p. 13). The presence of types, is a clear indication, of God, at work in history and that He divinely inspired the Old Testament writers, to record these typological events.

Typological study, is a necessity, if the full meaning of the New Testament, is to be grasped and appreciated. The interpreter needs to see the Old Testament Scripture through the eyes of the New Testament writers (Lampe 1957, p. 18-19). Although, the New Testament writers appear to attach strange and out of context meanings to Old Testament Scriptures, these meanings were assigned, under inspiration, and in the light of their experiences, of Christ (Klein et al. 1993, p. 131).

Generally, most types, are in the Old Testament and their anti-types, are in the New Testament. (Buchanan 1987, p. 3). In fact, most Old Testament types, are pictures of some aspect of the life of Christ (Kuske 1995, p. 99).

However, there are two archetypal epochs in the Old Testament: the creation and the Exodus from Egypt. The Exodus is viewed, as a new creation in the way that God constrained the waters, on both occasions (cf. Genesis 1:9f and Exodus 14:21-29) (Bruce in the New Bible Dictionary: Typology).

The restoration of Israel, from the Babylonian captivity, is viewed as, both a new creation and a new Exodus. The Hebrew words, used for God's workmanship, in Genesis 1 and 2, are the same ones used to describe the restoration (Isaiah 43:7f).

Also, as the Exodus generation was led by a cloud and fire, which moved behind them when threatened from the back, so also, the exiles received the promise, “The Lord will go before you and the God of Israel, will be your rear guard.” (Isaiah 52:12) (Bruce in the New Bible Dictionary: Typology).

Jesus and the New Testament authors, pointed out many types of Christ, including the High Priest (Hebrews 5), the Priest’s duties (Hebrews 10:1-22), the blood from animal sacrifices (Hebrews 13:11-13), the Old Testament sacrifices (Hebrews), the red heifer (Hebrews 9:13-14), the Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7), the Brazen Altar (Hebrews 13:10), the bowls of bronze (Ephesians 5:26-27), the Mercy Seat (Hebrews 4:16), the Veil (Hebrews 10:20), the manna (John 6:32-35), cities of refuge (Hebrews 6:18), the bronze serpent (John 3:14-15), the tree of life (John 1:4, Revelation 22:2), Adam (Romans 5:14, 1 Corinthians 15:45), Abel (Hebrews 12:24), Noah (2 Corinthians 1:5), Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:1-17), Moses (Acts 3:20-22, 7:37, Hebrews 3:2-6), David (Philippians 2:9), Eliakim (Revelation 3:7), and Jonah (Matthew 12:40).

3.2.2. *Limitations and Dangers*

Types have one point of comparison that serves to illustrate something about the anti-type (Kuske 1995, p. 100). Therefore, an interpreter must be extremely careful, not to ‘stretch’ the type, too far. They are not perfect pictures of the real thing, only rough sketches. For this reason, it is unwise to use types, as a basis for a doctrinal position.

4. Conclusion

The diversity of language and literary styles, used in the Bible, shows it to be a wonderful piece of literature, full of meaning and inspiration. If we approach figurative parts of the Bible, like parables, allegories, and types, with caution and treat their context with full respect, then we will avoid making many interpretive errors.

The parables must be interpreted, according to their function, not according to their allegorical elements. The task of interpreting a parable, becomes so much simpler

when its context is examined, in order to discover, the events that led up to the parable being told, the reason why the parable was told, and the effect it had on the original audience. This will highlight the parable's power, force, and function.

Allegories, although much less common in the Bible, serve to illustrate. They are usually interpreted, by the Biblical text, itself.

Types, serve to prepare people, for later events or people. They serve to illustrate, and also, to prophesy.

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Inspiration, Authority, and Interpretation

1. Introduction

The doctrine of Biblical Inspiration is fundamental to evangelical Christianity. Without this essential notion, the uniqueness and authority of the Bible, is destroyed. The Bible, just becomes one of many ancient books, and the truths of historic Christianity, are reduced to a collection of religious myths.

The doctrine of Inspiration, also implies, that the Bible is authoritative, for all humanity, in all aspects, of life. Unless the Bible is truly inspired, by God, there is no reason why it should be considered any more authoritative, than any other book. Francis Schaeffer, recognized that rejecting these two most fundamental doctrines, was an enormous problem and called it, The Great Evangelical Disaster (in The Complete Works 1982, vol. 5, pp. 320-321).

The purpose of this course, is to explore the meaning and implications, of these doctrines, and highlight how they relate to the hermeneutical task and how we apply these truths to our lives.

2. Biblical Inspiration

2.1 Inadequate Definitions

There are various theories of inspiration. These include, natural inspiration, which proposes Biblical authors, were merely, natural men that possessed a superior insight. Therefore, the Words of the Bible, are simply intense, elevated religious perceptions of the human author, like the writings of Aristotle and Socrates. Dynamic inspiration suggests, that God gave the Biblical authors the ability to communicate trustworthy religious truth, but didn't guarantee infallibility in matters of science and history. Another theory posits, that only the actual Words of Jesus, are inspired, and therefore, the rest of the Bible is only useful, for historical and literary study. The rest of the Bible only

expresses the author's and their community's interpretation of God and Jesus Christ. Existential inspiration is the idea, that the Bible contains the words of humans, which God can make His own, at the moment of personal encounter. The Biblical authors wrote about their encounters, with God, and incorporated into their writings, various supernatural myths and miraculous tales, to convey Spiritual truths. The interpreter's job, is to filter out all the mythical aspects, of the text, in order to discover what God's Spiritual message is, for humanity. Dictation inspiration, is the notion, that the Biblical authors, were merely, Spiritual secretaries, that listened to the Holy Spirit and wrote down everything He told them (Thiessen 1979, pp. 63-65) (Milne 1982, pp. 36-38).

2.2. Nature of Biblical Inspiration

The word, "inspiration" is a legacy of the rendering in the King James Version of the Greek word, *theopneustos* in 2 Timothy 3:16, which is a *hapax legoma* in the New Testament. The word literally means, God-breathed, so using the word, "inspiration" to describe this doctrine, is a little misleading. The idea, is God breathing out, rather than God breathing in (Packer, "Inspiration" in the New Bible Dictionary). Therefore, the New International Version, renders it as, "God breathed."

Thiessen (1979, p. 65), explains that inspiration, is the supernatural act of the Holy Spirit, guiding the Biblical authors, making use of their own personalities, to write what He wanted them to write and ensuring, that what they wrote, was accurate, reliable, and without error. The Holy Spirit guided the authors, in selecting which material to include and how that material was to be presented and arranged, according to that author's style and personality. Inspiration implies, the Bible is God's authoritative self-revelation (Milne 1982, p. 34). (Packer 1993, p. 3), calls the Scriptures "God's own testimony and teaching, in human form."

Many conservatives hold, that inspiration extends to the "very words" of Scripture (Thiessen 1979, p. 64, Geisler 1976, p. 362). The passages, most often quoted to support this, are Exodus 24:4, 2 Samuel 23:2, Matthew 4:4, and 1 Corinthians 2:13,

which speak of the Words of God. However, this view, not only borders on the dictation theory, it also disregards, the nature of language and communication, and the most recent linguistic research. There is a difference between a meaning and the word(s), used to express that meaning. Although words are used by Biblical authors to express a particular Spiritual meaning, communication is based on far more elaborate constructs, than individual words. The fact is, that all languages have several ways of expressing the same meaning, with different words. Rarely, do complex concepts consist of only one word (Black 1988, p. 123). In any case, the Greek word for “word,” is *logos* and may be rendered as “word,” “book,” “account,” “saying,” “speech,” or “message,” with the focus always being, on the content of what is being communicated (Louw & Nida 1989). Therefore, inspiration refers to God, inspiring the complete message of the Bible, rather than the “thoughts” or “words,” contained in it. It is the content of the words, that is inspired, not the words, themselves. This is how we may say, that a translation of the Bible, is virtually inspired, since only the original autographs, were actually, inspired. The original autographs, were penned in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Hellenistic Greek, but are now lost. However, the message content, is still present, in manuscript copies and translations.

2.3 Extent of Biblical Inspiration

Scripture, is essentially propositional truth, written by servants of God, as they were directed by the Spirit of God, in history (cf. 2 Peter 1:20). This includes every Scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments. The Bible is written revelation (Packer, “Inspiration” in the New Bible Dictionary) and the nature of this revelation, is what Schaeffer termed, “true truth.” (Schaeffer in Complete Works, v. 1, p. 218). It communicates God’s Word to humanity, truly, but not exhaustively (Schaeffer in Complete Works, v. 1, p. 100). So, everything in the Bible, is God’s Word to humanity and speaks truth about God Himself and about history and the cosmos (Schaeffer in Complete Works, v. 1, p. 263). This means, that wherever the Bible does speak about history and the cosmos, it is open to historical and scientific verification.

3. Biblical Authority

3.1 Nature of Biblical Authority

The nature of Biblical authority is two-fold: Intrinsic and Extrinsic (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 20).

Intrinsic authority, is what one possesses, due to who or what they are. A person with a gun, has intrinsic authority - they can enforce their demands. The laws of nature, also have intrinsic authority. The Intrinsic authority of the Bible, is derived from the fact that it is inspired - it is authoritative in matters of faith and practice, because it is the Word of the living God (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 20). We are obligated to take the Word of God in the Bible and make it God's Word to us (Marshall 1985, p. 336). Extrinsic authority, is what someone has, because it has been attributed to them. A politician or policeman has Extrinsic authority. Extrinsic authority relates to how people understand and respond to Scripture (Black & Dockery 1991, p.21).

Barr, (as quoted in Marshall 1985, p. 335-336), indicates there are two views of Biblical authority: Hard and Soft authority. Hard authority means, the Bible is authoritative before it is interpreted and that authority, is generally, applicable. This view is only appropriate, if the Biblical text is correctly interpreted. Soft authority means, the Bible is authoritative after interpretation and is limited to passages where authoritative effect is indicated. The problem with this view, is that it opens the door for the interpreter to interpret a text, in such a way, that it loses any authority, that it should have. It also opens the door for interpreters to interpret a text, anyway they like and then claim that their interpretation is authoritative. There is too much subjectivity involved.

According to the claims of the Biblical authors, the words they spoke and the words of the people they wrote about, were the authoritative Words of God. They also indicated, that it was these words were the only authority, and therefore, the highest authority (Exodus 4:22, 1 Samuel 15:2, Isaiah 3:16, Matthew 28:18, John 14:6, 2 Corinthians

10:8-9, Colossians 2:10). In matters of salvation, faith, and life, Jesus cites and follows Scripture, as a unique authority (Larkin 1988, p. 271). In fact, Jesus made no distinction between His own authority and that of the Scriptures (Schaeffer in Complete Works v. 1, p. 263).

3.2 Extent of Biblical Authority

The extent of Biblical authority is restricted to the message and principles the Biblical author and Holy Spirit intended to communicate (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 26). Twisted and theologically biased interpretations, are not authoritative (Thiessen 1979, p. 66). The authority of Biblical content, is also restricted, to the Biblical form and does not extend to any hypothetical pre-Biblical form (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 28).

Biblical authority, extends to the entire Biblical record, unless the context clearly shows, that this is not the case. All Scripture, is universally applicable, either directly or indirectly (Larkin 1988, p. 277). Although the Old Testament writings were written primarily about and to the Israelite nation, they are still authoritative in an indirect way and serve as examples and warnings (1 Corinthians 10:1-11). Also, Christ and the New Testament authors, often took Old Testament passages, and either reinforced them (Matthew 5:17-48) or reinterpreted them (Matthew 10:35-37, Romans 8:36, 1 Corinthians 14:21) (Marshall 1985, p. 338).

Sometimes the Bible contains records, that describe practices, rather than prescribe them. These records are not universally applicable (cf. Acts 2 & 15) (Marshall 1985, p. 344). In the Old Testament, a distinction needs to be made between moral, legal, and ceremonial aspects. In the New Testament, cultural and occasional elements are not authoritative (eg. Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 11). The precise application of the story of the Rich Young Ruler, by all Christians, would be silly, but the basic moral principle, is applicable to everyone. The Bible communicates eternal principles, rather than direct problems to current situations. These principles are authoritative when translated into the current age and culture, because human conduct, human nature, and human

relationships don't change (Marshall 1985, p. 345).

Ultimately, the issue is whether the authority of the Bible is translated into obedience. Scripture, is only really authoritative, when a person does what it says (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 21).

4. Inspiration, Authority, and Hermeneutics

The impact of the doctrines of inspiration and authority on hermeneutics are legion (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 21). If complete inspiration of the entire Biblical message is not accepted, then the Bible is no different from other great pieces of ancient literature. If this is the case, then why should it be interpreted any differently from other religious texts? Why should anyone believe what it says, is accurate and reliable? Why should it be accepted, in preference, to other religious writings? If the complete authority of the Bible is not accepted, then it is only useful as a subject of historical study. It contains no truth of any importance or relevance and should have no, or very little effect, on beliefs and practices. It also creates, a great deal of scope for speculation, about the author's theology and philosophy, their motivation and agenda, and their sources.

By rejecting inspiration and authority, people have found a way to remove the absolutes from the Bible, making it all relative. Many truths have been stripped out and labelled, as scientifically or historically incorrect or simply, cultural. Easy divorce and remarriage and order in the home and Church, are examples of this. Therefore, the Bible is made to echo, only what the current morality says, instead of standing as judge of this morality (Schaeffer in Complete Works v. 2, p. 147).

If we accept that the Bible is completely inspired by God, and absolutely authoritative, then we are also acknowledging its uniqueness. However, there are still a number of hermeneutical problems to deal with. How is the Bible to be interpreted and applied? How do we interpret the diversity of Biblical literature? What about the changes in world outlook and worldview between the authors and the modern readers? (Marshall 1985,

p. 335).

If God has caused His message to be recorded in the Bible, then we would expect Him to use communication, that is simple and understandable (i.e. propositional truth expressed in human language). Therefore, when we interpret the Bible, we must approach it as if it is God's plain Word to us, spoken through His prophets, in time-space history, and is to be taken literally and accepted completely, unless the context indicates otherwise. This notion, rules out ripping apart the text to discover the actual historical words used or reconstructing hypothetical sources, because the Bible is inspired and authoritative, as it is. This also rules out the rationalization of miracles and other supernatural events. Narratives, should be taken, as literal and historical, rather than analogized, unless the context indicates otherwise (eg. dreams and visions) because, unlike other religions, the Bible is rooted in history (Schaeffer, in Complete Works v. 1, p. 180, v. 2, p. 23-24).

People who go to the Bible for help, often find nothing which can be directly applied, to their situation. This is because the Bible communicates eternal, generic principles, rather than direct solutions to current problems (Marshall 1985, p. 347). Because God's message in the Bible, is eternal and generic, it is authoritative at all times and in all circumstances.

Although the Bible is to be accepted completely and literally as propositional truth, it does not always act as a referential standard (Larkin 1988, p. 282). The Bible does not contain an exhaustive list of laws to be obeyed. It would be impossible to be completely exhaustive (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 155-156). Rather, the Bible contains many models, principles, and paradigms, that can be generically applied to many different situations (Larkin 1988, p. 282). This is demonstrated, by Paul, telling Churches to pass around his letters (Colossians 4:16) and by the Old Testament, serving as an example (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Although the Bible was written between 2 and 4 thousand years ago, it is still

possible, for the same message to be communicated to a different audience, in a different time. This is due to the adequacy of human language to communicate divine revelation and the nature of truth and meaning. This is shown, by the way, the New Testament used the Old Testament (Romans 3:9-18, Galatians 3:7-9) (Larkin 1988, p. 280).

5. The Hermeneutical Task

The goal of hermeneutics is not to find what no-one else has ever found before, but to discover the 'plain meaning,' of the text. However, an interpretation, may seem unique, to those who have not seen it before (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 14).

The plain meaning of a text, is not always plain to everyone and interpretation is not a trivial exercise. Everyone who reads the Bible is an interpreter, whether they like it or not. People tend to think, that our understanding of the Bible, is the same as the Holy Spirit's and the human author's intent. We fail to see, that everyone brings to the Bible their own culture, personal experiences, pre-understandings of words and ideas, and their own theological/philosophical presuppositions. If we aren't aware of this, it may lead us astray or cause us to read thoughts and ideas, into the text, that aren't actually there (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 14).

In communicating His message, God used virtually every kind of available form of communication, including historical narratives, genealogies, chronicles, laws, poetry and songs, proverbs, prophetic oracles, riddles, dramas, biographical sketches, parables, letters, sermons, apocalypse, dreams, and visions. Therefore, to understand what God is communicating, it is necessary to learn, not just general principles of interpretation, but also, specific rules for each different form. It is also necessary, to understand how these different forms function, in communicating God's Word (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 19-20).

Interpretation is demanded, because of the 'tension' between the Bible's eternal

relevance and its historical peculiarity (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 17). Every Biblical book is conditioned by the language, time, and culture, in which, it was written. Because we are so far removed from that time, culture and language, hermeneutics is vitally important. In order to truly understand what God's Word is to us, we need to understand what God's Word was, to the original audience (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 18-19).

6. Guidelines for Sound Biblical Interpretation

6.1 Genre

Genre refers to the 'type' of the literature. In the Bible, the following major types are found: historical narratives, legal writings, prophetic oracles, wisdom writings, Psalms, Gospels, letters, and apocalypse. The Gospels also include various subtypes such as parables, sermons, and miracles or pronouncement stories. The type of a text has a significant effect on the way it should be interpreted. Commands in historical narratives, are not universally applicable. Letters are occasional and its text must be read with respect to its context. The apocalypse is full of symbology. All this impacts interpretation (Klein et al. 1993, p. 259-374).

6.2 Historical Context

Historical context, includes the occasion and purpose for writing the book and the social cultural and political background and geography. Understanding the historical context aids in understanding the nature, force, and content of the message (Klein et al. 1993, p. 172-179).

6.3 Literary Context

This is one of the most crucial tasks. Words only have unambiguous meaning in sentences, and sentences often only have unambiguous meaning, when set in relation to surrounding sentences. It is important to trace the author's train of thought and determine why they wrote a particular paragraph or sentence, and what contribution it

makes to the overall text. Many erroneous doctrines have come about, by not reading verses and paragraphs, in their context (Klein et al. 1993, p. 155-172).

6.4 Content

Content, is what the text actually says, or communicates. In order to determine what is being communicated, key words need to be identified and examined to determine their meaning, in this current context. Objects, people, places, and concepts referenced, need to be understood in the same way as the original audience. Grammatical relationships, must be noted, and any cause/effect, reason/result, conditions, questions, or commands must be analyzed (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 24).

6.5 General Principles

The Bible should always be approached with the assumption that it is inspired, inerrant, and authoritative. Always compare Scripture with Scripture, because the best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture. The two Testaments form a complete unit and must be interpreted in the light of one another. Total reliance on the Holy Spirit, is essential for correct interpretation. All Scripture should be taken literally, unless the context indicates otherwise. Scripture cannot mean what it never meant, when it was written. There is only one meaning in any one Scripture, although there may be multiple applications. Always be aware of the presuppositions we bring to the text. These are unavoidable, but awareness of them, usually prevents subjective interpretation (Pacific College 1989, p. 86-87).

7. Conclusion

The Bible is God's authoritative Word to humanity, set in history. It is understandable, eternally relevant, always applicable and completely sufficient for all our Spiritual, philosophical and psychological needs, although it does not always satisfy our curiosities. But, it is when the Bible is read, understood, and obeyed, that it truly becomes the inspired and authoritative Word of God.

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The Difference between Event and Text and the Interpreter's Task

As one studies, more closely, the science and art of Biblical interpretation, one is increasingly confronted with concerns, of which, he was hitherto, ignorant. Though at first glance, some of these aspects of interpretation may seem insignificant, further scrutiny reveals, that they must be thoughtfully considered in order to faithfully apply oneself to the task of understanding the Bible. Such is the case with the question, "Is the event or the text, the proper object of interpretation?" The answer, as it shall be demonstrated, is that the Biblical text is the vehicle that contains the actual message of God and ought to be the focus of the interpreter's study.

We understand the term, "event," to mean, the historical circumstance that occurred, be it the slaughter of Abel, the Exodus of Israel, or the resurrection of Jesus Christ. By "text," then, we mean, the actual written record of said event, captured through the personality and literary style of its chronicler. The author had a specific purpose in mind, when he recorded the event that is recoverable, not through examination of the *event*, which we do not possess, but only through examination of the *text itself*, which we do.

By narrowly approaching the event and neglecting the text in our study of Scripture, one can easily be fooled into thinking that he, "knows all there is to know" about a given occurrence. He is assured that his understanding of the story is complete; in fact, he may have read or heard the story of a particular Biblical event, hundreds of times! With little or no consideration given to the event, as contained in the message itself, however, the interpreter misses out on vital information, to aid him, in understanding the author's purpose.

There is only one literary genre, to which, this principle is applicable: the historical narrative. The problem arises from the reader's tendency to view the account, as mere history. With such a presupposition as a foundation, the reader feels that he is getting "the bare facts" of a Biblical narrative. In reality, though, he is missing the very essence of the Biblical account. The careful interpreter must realize, that historical narratives were written using certain literary forms and are found within a larger context.

Suppose for a moment, that one attends just one scene of a play, and then promptly, exits the theatre. From his limited frame of reference, as he recounts what he has observed to others, he could easily come to believe that there is nothing more to know, save what happened in the scene, he witnessed. Of course, the scene is contained within the act, and the act, in turn, is an integral part of the larger whole - the play. Character, setting, plot, climax, denouement, and the overall message of the dramatic work - all these are lost upon the man, who chooses to view only the "one scene."

In the Book of Numbers, we find an episode, in which, a man was gathering wood on the Sabbath day. After consulting the Lord for judgment, Moses and Aaron directed the Israelites to take the man outside of the camp and stone him to death (Numbers 15:32-36). If an interpreter were to view, only the stoning itself, he would miss the entire point of the passage. The narrative is found in the larger context of instruction, regarding sacrifices for unintentional and inadvertent sin, under the Mosaic Law (15:22-31). It had been provided by the author, in anticipation, of the inevitable question, "What about those who sin deliberately? Does the law prescribe anything for them?" Moses provided the answer, in the form of a narrative. The true meaning, of this passage, would be lost, then, if one merely chooses the event, as the object of interpretation.

It has been said, that "the issue is not what Jesus actually said. What matters, is what the Gospel writers meant, when they recorded Jesus' Words." Typically, a Christian's gut-level reaction to these seemingly appalling words, is to reel in shock, horror, and disgust - aghast at the prospect of cheapening the red-letter Words of Christ. In order to conduct accurate exegesis, the Bible student must realize, that (since

he does not have access to them), “meaning,” does not reside in the ethereal vibrations, that were spoken by the Saviour two millennia ago; rather, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John quoted Jesus, in differing contexts and for differing purposes, to advance distinct truths. It is only through careful examination of the Biblical text that we possess,

that one can discern the intended meaning of the writer, of the account. Are we, in fact, guilty of lessening the importance of the Words of the Lord Jesus Christ? On the contrary, it is only when we focus on the Biblical text, instead of the event that we discover what the true author - the Divine author, who inspired its writing - meant.

An Introduction to Logic and Logical Argument

1. Introduction

There is a lot of very poor argument in modern Biblical studies (and other fields, as well, no doubt), even from very well-known and high profile scholars. This document attempts, to provide a basic introduction to logic, in order, to guide readers in constructing a careful, logical, argument that can stand up to scrutiny, as well as, helping readers to spot poor and invalid arguments.

Logic is the science of reasoning, proof, thinking, or inference [Concise OED]. Logic will let you analyze an argument or a piece of reasoning, and work out whether it is correct or not. To use the technical terms, logic lets you work out whether the reasoning, is valid or invalid.

Note also, that this document deals only with simple Boolean logic. Other sorts of mathematical logic, such as fuzzy logic, obey different rules. When people talk about logical arguments, though, they usually mean the type, being described here.

One problem with Boolean logic, is that people don't have to be consistent in their goals and desires. People use fuzzy logic and non-logical reasoning, to handle their conflicting goals; Boolean logic isn't good enough. For example:

“John wishes to speak to the person in charge. The person in charge, is Steve. Therefore, John wishes to speak to Steve.”

Logically, that's a totally valid argument. However, John may have a conflicting goal of avoiding Steve, meaning that the answer obtained by logical reasoning, may be inapplicable, to real life. Garlic tastes good, strawberry ice cream tastes good, but strawberry garlic ice cream, is only logically, a good idea.

Sometimes, principles of valid reasoning, which were thought to be universal, have turned out to be false. For example, for a long time, the principles of Euclidean geometry, were thought, to be universal laws.

However, keeping those caveats and limitations in mind, let's go on to consider the basics of Boolean logic.

2. Basic concepts

The building blocks of a logical argument are propositions, also called statements. A proposition, is a statement, which is either, true or false. For example:

“The first Holden car was built in 1948.”

“Ginger cats are always male,”

“Canberra is the capital of Australia.”

Propositions, may be either, asserted (said to be true) or denied (said to be false).

Note: This is a technical meaning of the word, “deny,” not the everyday meaning.

When a proposition has been asserted, based on some argument, we usually say, that it has been affirmed.

The proposition, is generally viewed, as the meaning of the statement, and not the particular arrangement of words used. So, “An even prime number, greater than two, exists” and “There exists, an even prime number, greater than two,” both express the same (false) proposition.

Sometimes, however, it is better to consider the wording of the proposition, as significant, and use linguistic rules, to derive equivalent statements, if necessary.

3. What is an argument?

There are three stages to an argument: premises, inference, and conclusion.

Stage 1: Premises

For the argument to get anywhere, you need one or more initial propositions. These initial statements are called, the premises of the argument, and must be stated, explicitly.

You can think of the premises, as the reasons for accepting the argument, or the evidence it's built on. Premises, are often indicated by phrases, such as "because," "since," "let's assume," and so on.

Stage 2: Inference

Next, the argument continues, step by step, in a process called, inference.

In inference, you start with one or more propositions, which have been accepted. You then use those propositions, to arrive at a new proposition. The new proposition can, of course, be used in later stages of inference.

There are various kinds of valid inference -- and also some invalid kinds, but we'll get to those later. Inference, is often denoted, by phrases such as, "implies that" or "therefore."

Stage 3: Conclusion

Finally, you arrive at the conclusion of the argument, another proposition.

The conclusion, is often stated, as the final stage of inference. The conclusion, is affirmed on the basis the original premises, and the inference, from them.. Conclusions, are often indicated, by phrases such as, “therefore,” “it follows that,” “we conclude,” and so on.

Note that the phrase, “obviously,” is often viewed with suspicion, as it gets used to intimidate people into accepting things which aren’t true, at all. If something doesn’t seem obvious to you, don’t be afraid to question it. You can always say, “Oh, yes, you’re right, it is obvious,” when you’ve heard the explanation.

4. Types of argument

There are two traditional types of logical argument: deductive and inductive.

1. A **deductive** argument, is one which provides conclusive proof, of its conclusions. It is either valid or invalid. A valid deductive argument, is defined as one, where if the premises are true, then the conclusion, must also be true.

2. An **inductive** argument, is one where the premises provide some evidence, for the truth of the conclusion. Inductive arguments, are not valid or invalid, but we can talk about whether they are better or worse, than other arguments. We can also discuss, how likely their premises are.

There are forms of argument, in ordinary language, which are neither deductive, nor inductive. However, we’ll concentrate on deductive arguments, as they are often viewed, as the most rigorous and convincing. Here is an example of a deductive argument:

- * Premise: Every event has a cause
- * Premise: The universe has a beginning

- * Premise: All beginnings involve an event
- * Inference: This implies that the beginning of the universe involved an event
- * Inference: Therefore, the beginning of the universe had a cause
- * Conclusion: The universe had a cause

Note that the conclusion of one argument might be a premise, in another argument. A proposition, can only be a premise or a conclusion of a particular argument; the terms don't make sense in isolation.

5. Recognizing an argument

Sometimes, arguments won't follow the order, described above. For instance, the conclusions might be stated first, and the premises stated afterwards, in support of the conclusion. This is perfectly valid, if sometimes, a little confusing.

Arguments are harder to recognize, than premises or conclusions. Lots of people shower their writing with assertions, without ever producing anything you might reasonably, call an argument.

To make the situation worse, some statements look like arguments, but are not. For example: "If the Bible is accurate, Jesus must either, have been insane, an evil liar, or the Son of God."

The statement above, isn't an argument; it's a conditional statement. It doesn't assert the premises, which are needed, to support what looks like, its conclusion. (Even if you add those assertions, it still suffers from a number of other logical flaws).

Here's another example:

"God created you; therefore, obey and worship God."

The phrase, “obey and worship God” is neither, true nor false. Therefore, it isn’t a proposition, and the sentence isn’t an argument.

Causality is important, as well. Suppose we’re trying to argue, that there’s something wrong with the engine of a car. Let’s look at two statements of the form, “A because B.” Here’s the first:

“The car won’t start, because there’s something wrong with the engine.”

That’s not an argument, for there being something wrong with the engine; it’s an explanation of why the car won’t start. We’re explaining A, using B, as the explanation.

Now consider a second statement:

“There must be something wrong with the engine of the car, because it won’t start.”

Here we’re arguing for A, giving B, as evidence. The statement, “A because B,” is an argument.

The difference between the two cases, might not be completely clear. So, remember that, “A because B,” is equivalent to “B therefore, A.” The two statements then become:

“There’s something wrong with the engine, therefore, the car won’t start.”

And:

“The car won’t start, therefore, there’s something wrong with the engine.”

We’re supposed to be arguing, that there’s something wrong with the engine, but now it’s obvious, that the first statement doesn’t do that at all. Only the second statement, is arguing that there’s something wrong with the engine.

6. Implication

There's one very important thing to remember:

The fact that, a deductive argument is valid, doesn't necessarily mean, that its conclusion holds.

That may seem confusing, but it's because of the slightly counter-intuitive nature of how implication works.

Obviously, you can build a valid argument out of true propositions. But, you can also build, a completely valid argument using only false propositions. For example:

- * All insects have wings (premise)
- * Termites are insects (premise)
- * Therefore, termites have wings (conclusion)

The conclusion isn't true, because the argument's premises are false. If the argument's premises were true, however, the conclusion would be true. So, the argument, is entirely, valid.

More subtly, you can reach a true conclusion from false premises -- even ludicrously false ones:

- * All fish live in the ocean (premise)
- * Sea otters are fish (premise)
- * Therefore, sea otters live in the ocean (conclusion)

However, there's one thing you can't do: start with true premises, go through a valid deductive argument, and arrive at a false conclusion.

Look at the following truth table:

	Premise A A	Conclusion B B	Inference A=>B A=>B
1.	False	False	True
2.	False	True	True
3.	True	False	False
4.	True	True	True

* If the premises are false and the inference valid, the conclusion can be true or false. (Lines 1 and 2.)

* If the premises are true and the conclusion false, the inference must be invalid. (Line 3.)

* If the premises are true and the inference valid, the conclusion must be true. (Line 4.)

A sound argument is a valid argument whose premises are true. A sound argument, therefore arrives at a true conclusion. Be careful not to confuse sound arguments with valid arguments.

Ultimately, the conclusion of a valid, logical, argument is only as compelling, as the basic premises it is derived from. Logic, in itself, does not solve the problem of verifying the basic assertions, which support arguments. The only way to verify basic assertions, is by scientific enquiry.

7. Fallacies

In everyday English, the word, “fallacy” is used to refer to mistaken beliefs, as well as, to the faulty reasoning that leads to those beliefs. In logic, the term, is generally used, for a form of technically incorrect argument -- especially if the argument appears valid or convincing.

So, for the purposes of this discussion, a fallacy is a logical argument which looks correct, but which can be seen to be incorrect, when examined more carefully. If fallacies are recognized, they can be pointed out as being fallacious, and will therefore, be less likely to mislead people.

Below is a list of some common fallacies, and also some rhetorical devices, often used, in debate. The list isn't intended to be exhaustive.

Many of the examples below are commonly found, though some have been rephrased, for the sake of clarity.

Anecdotal evidence

One of the simplest fallacies, is to rely on anecdotal evidence. For example:

“Violent crime is on the increase, because you hear a lot more about it on the news

these days.”

It's quite valid, to use personal experience to illustrate a point; but, such anecdotes don't really prove anything to anyone. Your friend may say, he met Elvis in the supermarket, but those who haven't had the same experience, will require more than your friend's anecdotal evidence, to convince them.

Argumentum ad baculum/Appeal to force

An Appeal to Force happens when someone resorts to force (or the threat of force) to try and push others to accept a conclusion. This fallacy, is often used by politicians, and can be summarized as, “might makes right.” The threat doesn't have to come directly from the person arguing. For example:

“If you don't turn to Jesus Christ, you'll burn in Hell.”

“...In any case, I know your phone number and I know where you live. Have I mentioned, I am licensed to carry concealed weapons?”

Argumentum ad hominem

Argumentum ad Hominem, literally means, “argument directed at the man.” There are two types, abusive and circumstantial.

If you argue against some assertion by attacking the person who made the assertion, then you have committed the abusive form of argumentum ad hominem. A personal attack isn't a valid argument, because the truth of an assertion doesn't depend on the virtues of the person asserting it. For example:

“No intelligent person could believe in Creation.”

Sometimes, in a court of law, doubt is cast on the testimony of a witness. For example, the prosecution might show, that the witness is a known perjurer. This is a

valid way of reducing the credibility of the testimony given by the witness, and not Argumentum ad Hominem. However, it doesn't demonstrate that the witness's testimony is false.

If you argue that someone should accept the truth of an assertion, because of that person's particular circumstances, then you have committed the circumstantial form of argumentum ad hominem. For example:

"It is perfectly acceptable to kill animals for food. How can you argue, otherwise, when you're quite happy to wear leather shoes?"

This is an abusive charge of inconsistency, used as an excuse for dismissing the opponent's argument. The fallacy, can also be used, as a means of rejecting a particular conclusion. For example:

"Of course, you would argue, that positive discrimination, is a bad thing. You're white."

This particular form of Argumentum ad Hominem, when you allege that someone is rationalizing a conclusion for selfish reasons, is also known as "poisoning the well."

Argumentum ad ignorantiam

Argumentum ad ignorantiam, means "argument from ignorance." The fallacy occurs, when it's argued that something must be true, simply because, it hasn't been proved false. Or, equivalently, when it is argued, that something must be false, because it hasn't been proved true. (Note, that this isn't the same as assuming that something is false, until it has been proved true; that's a basic scientific principle). For example:

"Of course, telepathy and other psychic phenomena do not exist. Nobody has shown any proof that they are real."

Note, that this fallacy doesn't apply in a court of law, where you're generally assumed innocent, until proven guilty.

Argumentum ad misericordiam

This is the Appeal to Pity, also known as *Special Pleading*. The fallacy is committed, when someone appeals to pity, for the sake of getting a conclusion accepted. For example:

"I did not murder my mother and father with an axe! Please don't find me guilty; I'm suffering enough, through being an orphan."

Argumentum ad populum

This is known as Appealing to the Gallery, or Appealing to the People. You commit this fallacy, if you attempt to win acceptance of an assertion by appealing to a large group of people. This form of fallacy, is often characterized by emotive language. For example:

"If we allow religion in schools, all our children will get brain-washed."

Argumentum ad numerum

This fallacy, is closely related to the argumentum ad populum. It consists of asserting that the more people who support or believe a proposition, the more likely it is that, that proposition is correct. For example:

"The vast majority of people, in this country, believe that capital punishment has a noticeable deterrent effect. To suggest that it doesn't, in the face of so much evidence, is ridiculous." "All I'm saying is that, thousands of people believe in pyramid power, so there must be something to it."

Argumentum ad verecundiam

The Appeal to Authority uses admiration of a famous person to try and win support for an assertion. For example:

“Bultmann didn’t believe in a physical resurrection of Christ.”

This line of argument, isn’t always completely bogus; it may be relevant to refer to a widely-regarded authority, in a particular field, if you’re discussing that subject. For example: we can distinguish quite clearly between:

“Hawking has concluded, that black holes give off radiation”

and

“Penrose has concluded, that it is impossible to build an intelligent computer”

Hawking is a physicist, and so we can reasonably expect his opinions on black hole radiation, to be informed. Penrose is a mathematician, so it is questionable, whether he is well-qualified to speak on the subject of machine intelligence.

Argumentum ad antiquities

This is the fallacy of asserting, that something is right or good, simply because, it’s old, or because, “that’s the way it’s always been.” The opposite of Argumentum ad Novitatem. “This interpretation has been accepted, for hundreds of years. It must be correct.”

Argumentum ad novitatem

This is the opposite of the Argumentum ad Antiquitatem; it's the fallacy of asserting, that something is more correct, simply because, it is new or newer than something else.

Argumentum ad crumenam

The fallacy of believing, that money is a criterion of correctness; that those with more money are more likely, to be right. The opposite of Argumentum ad Lazarum.

Argumentum ad lazarum

The fallacy of assuming, that someone poor is sounder or more virtuous, than someone who's wealthier. This fallacy is the opposite of the Argumentum ad Crumenam.

Argumentum ad nauseam

This is the incorrect belief, that an assertion is more likely to be true, or is more likely, to be accepted as true, the more often it is heard. So, an Argumentum ad Nauseam, is one that employs constant repetition in asserting something; saying the same thing over and over again, until you're sick of hearing it.

This is a common technique, used by preachers (usually with a very shaky argument!).

The fallacy of accident/Sweeping generalization/Dicto simpliciter

A sweeping generalization occurs when a general rule is applied to a particular situation, but the features of that particular situation mean, the rule is inapplicable. It's the error made, when you go from the general to the specific. For example:

“Most aborigines have been in trouble with the law. You are an aborigine, so you must have been in trouble with the law, as well.”

This fallacy, is often committed by people who try to decide moral and legal questions, by mechanically applying general rules.

Converse accident/Hasty generalization

This fallacy is the reverse of the Fallacy of Accident. It occurs, when you form a general rule by examining only a few specific cases, which aren't representative of all possible cases. For example:

“Jim Bakker was an insincere, immoral Christian. Therefore, all Christians, are insincere.”

Non causa pro causa

The fallacy of Non Causa Pro Causa, occurs when something is identified as the cause of an event, but it has not actually been shown to be the cause. For example:

“I took an aspirin and prayed to God, and my headache disappeared. So, God cured me of the headache.”

This is known, as a false cause fallacy.

Post hoc ergo propter hoc

The fallacy of Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc, occurs when something is assumed to be the cause of an event, merely because, it happened before that event. This is another type of false cause fallacy.

Cum hoc ergo propter hoc

This fallacy, is similar to post hoc ergo propter hoc. The fallacy is to assert, that because two events occur together, they must be causally related. It's a fallacy, because it ignores other factors, that may be the cause(s) of the events.

Petitio principii/Begging the question

This fallacy occurs, when the premises are at least as questionable, as the conclusion reached. For example:

“Aliens are abducting innocent victims every week. The government must know what is going on. Therefore, the government is in league with the aliens.”

Circulus in demonstrando

This fallacy occurs if you assume, as a premise, the conclusion which you wish to reach. Often, the proposition is rephrased, so that the fallacy appears to be a valid argument. For example:

“Real scientists are evolutionists. Evolutionists propose scientific theories of evolution. Therefore, real scientists are evolutionists.”

Note, that the argument, is entirely circular. Circular arguments, are surprisingly common, unfortunately. If you've already reached a particular conclusion once, it's easy to accidentally make it an assertion, when explaining your reasoning to someone else.

Complex question/Fallacy of interrogation/Fallacy of presupposition

This is the interrogative form of Begging the Question. One example is the classic loaded question: “Have you stopped beating your wife?” The question presupposes a

definite answer to another question, which has not even, been asked. This trick, is often used by lawyers in cross-examination, when they ask questions like: “Where did you hide the money you stole?”

Similarly, politicians often ask loaded questions, such as: “How long will this EU interference in our affairs be allowed to continue?” or “Does the Prime Minister plan two more years of ruinous privatization?” Another form of this fallacy, is to ask for an explanation of something which is untrue or not yet established.

Ignoratio elenchi/Irrelevant conclusion

The fallacy of Irrelevant Conclusion consists of claiming that an argument supports a particular conclusion, when it is actually, logically, nothing to do with that conclusion.

For example, a Buddhist may begin by saying that he will argue that the teachings of the Buddhas, are undoubtedly true. If he then argues, at length, that Buddhism is of great help to many people, no matter how well he argues, he will not have shown that Buddhist teachings, are true. Sadly, such fallacious arguments, are often successful, because they arouse emotions which cause others to view supposed conclusion, in a favorable light.

Equivocation/Fallacy of four terms

Equivocation occurs when a key word is used with two or more different meanings in the same argument. For example:

“What could be more affordable than free software? But, to make sure that it remains free, that users can do what they like with it, we must place a license on it, to make sure, that it will always be freely redistributable.”

One way to avoid this fallacy, is to choose your terminology carefully, before

beginning the argument, and avoid words, like “free,” which have many meanings.

Amphiboly

Amphiboly occurs when the premises used, in an argument, are ambiguous because of careless or ungrammatical phrasing.

Accent

Accent is another form of fallacy through shifting meaning. In this case, the meaning is changed by altering which parts of a statement are emphasized.

For example, consider:

“We should not speak *ill* of our friends”

and

“We should not speak ill of our *friends*”

Be particularly wary of this fallacy, in written communication, where it’s easy to mis-read the emphasis of what’s written.

Fallacies of composition

One Fallacy of Composition, is to conclude that a property, shared by the parts of something, must apply to the whole. For example:

“The bicycle is made entirely of low mass components, and is therefore, very lightweight.”

The other fallacy of Composition, is to conclude that a property of a number of

individual items, is shared by a collection of those items. For example:

“A car uses less petrol and causes less pollution, than a bus. Therefore, cars are less environmentally damaging, than buses.

Fallacy of division

The fallacy of division is the opposite of the Fallacy of Composition. Like its opposite, it exists in two varieties. The first, is to assume that a property of something must apply to its parts. For example:

“You are studying at a rich college. Therefore, you must be rich.”

The other, is to assume that a property of a collection of items, is shared by each item. For example:

“Ants can destroy a tree. Therefore, this ant can destroy a tree.”

The slippery slope argument

This argument states, that should one event occur, so will other harmful events. There is no proof made, that the harmful events are caused, by the first event. For example:

“If we allow people to sing anything other than hymns, in Church, then we'll start having rock bands, then heavy-metal bands, then the whole place will turn into disco.”

“A is based on B” fallacies/“...is a type of...” fallacies/Fallacy of the Undistributed Middle

These fallacies occur if you attempt to argue, that things are in some way, similar, but you don't actually specify, in what way, they are similar. Examples:

“Isn’t history based upon faith? If so, then isn’t the Bible, also a form of history?”

“Islam is based on faith, Christianity is based on faith, so isn’t Islam a form of Christianity?”

“Cats are a form of animal, based on carbon chemistry, dogs are a form of animal, based on carbon chemistry, so aren’t dogs a form of cat?”

Affirmation of the consequent

This fallacy is an argument of the form “A implies B, B is true, therefore A, is true.” To understand why it is a fallacy, examine the truth table for implication given earlier. Here’s an example:

“If I fall into the swimming pool, I get wet. I am wet, so I must have fallen into the swimming pool.”

This is the converse of Denial of the Antecedent.

Denial of the antecedent

This fallacy, is an argument of the form “A implies B, A is false, therefore B is false.” The truth table for implication, makes it clear why this is a fallacy.

Note, that this fallacy is different from Non Causa Pro Causa. That has the form “A implies B, A is false, therefore B is false,” where A does not, in fact, imply B, at all. Here, the problem isn’t that the implication is invalid; rather, it’s that the falseness of A doesn’t allow us to deduce anything about B.

“If I fall into the swimming pool, I get wet. I did not fall into the swimming pool, therefore I am not wet.”

This is the converse of the fallacy of Affirmation of the Consequent.

Converting a conditional

This fallacy is an argument of the form, “If A then B, therefore, if B then A.”

“If educational standards are lowered, the quality of argument, seen on the Internet, worsens. So, if we see the level of debate, on the net, get worse over the next few years, we’ll know that our educational standards are still falling.”

“If it’s raining outside and I don’t have an umbrella, I get wet. So, if I get wet, then it’s raining outside and I don’t have an umbrella.”

This fallacy is similar to the Affirmation of the Consequent, but phrased as a conditional statement.

Bifurcation

Also referred to, as the “black and white” fallacy, bifurcation occurs, if you present a situation as having only two alternatives, where in fact, other alternatives exist or can exist.

Plurium interrogationum/Many questions

This fallacy occurs when someone demands a simple (or simplistic) answer to a complex question.

Non sequitur

A non sequitur is an argument where the conclusion is drawn from premises which aren’t logically connected with it. For example:

“Since Egyptians did so much excavation to construct the pyramids, they were well versed in paleontology.”

Red herring

This fallacy is committed when someone introduces irrelevant material to the issue being discussed, so that everyone else’s attention, is diverted away from the points made, towards a different conclusion.

Reification/Hypostatization

Reification occurs, when an abstract concept is treated as a concrete thing.

Shifting the burden of proof

The burden of proof, is always on the person asserting something. Shifting the burden of proof, a special case of Argumentum ad Ignorantiam, is the fallacy of putting the burden of proof on the person who denies or questions the assertion. The source of the fallacy, is the assumption that something is true, unless proven otherwise.

“OK, so if you don’t think aliens have gained control of the US government, can you prove it?”

It should be noted though, that if no “proof” can be offered for a particular assertion, that in no way implies the assertion is not true. There is a danger in any form of “positivism,” which holds that ONLY propositions, that can be proved beyond doubt, should be accepted, as true.

Straw man

The straw man fallacy, is when you misrepresent someone else’s position so that it

can be attacked more easily, then knock down that misrepresented position, then conclude that the original position has been demolished. It's a fallacy, because it fails to deal with the actual arguments that have been made.

“Textual criticism is wrong, because it is inconsistent. Aleph and B are accepted as the best manuscripts available, but they disagree, so often, in the Gospels.”

The above is straw man argument, because the person that uses this kind of argument, does not really understand Textual Criticism. Textual decisions, are very complex and are not simply, a matter of manuscript preference. Aleph and B disagree in the Gospels, because B is Alexandrian whereas Aleph, is Western, in the Gospels and Alexandrian in the rest of the NT.

The extended analogy

The fallacy of the Extended Analogy, often occurs when some suggested general rule is being argued over. The fallacy is to assume that mentioning two different situations, in an argument about a general rule, constitutes a claim, that those situations are analogous to each other.

This fallacy is best explained using a real example from a debate about anti-cryptography legislation:

“I believe it is always wrong to oppose the law by breaking it,”

“Such a position is odious: it implies that you would not have supported Martin Luther King.”

“Are you saying that cryptography legislation, is as important, as the struggle for Black liberation? How dare you!”

Tu quoque

This is the famous “you too” fallacy. It occurs if you argue that an action is acceptable, because your opponent, has performed it. For instance:

“You’re just being randomly abusive.”

“So? You’ve been abusive too.”

This is a personal attack, and is therefore, a special case of Argumentum ad Hominem.

Audiatur et altera pars

Often, people will argue from assumptions, which they don’t bother to state. The principle of Audiatur et Altera Pars, is that all of the premises of an argument should be stated explicitly. It’s not strictly a fallacy to fail to state all of your assumptions; however, it’s often viewed with suspicion.

For example, many scholars reject the doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy. This will, of course, dramatically affect their reasoning and conclusions.

Ad hoc

There is a difference between argument and explanation. If we’re interested in establishing A, and B is offered as evidence, the statement “A because B,” is an argument. If we’re trying to establish the truth of B, then “A because B,” is not an argument, it’s an explanation. The Ad Hoc fallacy, is to give an after-the-fact explanation, which doesn’t apply to other situations. Often, this ad hoc explanation will be dressed up to look like an argument.

For example, if we assume that God treats all people equally, then the following is an ad hoc explanation:

“I was healed from cancer.”

“Praise the Lord, then. He is your healer - so, will He heal others who have cancer?”

“Er... The ways of God are mysterious.”

Argumentum ad logicam

This is the “fallacy fallacy” of arguing that a proposition is false, because it has been presented as the conclusion of a fallacious argument. Remember always, that fallacious arguments can arrive at true conclusions.

“Take the fraction $16/64$. Now, canceling a 6 on top and a six on the bottom, we get that $16/64 = 1.4$.”

“Wait a second! You can’t just cancel the six!”

“Oh, so you’re telling us $16/64$, is not equal to $\frac{1}{4}$, are you?”

The “No True Scotsman...” fallacy.

Suppose I assert, that no Scotsman puts sugar on his porridge. You counter this by pointing out, that your friend, Angus likes sugar with his porridge. I then say, “Ah, yes, but no true Scotsman puts sugar on his porridge. This is an example of an ad hoc change being used, to shore up an assertion, combined with an attempt, to shift the meaning of the words, used assertion. You might call it, a combination of fallacies.

What is the Relationship of Reason to Revelation?

Reason and revelation. To many Christians, the two terms seem contradictory. The word, “reason” sends chills up and down some spines, because it is seen to oppose faith and the miraculous. Other Christians welcome reason and treat it as a gift from God, to be used to its fullest extent. The fact of the matter, is that Christians have several viewpoints, concerning the relationship between revelation and reason. Some, completely eliminate one or the other from their belief-system, others tend to lean more heavily toward one over the other, while others treat both, with equal emphasis. We could term the various positions, as “Revelation Only,” “Reason Only,” “Revelation Over Reason,” “Reason over Revelation,” or “Revelation and Reason.”

The first hurdle to overcome, in any discussion, is the defining of terms. “Reason,” is the natural ability of the human mind to discover and process truth. “Revelation,” is the supernatural disclosure of truth, by God, which could not otherwise, be discovered by the unaided powers of human reason. Let us examine and evaluate the five views of the relationship of revelation to reason.

Revelation Only

Soren Kierkegard argued, that since man is fallen and in a state of rebellion and isolation from God, he cannot understand God’s truth without revelation. God is transcendent. As such, His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9). The ways of God are past finding out (Romans 11:33). God is wholly other than man, so attempting to understand the truth of God with man’s reasoning ability, is futile. God is not irrational, but supranational and beyond the scrutiny or testability of human reason.

He further argued, that reason can only reject the absurd or irrational, but it cannot be of any positive benefit, in discovering divine truth. We need to take a “leap of faith,” beyond rationality, to believe divine revelation. This is why any attempt to offer proofs for God’s existence, is an insult to God. No one needs proof who believes, and those who do not believe, will not be convinced.

This view is true insofar as, all truth flows from God, and must be revealed to men, by some means. It seems inadequate, however, in that it fails to allow men to use their God-given minds, to discover and contemplate God’s truth. It turns humanity into nothing more than a computer, who can only process the data that is input into it. We are made in God’s image, which includes the ability to reason. To deny this essential aspect of our humanity, is to deny the image of God, in us. God gave us minds for a purpose. Although our minds should not be used to contradict God’s revelation, our minds must be used to understand it.

Reason Only

This view states that nothing is known from divine revelation, but all truths are discovered by human reason. Immanuel Kant, held to this view. He believed, that we must filter the Scripture, through reason. This necessitated his denial of miracles, demon possession, the resurrection of Christ, etc.

This view if good, insofar as it stresses man’s need to use His God-given mind, to discover the truths of the universe that God, created, and to discover truths about God. It is seriously deficient, however, in that human reason unaided by divine revelation, is limited in its scope. Even aside from the effects of sin on our ability to reason to truth, there are many things that could never be known, apart from revelation. We would not know of Jesus Christ, the resurrection, or the future kingdom of God, apart from divine revelation. Human reason could never discover such truths.

Reason Over Revelation

`Reason over revelation` affirms, both reason and revelation's importance in the life of the believer, but reason is given more importance, than is revelation. Justin Martyr said, that those who lived reasonably, were Christians, even if they did not have faith in Christ. Starting with the idea, that all truth is God's truth, Justin believed, that the Greek philosophers were Christians, because their reasoning brought about the discovery of God's truth. Clement of Alexandria, even compared the Greek's philosophy, to the Jewish law. He said, that both were intended to lead one to Christ.

The Deists of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, held to such a view. In fact, Thomas Jefferson, went through the Bible, and literally cut out every supernatural event and printed the rest, as the "Jefferson Bible." Reason over revelation concludes, that if the Bible's teaching does not line up to good reason, it must be rejected.

The best modern-day example of those who hold to reason over revelation, are the high critics of the Bible, who determine, by reason, which parts of the Scripture are truly God's revelation to man and which are not.

The truth of this view, is found in the fact, that revelation must be examined by human reason. We examine revelation, not to determine it if is indeed revelation, but in order to understand, comprehend, and apply that revelation, to our lives. This view is weak, in that, it can lead to the idea, that human reason is able to judge whether something is revelation, such as the resurrection of Christ and miracles, in general.

Revelation Over Reason

Tertullian said, "I believe, because it is absurd." He did not mean, he believes in that which, makes no sense. The Latin word translated as, "absurd" means, "foolishness." He was not against reason, because he spoke against those who were "content with having simply believed, without full examination of the grounds of the traditions," they believed. But his comment does show the superiority that revelation held over his ability

to reason through that revelation and it to make sense to the human mind.

One of his most famous statements is, “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the academy and the Church?” He decried the Greek philosophy and reasoning that rejected God’s revelation. Again, he said, “It is the more to be believed if the wonderfulness be the reason why it is not believed.”

This view holds that the believer reasons *about* revelation, but never *against* it. Kant held to “revelation within the limits of reason,” but, Tertullian held to “reason within the limits of revelation.”

Cornelius Van Til, said that reason is dependent on revelation. Too many Christians ground God in reason, instead of reason in God. God is creator of the human race; therefore, all reason must be His servant. Reason stands under God’s judgment, but never in judgment of God.

This view is correct in an ontological sense. Revelation is prior to reason ontologically. Before one can reason about revelation and truth, they must know it. Surely, one cannot reason about something they do not know. Apart from God giving us revelation, human reason, as incited by the fallen nature, will naturally lead to error. God is superior to all things, including human reason. This view’s weakness, is that it tends to belittle human reason, commonly viewing it as an enemy to God. It does not give enough attention to man’s reason as part of the image of God in us, and something which should be utilized to its fullest extent, but within the limits of revelation.

Revelation and Reason

Augustine held, that one can reason for revelation, but never against it. The thinking Christian should attempt to render the credible intelligible. He said, that “faith is understanding’s step.” Without faith, one would never come to a full understanding of God’s truth. He based this off of the Septuagint reading of Isaiah 7:9, which says,

“Unless you believe, you will not understand.” He also held to the fact, that no one believes without first having some understanding of what he is to believe. No one should believe a revelation, which he has not first judged by reason, to be worthy of belief.

Augustine also taught, that “understanding is faith’s reward.” Because one accepts God’s revelation, he is rewarded with a fuller understanding than he could have had otherwise. A partial understanding is necessary for one to know, by reason in order to believe, but after believing, a fuller understanding will come. Ultimately, man must accept, by faith, that which can be proved by reason, and that which cannot.

Thomas Aquinas believed in the total depravity of man, but still believed that our human rationality was not destroyed altogether. If it was destroyed altogether, he reasoned, we would no longer be capable of sinning, or at least, being held accountable, for our sins.

The best that reason can do for us, is demonstrate *that* God exists, but divine revelation, is the only ground for believing *in* God. Reason leads to our belief, *that* something is truth, while revelation is the only basis for belief, *in* that truth. Even the Scripture says, that demons believe that God exists, but they do not believe in God (James 2:19).

Even though one cannot reason *to* believe in God, he can find reasons *for* it. The believer finds reasonable support for his faith, in experiential and historical evidences and miracles, and philosophy. Faith is prior to reason philosophically, for no non-Christian ever offered proofs for God’s existence. Yet, reason is prior to faith *personally*, for one does not believe in God or His alleged Word, if he has no evidence *that* it is true.

This view’s strength is found, in that, it gives proper emphasis, to both reason and revelation, understanding that each work together, to bring the believer truth and

understanding. Without reason, the concept of faith, is belittled to a mere confession or dogmatic commitment, to a list of non-intelligible, “facts.” Only when we reason about revelation, can it truly be understood, and only then, can we truly have faith, in that revelation.

Conclusion

Seeing that God has the ability to reason, and we are made in His image, it follows, that God has intended for us to use our reasoning ability to discover and contemplate truth. Many truths, however, can only come, via revelation. Revelation and reason cannot be separated from the life of the Christian. That we cannot divorce reason from our lives in favor of “revelation only,” is evident from the fact, that those who hold to a “revelation only” view, must give logical and reasonable arguments, for their position. They call upon our reasoning abilities, to prove that their view is correct. On the flip-side, any attempt at pure rationalism divorced from revelation, is also futile, because not everything can be proved. Something is always presupposed or simply believed, behind every provable belief. Justification, which comes by reason, must stop somewhere.

That reason is necessarily connected to revelation, is evidenced by the fact, that we are called upon to decide true revelation from false revelation (testing the Spirits -- I John 4:1-2). How can we do such discerning, apart from reason, even if it is reasoning from the Scriptures? It must be remembered, that there is a difference between reasoning to see *whether* something is revelation, or to determine *what*, in the Bible *is* revelation. The former is a noble endeavor (Acts 17:11), while the latter, is not. Belief is blind and unworthy, unless it tests *whether* something is revelation or not. It is foolish to believe everything without applying reason to test its believability or truthfulness, but likewise, it is arrogant to assume that everything must be accepted, by our reason, before it can be accepted as God’s Word or truth.

Part of the tension can be resolved, by viewing the issue from two different

perspectives: epistemologically (what we know) and ontologically (how we know). There is a difference between *the way* we know reality and *what* we know about reality. If God is the source of all truth, then truth must come from the “top down,” and thus, be known by revelation; however, epistemologically we start from the “bottom up,” to determine whether or not God exists. In the epistemological sense, then, reason is prior to revelation, since reason must be used to evaluate whether or not the Bible, is indeed, revelation.

Reason precedes faith as a method of knowing the existence of God. One cannot believe in a God, in whom, they have no knowledge of, and cannot truly know something, without reasoning about that which is to be known. A certain amount of knowledge (and thus, reason) must be known of God, if one is to have saving or experiential faith. One may have knowledge without faith, but one cannot have faith, without knowledge.

Reason and revelation work together. God bestows faith, simultaneously, with our understanding. We do not have to crucify our intellect, in order to believe. Faith, may sometimes, go beyond our ability to know something or understand it to the fullest extent, but faith, is not illogical. Healings may seem illogical to some, but we know from God’s Word (revelation) that He heals, and therefore, can believe (reason) that He will heal.

All other views, besides “revelation and reason” produce logical complications, concerning salvation. The idea, that one can move only from faith to understanding, and never from understanding to faith, is lacking for reasonable support. Michael Bauman said it best:

Saving faith is not without its necessary prior theological content. To become a Christian requires one to come to, at least, some rudimentary conclusions about God, about Christ, about one’s own Spiritual status and need. In other words, it requires (correct) theology...Adherents to such a view...do not seem to realize that,

their position actually eliminates the *possibility* of saving faith, because it asserts that, saving faith is the *sine qua non*, of theology. The truth, however, is quite the opposite, because correct theology of some sort (however primitive and unsophisticated it might be, in the case of some new converts) is the *sine qua non*, of saving faith.

For the above reasons, we conclude, that both revelation and reason are gifts of God to men, for the purpose of knowing and understanding truth, and subsequently knowing and understanding, the God of all truth. By rejecting, either revelation or reason, or under-emphasizing either aspect, we are discarding part of the equipment, that God has endowed us with, to know Him. As a result, our understanding of God and the Spiritual growth He intends for us, will be stunted. To dismiss one aspect or the other, is like cutting with a pair of scissors, having only, one blade. To minimize one aspect over the other, is like cutting with a pair of dull scissors. Only by emphasizing, both revelation and reason, can we cut the truth straight!

Differing Levels of Relevance to Differing Audiences

The question of relevance, pertains to importance and value, usually attached to someone or something, by an individual or certain group of individuals. We attach relevance to the advice of our peers and elders, facts and statistics, and particular issues of the day. Relevance, is usually personal, in that, it will differ from individual to individual. One thing may have more relevance to one particular person, than to another. Certain things may be more relevant to certain groups, more than to others. For example, the issue of the historical character of Abraham Lincoln, is more relevant to a historian than to a theologian or philosopher. The subject of epistemology, however, will have more relevance to the theologian and philosopher.

The Scriptures, also have, relevance. The words spoken by historical figures such as Elijah, Jeremiah, and Jesus have differing levels of importance and value to different individuals and audiences. To demonstrate my point, I will examine Matthew 10, attempting to measure the level of relevance to three distinct groups of people: the original hearers of Jesus' Words, the original readers of Matthew's Gospel, and those reading Jesus' Words today, in the United States. Through this, I hope to discover what relevance Matthew intended for his readers. This will necessitate the examination of Matthew's literary context, to see chapter ten's logical connection, to preceding chapters.

The problem of relevance, has much to do with context. Context, is not limited to literary context, but includes historical context, as well. There are many barriers to communication, that occur between individuals, while face to face. The issue is complicated somewhat, when the discourse is written down by a reporter and read by contemporaries, without the presence of the author. The situation is worsened, when that discourse is recorded by a reporter and read by an audience, far removed in time, from the historical and cultural setting of the original discourse. This gap, often breeds misunderstanding, of the author's intended meaning and a loss of relevance, to the

present reader. The impact and importance of the original message, to the original hearers, can slip through the gaps and be lost to the modern reader of the Bible.

Jesus' Words in Matthew 10, had extreme relevance to Jesus' original audience, the twelve disciples. It was, at this point in time, that they were specifically chosen, from among the multitudes that had been following Jesus and appointed apostles of the Lord. Jesus commissioned them, laboring in the harvesting of souls, for the first time (10:5-15). They were commanded to preach, only to Israelites (10:5-6), heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils (10:8). Gold, silver, brass, bags, tunics, sandals, and staffs were not allowed on the journey (10:9-10). Jesus warned them of the persecution, that would follow, in the days to come (10:16-42). The cost of discipleship was great. It could result in being hated, whipped, or killed (10:17, 22, 28). This message had extreme relevance to the Twelve, because their lives were being changed, in a major way. They were being sent out, by Jesus, to perform the very same works He had been doing. This task, put their lives, in jeopardy (10:1).

The readers of Matthew's Gospel, would not have reacted the same way to Jesus' Words, as did His disciples. They would have understood its historical and cultural context, but it would not have been nearly as relevant to them, as it was to the Twelve, because they were not of those, actually commissioned, by Jesus.

What Matthew's audience might have found relevant, was Jesus' discussion, concerning the cost of discipleship. The Church was suffering persecution, in those days, and would have easily related to Jesus' warning, that the world would hate them and seek to kill them.

In our day, this passage has little relevance and evokes little emotion or feeling, as compared to the former audiences. The historical gap is great, and our cultural/political situation, is not at all, similar to that of the Jews, in first century Palestine. Even the content of what was spoken, does not apply to us. Jesus told the Twelve, that they were not to preach to the Gentiles, but only to the Jews (Matt. 10:5-6). Since this time,

however, the Gentiles, have been evangelized. Most of the Church, is comprised of Gentiles, in our day.

Jesus also commanded the Twelve, to leave behind their valuables and accessories (Matt. 10:9-10). This too, has little relevance to us, because we know that this was a temporal charge. Jesus later commanded His disciples, to do otherwise (Luke 22:35-36). Some of what was spoken, only had temporal relevance. This is not to say, that we cannot get anything out of what was spoken and done, but that it does not directly apply to us, and therefore, we generally, will not attach much importance or value to it.

Discovering an author's flow of thought, in any discourse, is very crucial to understanding the author's original intent. This becomes even more important, when an author takes someone's words and actions that were spoken and occurred, at various times, and selectively strings them together. We must then determine, how the author was using the words and actions, of the story, figure to make his literary point, whatever that point may be. Concerning Matthew 10, it seems that Matthew's point of relating the contents of this chapter, was to show the transition from Jesus' solo ministry, to include that, of the Twelve.

The backdrop for chapter ten, is seen in chapters eight and nine. These two chapters are filled with accounts of Jesus, ministering to the sick and the devil-possessed. We also see, accounts of those who desired to be disciples. The healings accounted for, are a leper (Matt. 8:2-4), the centurion's servant (8:5-13), Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-15), those brought to Jesus in Capernaum (8:16), a man of palsy (9:2-8), the woman with the issue of blood (9:20-22), Jairus' daughter (9:18-19, 23-26), and a deaf man (9:32-34). He cast devils out of those in Capernaum (8:16), and the two men of Gergesa (8:28-34), and a deaf man (9:32-34). During this time, Jesus had two requests for discipleship. A scribe and another man requested discipleship, but seem to have been rejected (8:19-22). Later, Jesus requested, that Matthew accept the call to discipleship (9:9).

Matthew 9:35, sums up the two chapters by saying, “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” When Jesus saw the multitudes who needed a shepherd, His heart went out to them (9-36). It was, at this point, that Jesus told His disciples to pray for laborers to be sent into the field of harvest (9:37-38). Jesus was pushing Himself to His full human capacity. He had exhausted His capacity to minister to the multitudes and now needed assistance. It was, at this point, that the Twelve were selected, in chapter ten. Their job, was to do what Jesus had been doing alone, up to that point: preaching the kingdom of heaven (10:7), casting out unclean spirits, and healing (10:1).

Conclusion

The relevance of any given Biblical text can vary, because of the historical/cultural/political gap, that separates us and the Biblical writers. What may have had a lot of relevance to others, in the past, may have little relevance to us today, or vice-versa. The relevance of Matthew 10, to Jesus’ disciples, was great, because it involved them, particularly. The relevance to Matthew’s audience, would have been less significant, but still would have been, fairly high, due to the persecution they were suffering, at the time. The relevance of Matthew 10, to us today, is very little in comparison, to the above groups; nevertheless, there are still things that can be learned from the passage and that we can benefit from. Finally, Matthew 10, is preceded by the context of Jesus’ exhaustive ministry. Matthew intended to show from chapter ten, how Jesus began to multiply His ministry, and the cost of discipleship.

Bias, Systematic Theology, and Exegesis

Many people live by the old adage, “I’ve made up my mind - don’t bother me with the facts,” and its sister, “People hear what they want to hear.” The truth, however, is not always, in the fact, that people are being willingly ignorant or obstinate to the facts, but rather that people often cannot hear the facts in any other way, than that which their prior understanding will allow them to. We are often unconsciously selective on what we will hear and how we will comprehend a particular fact or event, because we only hear/comprehend what our minds are prepared to hear/comprehend.

The process of learning is a process of adding to and adjusting our current understanding. The mind can only assimilate new information, by relating it, to already existing knowledge. During the assimilation process, our mind will automatically filter the new information, in an attempt to fit it into our pre-understandings, of reality/truth. At times, the new information may be forced into the existing interpretational grid, while at other times, we will alter our grid, to account for the new data. While our pre-understanding is continually being altered to adjust to new information, some pre-understandings are not as easily changed, as are others. It may take quite a bit of work, to identify an anomaly, which cannot be assimilated into the existing system, and adjust our interpretive framework to account for the new facts.

Our Biased Approach to Interpretation

We can never be entirely objective with the data we encounter, because the knower always brings his preunderstandings to that which is being observed/considered. All human knowledge, understanding, and interpretation arise from the biases and pre-understandings we bring to bear on the evidence. Understanding is not achieved in a vacuum. Nobody is neutral in their approach to the world - pre-understandings, are always, at work.

We stand within the stream of history, socially conditioned by a particular people, with a particular culture. Each of us inherits a particular social tradition, a standpoint, from which, we begin all rational inquiry. All knowledge is mediated through a certain inherited perspective. All rational activity is “inescapably, historically, and socially context-bound.”

All of us also inherit, a particular tradition. Tradition, “is a historically extended, socially, embodied argument about how best to interpret” reality, as we experience it and think it ought to be. The basic assumptions of this inherited tradition, are assumed uncritically, in our everyday engagement with the world, thus we begin our inquiry into our world assuming certain basic beliefs belonging to our tradition, “which cannot be disbelieved while they serve as assumptions.” While there will be occasions, in which, the fundamental assumptions of our tradition are recognized and called into question for their inherent justification (often when confronted by the presuppositions of a different tradition), the assumptions can never be questioned *in toto*, because one cannot completely step outside their tradition. One can only evaluate their tradition and its assumptions, in light of other traditions, being compared for their rational justification.

We must face up to the inevitability of our locations within and indebtedness, to some tradition or other. In such a predicament, it is impossible to obtain culturally neutral, unconditioned knowledge, a ‘spectator’s gallery,’ or ‘God’s-eye view,’ of the world. There is no privileged, wholly objective glimpse of the world, unhindered by our own perspective and experience. There is no such view-from-nowhere.

The perspectival nature of our knowledge, is the reason, we must reject the notion of “nothing, but the bare facts.” Facts are not “pre-theoretical, value-free, pure units of ‘public’ experience, that popular mythology would have us to believe.... Real facts are theory-laden, quarried from the mass of our experience, via a complex process of interpretation....” Two people can view the same “facts” and come up with two entirely different interpretations, of those facts, due to their background, cultural surroundings, personal bias, education, etc. Facts, are meaningless, by themselves. It is the

interpretation, of the facts, that makes the difference.

We all interpret the “facts,” in light of prior knowledge commitments. There is no such thing, as the neutral observer, who takes a bird’s-eye-view of reality, free from all presuppositions. All knowledge is theory-laden, historically rooted, and perspectival. “In many, many cases, it is a set of prior commitments, rather than the weight of the evidence, that determines the final conclusion” we come to, when presented with conflicting data.

Each of us views the world, through our own particular set of colored glasses. While all of us have such glasses, we are not naturally aware of them, because they are always, on our noses. We get used to them, and used to viewing the world, through them. We often deny their existence, because we have never been able to view the world without them, to see the difference. Many have recognized the existence of such glasses, but are confused, as to who is wearing them. They have wrongly assumed, that it is only those who disagree with them, who are wearing the colored glasses! The fact of the matter, is that these glasses are part of us, unable to be removed from, before our eyes. While we make every attempt to be critically aware of and free ourselves of the perspective, offered to us by these glasses, we cannot be entirely free, from their effects.

Implications for Theology

Such an understanding of how people process and organize knowledge, the perspectival nature of our knowledge, and the natural biases of our inherited tradition and culture, has great implications for the theological method, we employ. It also explains the reason we encounter such difficulty, in interpreting the Biblical text, and find so many different interpretations of the same.

How should the believer approach Biblical interpretation? Most students of theology have been told, to approach the text, without any preconceived idea, as to what it

means, so as to be non-biased in their interpretation, performing exegesis, rather than eisegesis. While I agree that such an approach is our goal, it is not possible to be entirely objective, when we come to the text. The advice is good, insofar as, it encourages independent thinking, and in the fact that, it attempts to guard against us, forcing a particular theology into the passage, rather than allowing the passage to instruct our theology, but such advice is fundamentally flawed, because it is untrue to the learning process. It is simply impossible, to learn anything without basing new information on existing knowledge and filtering it through existing interpretational grids. We cannot approach the Scripture, free from presuppositions, nor free from a theological bias, and thus, cannot be entirely objective, in the interpretive process. To do proper exegesis, we must be aware of our biases and pre-understandings, not deny their existence.

The notion, that the interpretation of a particular passage can be undertaken apart from a prior systematic theology, or any pre-understandings, is hopelessly naïve. Whether we like it or not, all of us approach interpretation from our pre-understandings, assimilating new information in light of existing information, because the very possibility of understanding anything, depends on a prior framework of knowledge. It is usually, only in the case where many facts begin to accumulate which do not fit into the present paradigm (system), that one will begin to question their pre-understandings, and seek to reorganize their system. Truly, the mind can only receive what it is prepared to comprehend. All of us have had the experience of reading a particular passage, over and over again, never to see its real meaning, because we were attempting to understand it, in light of a faulty paradigm. Once that paradigm changed, and the mind was prepared to see something else, suddenly the passage takes on new meaning, teaching something different, than we once thought it did.

Is our inevitable affinity with pre-understandings, a necessary evil? Not necessarily. What one thinks of the predicament is a moot point, because it remains our predicament, nonetheless. Seeing that we cannot escape our pre-understandings, we ought to find ways to use them, to the best of their ability to aid us in the interpretive

process, rather than hindering us, in the same.

The Role of Systematic Theology

The mind works as a system, systematizing all incoming data into an understandable framework and grid, through which, to make sense of the world, and through which, to interpret other incoming data. Our mind systematizes everything, from the trees in the field, to our understanding of God. All Christians have certain beliefs about God, and those beliefs are arranged in a systematic fashion, as well -- so it is, that every Christian has a systematic theology.

What our minds do naturally, has been developed into a specific method of interpreting the Bible, known as systematic theology. The question, is not whether one has a systematic theology, but how well defined and consistent, their systematic theology is.

Some theologians are skeptical of systematic theology, because they recognize its weaknesses, as a method. Many of these same theologians, advocate Biblical theology, as the preferred method of doing theology. Biblical theology, is an approach to Biblical interpretation, that recognizes revelation as progressive -- God has progressively disclosed His will and purpose to His creation, over time. It attempts to present the Biblical teaching, in the sequence that God's revelation was given to man, examining each author's particular contribution to the Biblical teaching, as a whole, but not necessarily understanding each author's statement, in light of the whole. Biblical theology, interprets each passage in light of each author's understanding from his particular vantage point in the history of revelation, understanding his words in his own particular thought forms and categories, rather than imposing on one author, the understanding and categories of expression, of another.

The Bible was written by many authors over many centuries, each having some new revelation to add to the previous revelation, or offering a different perspective to an

already revealed truth. Biblical theology maintains, that while the Bible may make many statements concerning a particular subject, each statement must be interpreted in light of the immediate context, the genre, the historical context, and the literary purposes of the author before being interpreted in light of other statements made in other books, regarding the same topic. Biblical theology recognizes the error of reading a later revelation into a former revelation, assuming that the truths understood/revealed, at a later time, were also understood/revealed, in the previous revelation. An obvious example concerns the person of Jesus Christ. While the OT contains prophecy concerning His coming, and supplies us with some brief allusions to His purpose, it is the NT that supplies us with the greatest understanding concerning who Jesus is, and what Jesus did for humanity. It would be a mistake to read the OT prophecies concerning Christ and believe that those who penned those prophecies understood all that we understand about Christ after having received new revelation in the NT. Likewise, the understanding we gain from Paul's teaching cannot be read back into the OT passages, and neither can we assume, that Paul understood the truths of God, in the same manner as did John. Each author was at different stages in their understanding, and offered different perspectives, on the same truths. As such, the contribution of each author needs to be evaluated first, in light of the author's particular stance, in the stream of revelation, the genre he wrote in, and his literary purpose, and then secondly, in light of other Biblical statements, dealing with the same topic.

While I would agree that there are inherent weaknesses in systematic theology, every theological method has its weaknesses, including Biblical theology. While systematic theology is prone to eisegesis, so as to make all the pieces fit together just right, and prone to over-explanation, Biblical theology is prone to leaving one with a series of unresolved, apparent, Biblical contradictions, not willing to tie up the loose ends to present the Biblical teaching, as a unified whole. While the issue could be debated further, it needs to be pointed out, that everybody has both, a Biblical and a systematic theology, to one degree or another....Both theological methods are necessary and beneficial to the believer. What I want to focus on, for this discussion, is the inevitableness of developing and using a systematic theology in our exegesis.

Everyone must have a systematic theology, because systematization is an inescapable construct of the mind, organizing incoming data into meaningful paradigms, that can be understood and used. The logical nature of our minds will not allow known contradictory data to be believed, at one and the same time, or to allow contradictory systems of thought to co-exist, side-by-side. While everyone has a systematic theology, not all theologies are equally consistent, nor do all adequately deal with all the relevant data.

Not only is systematization the natural process of the mind, but developing a systematic theology is the logical outflow of the conservative Christian's view of the Scripture, as a unitary corpus of writings with one ultimate author -- God. To the degree that we believe in a single, ultimate author of Scripture is the degree to which we will allow our systematic theology to inform our exegesis of particular texts. If the various passages and teachings of the Bible, cohere in unity, and are non-contradictory (because they come from one author), then the teaching of one particular passage cannot contradict the teaching of another passage. All Biblical statements must be able of systematization, even if not perfectly, because of our finite understanding. Nevertheless, our systematic theology will be used to help us understand and interpret the meaning of problematic passages, resolving apparent contradictions. This should not cause us to make our theological glass slipper fit the foot of the problematic passage, but the validity of the method is witnessed to, by the fact, that such a process is natural and necessary, to the learning process.

The Biblical theological method elucidates the truth, that revelation is progressive, and that various authors may speak of various truths, from different perspectives. Having this understanding, we must not try to read later revelation into earlier revelation, or try to make every author out to be saying the same exact thing, as a different author writing on the same topic. However, the belief that God is the ultimate Author of Scripture, must lead us to the conviction, that there is indeed, a way of reconciling all Biblical statements when considered in their proper historical and literary context, because God cannot contradict Himself. This does not mean, that we will be able to

perfectly do so, but it does give credence and validity to our attempt, to do so, no matter how humble it may be.

The Dangers of Our Systematic Theology

Our attempt to develop a systematic understanding of Scripture, is both natural and good, but we must beware, lest the system we develop, be viewed as *the* teaching of Scripture, itself. We must exercise this caution, because all systematic theologies are formulated by finite human beings, who interpret the data through a biased, historically rooted perspective.

We must also be aware of canonizing a particular systematic theology, because of the nature of systematic theology, itself. Systematic theology attempts to fit all the pieces together into a unitary composition. Often, however, we do not have all the pieces available to fit together. It might be compared to a puzzle with missing pieces. The Bible is not always thorough on a particular teaching, or is not clear on a particular point, and thus, we only have so many pieces of the puzzle, that can be seen. Our Biblical theology attempts to understand the meaning of the existing pieces, while our systematic theology attempts to understand how they cohere together in unity, and to visualize the missing pieces, based on the existing pieces.

While such a quest to fill in the missing pieces is natural, and to a large degree necessary and good, it can also be dangerous. It is difficult enough to properly understand the Biblical passages themselves (the existing pieces), yet alone, trying to fill in the gaps of knowledge and understanding, between these statements. Referring again to the puzzle analogy, even without all the pieces of the puzzle, we can get a fairly good mental picture of what the completed puzzle looks like, depending on the amount of existing pieces. We cannot, however, maintain that our mental picture of the puzzle, corresponds exactly to the completed puzzle, itself. Likewise, while our attempts to fill in the missing pieces (gaps), in Scripture, can be fairly accurate, surely it is not perfect, because of our biases and pre-understandings. Let us never believe, that

the gaps we have attempted to fill through our systematic theology, are the teachings of Scripture, itself. We need to hold any systematic theology as tentative, able to be altered in light of other evidence that may arise to the contrary, which can better explain the Biblical statements. All too often, we pass off our systematic understanding of the Biblical statements as the absolute teaching of Scripture, when indeed, such is not the case. Our systematic understanding of the Scripture, or even our exegesis of a particular text, is conditioned by our historical context, and thus, may not have permanent validity.

While the approach to exegesis, on the basis of systematic theology, runs into the danger of eisegesis, reading into a particular text, a theology which is not being taught in the text, the approach is necessary, nonetheless, in light of the unitary nature of Scripture. Realizing the possible dangers of interpreting particular passages, in light of our pre-understandings, ought not lead us to eisegesis, but make us more aware of our natural tendencies to make the evidence fit our pre-existing understanding, and thus, more critical of both our systematic theology and the passage under investigation. Our pre-understandings, then, are both necessary, and can be beneficial to the task of interpretation, rather than hindering it.

Conclusion

Proper exegesis cannot be done from a non-biased viewpoint, where we allow the text, to simply, speak for itself. While the text may try to speak for itself, we will hear the text in a particular way -- in a way that fits our pre-understandings. Our theological system can, should, and will inform our exegesis. Such a predicament, may be considered, a necessary evil, but it is our only real option, nonetheless.

Since it is impossible to interpret the Scripture, apart from our prior understandings, then we must use our systematic theology to the best of its ability, to aid us in the process. When we are aware of our tendencies to systematize knowledge, "the result should be increased sensitivity, to those features of the text, that disturb our interpretive

framework, and thus, a greater readiness to modify that framework.” Those who claim they do not allow their systematic theology and presuppositions to aid them in the interpretive process, are deceiving themselves, for they must do it, whether they wish to or not. “Exegetes who convince themselves that, through pure philological and historical techniques, they can understand the Bible directly -- that is, without the

mediation of prior exegetical, theological, and philosophical commitments -- are less likely, to perceive the real character of exegetical difficulties.

An Evaluation of historical - critical methods with special reference to Source Criticism, Tradition Criticism, Form Criticism, and Redaction Criticism.

1. Introduction

The use of historical criticism and critical methods have dominated much of the Biblical research, undertaken this century. The practitioners of these methods, have arrived at some interesting, surprising, and astounding conclusions, about the Biblical authors and what they wrote. Many of these conclusions, pose a serious problem to conservative evangelical Christians, who hold that, the Bible is the fully inspired, authoritative, inerrant Word of God.

The purpose of this essay, is to survey and evaluate, the most important, critical, methods. Various weaknesses and dangers will be highlighted and suggestions given, about how these methods may be used by evangelicals, to aid in Biblical interpretation. Most of the methods in question, relate primarily, to the New Testament, and in particular, the Gospels. Although some principles may apply to all Scripture, this essay will focus only on critical methods, relating to interpretation of the synoptic Gospels (i.e. Matthew, Mark, and Luke).

2. Historical-Critical Methods

2.1 History, Historical Criticism and Presuppositions

The Bible is a historical book. It records the history of Israel, the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and the history of the early Church (Krentz 1975, p. 1), in the words of humans, who were inspired, by God (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 76). Because the Bible is a historical work, it is subject to historical investigation and the results of historical research (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 73-74).

The overall purpose of historical-critical methods, is to investigate what actually happened in the events described or alluded to (Marshall 1985, p. 126). Krentz (1975, p. 35-36) gives the following goals of historical investigation:

1. Present a body of facts, that show what actually happened and why.
2. Illuminate the past, creating a comprehensive picture of a culture's own record of history.
3. Understand the significance of events and interpret them.
4. Understand motives, as well as, actions.

Marshall (1985, p. 128-130) points out, that reading Biblical accounts raises the following historical problems or questions:

1. Discrepancies with parallel Biblical accounts.
2. Discrepancies with non-Biblical material.
3. Historical improbabilities.
4. Supernatural occurrences.
5. Creation/Modification by the early Church
6. Literary genre.
7. Insufficient evidence.

These problems and questions, may only be resolved, by historical study (Marshall 1985, p. 131). Using critical methods, it is possible, to determine all relevant sources of historical data, the accuracy, and credibility of these sources and the development of the material, in these sources. Using this information, it is possible, to determine what is historically probable and form a historical hypothesis, which successfully accounts, for what the sources say and build a coherent picture of what probably happened (Marshall 1985, p. 127). It is not always possible to arrive, at certainty. Complex events are difficult to record in detail, and often, the sources are missing or incomplete. History is limited - historians only produce a limited or reduced representation of the past (Krentz 1975, p. 37). There may be several possibilities available, each of which, is equally probable, so reasoned assessments and conjectures, are often called for. However, this results in a problem with presuppositions, because they will determine what may or may not be possible and probable (Marshall 1985, p. 127)

This is where historical criticism has been abused. Many practitioners take a “purely scientific” view, which excludes any possibility of the supernatural and results in a purely naturalistic interpretation of Biblical events and people. Because of these presuppositions, this view is prevented from saying anything at all, about God or the miracles and supernatural works of Jesus Christ (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 74). These scholars hold that all supernatural events, described in the Bible, are inventions of the early Church. Therefore, they attempt to get behind this mythology and get at the “real” historical Jesus. (Schaeffer 1985, v. 1, p. 52), highlights the problem with this approach: “Naturalistic theology has....begun by accepting the presupposition of the uniformity of natural causes, in a closed system. Thus, they rejected everything miraculous and supernatural, including.....the life of Jesus Christ....they still hoped to find a historical Jesus, in a rational, objective, scholarly way, by separating the supernatural aspects of Jesus’ life, from the ‘true history.’ But they failed....Their search for the historical Jesus, was doomed to failure. The supernatural, was so intertwined with the rest, that if they ripped out all the supernatural, there was no Jesus left!”

Many liberal theologians, have used critical methods, to show the Bible is not

historically accurate. The authors, were primarily theologians, not historians, so the “Jesus of history” is nothing like, the Jesus of the Bible. This means, that if there is a discrepancy between the Bible and other historical material, it is the Bible, that is most probably, in error. A Biblical account must be ‘proved’ historically accurate, rather than accepted as so (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 82). But, this skepticism is unwarranted, since the Bible has shown itself, time and again, to be historically accurate. Historical criticism, should pursue without restriction, the explanation that best explains the phenomena in question. This includes supernatural explanations (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 89).

2.2. Source Criticism

2.2.1 Explanation of Source Criticism

The author of Luke states that, “Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who, from the first, were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word.” (Luke 1:1-2, NIV). This implies, that in the early Church period there were many different sources of material, concerning the life of Christ. Luke also states, that he “carefully investigated everything from the beginning” (v. 3), so it is reasonable to assume, that Luke knew about these sources, read them, and used them to compose his own account. (v. 3). It is also reasonable, to assume that the other Gospel writers, did the same (Marshall 1985, p. 139). Also, internal evidence, such as the similarity/dissimilarity of wording (for the same events), content and order, suggests the Gospel writers had common sources (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 139). To assume that the synoptic Gospels were written completely independently, is not a sensible option -- there is just too much internal evidence, indicating otherwise (Fee & Stuart 1993, p. 122).

The search for sources is much easier and less speculative when there are several parallel accounts, like those found in the Synoptic Gospels. By examining parallel accounts and noting the agreements and disagreements in wording, ordering of material, omissions, style, ideas, and theology and taking into account, statements

made by Church fathers, it is possible to derive hypothetical sources of the Synoptic Gospels (Marshall 1985, p. 140-144). If a story is unique to a particular Gospel, then searching for breaks and dislocations in narrative sequence, stylistic inconsistency, theological inconsistency, and historical inconsistency, may also be helpful, in determining possible sources (Marshall 1985, p. 144-145).

It will not always be possible to identify the written or oral sources of a particular account. This does not mean, that the account should not be trusted (Marshall 1985, p. 146). In any case, several Gospel writers, (Matthew, John, and perhaps Mark) were actual eye-witnesses.

The Two-Source or Oxford hypothesis, is the one accepted by the vast majority of scholars (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 144). This hypothesis states, that Mark and a hypothetical document called Q, were the basis for Matthew and Luke. It is suggested that Q, contains the verses common to Matthew and Luke, but not found in Mark. Matthew and Luke were composed, using a combination of Mark, Q, and possibly other sources (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 143-144).

2.2.2 Evaluation of Source Criticism

If the sources of an account can be identified, it is possible to learn a great deal. The fact that Matthew and Luke usually agree with Mark on the actual Words of Jesus, indicates they both wanted to preserve Mark's tradition, rather than just make up their own. Source criticism can reveal something about the author's method of writing and particular interests and ideas (Stein 1988, p. 144). For example, Matthew seems to focus on the Jews, but to be sure of this, we need to know what his sources were. If his source was Mark, then this is a reasonable conclusion, but if it was the traditions of the Jerusalem Church, then this Jewish focus would be inherent in the source, rather than Matthew's interest (Marshall 1985, p. 147).

Hermeneutical insights, may also, be gained. If the earliest text form of an event can

be recovered, then it will be possible to see how each Gospel writer interpreted that event and how they modified it to emphasize that interpretation (Stein 1988, p. 151).

Many critics have viewed source modifications as corruptions or errors, but these changes were made under the inspiration of the Spirit and are still authoritative. It should also be noted, that the canonical text form, is inspired. A hypothetical reconstruction, of the text, is not. It is unwise, to make hypothetical sources, the basis for theology.

The Two-Source hypothesis makes some questionable affirmations, in regard to Q material and material unique to Matthew or Luke. Q, is a purely hypothetical document and it is highly unlikely, that it was a single written source. It is far more probable, that it was a collection of documents. However, the possibility of the existence of Q-like documents, is beyond doubt, since the discovery of the Gospel of Thomas (Stein 1988, p. 109). Also, material that is unique, to either Matthew or Luke, is assumed to come from another source, other than Mark or Q. But, this may not be the case. It is possible, that Matthew included a saying from Q, that Luke did not and vice-versa.

2.3. Tradition Criticism

2.3.1 Explanation of Tradition Criticism

Tradition criticism, is used to determine the development of traditions, from Jesus, through the early Church to the Gospel writer and forms the basis for form and redaction criticism. It is an attempt to trace the evolution of the form and/or meaning of concepts, words or sayings. For example, tradition criticism is interested in how a parable developed into 2 or 3 different versions (Marshall 1985, p. 165-166). The basic axioms behind tradition criticism, force the critic to be highly skeptical about the authenticity or historicity of the traditions, as they are recorded in the Gospels. The burden of proof, lies with those, who wish to take the traditions, as historical (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 204).

The 3 basic axioms for determining authentic traditions, rather than those created and modified by the early Church, are listed in Black & Dockery (1991, p. 205), and are as follows:

1. ***Dissimilarity***: they are not parallels of Jewish traditions and not reflections of the faith and practices of the early Church.
2. ***Multiple attestation***: whether or not a saying occurs in more than one Gospel.
3. ***Coherence***: if the saying, in question, has the same form of another saying, that has already been shown, to be authentic (using the above criteria), then this saying should also be regarded, as authentic.

Tradition criticism, may be applied to Peter's confession in Mark 8:29, and parallels. Luke adds the Words "of God," Matthew adds "the Son of the Living God," and John has "the Holy One of God." Therefore, since these 4 parallels, each say something different, it is highly unlikely (or so it is claimed), that this saying, is actually historical (Marshall 1985, p. 167).

Using tradition criticism, some critics have shown, that Matthew 18:17, is not authentic, because it goes against the parable of Wheat and Tares and the Dragnet (Matthew 13:47f). It also presupposes, a Jewish audience, which excludes Gentiles and tax collectors. This is unlike the "historical Jesus," who embraced such people, therefore, it must be a later development of the Church (Marshall 1985, p. 168).

2.3.2 Evaluation of Tradition Criticism

Tradition criticism, has done much, to undermine the integrity of the Gospel accounts. It is far too skeptical and its conclusions, are often devoid, of supporting evidence. The axioms for determining authenticity, leave much to be desired. The criteria of dissimilarity, is far too narrow, and therefore, only identifies the unique Jesus. It is ridiculous to expect Jesus' teaching would not have overlapped with Jewish teaching,

especially since both were rooted in the Old Testament. It is even more ridiculous, to expect Jesus' teaching, to have contributed nothing to the early Church. Responding to the message of Jesus, is the very essence of

Christianity (Marshall 1985, p. 174). The criteria of multiple attestation, ignores the purpose and inspired overall theological agenda, of the Gospel author (Marshall 1985, p. 176).

For Matthew 18:17, it seems that this verse, has not been correctly, understood. This verse is not a put-down of Gentiles and tax collectors, but simply stating, that we should treat unrepentant Christians the same way we would treat non-Christians. How should we treat non-Christians? The same way Christ did (cf. Matthew 9:10-12, Matthew 15:22-28).

There are 4 Gospels that do not oppose one another. Therefore, it is best to assume everything is authentic, unless there is concrete evidence, to the contrary. Although the Gospels may not record Jesus' actual Words (He spoke in Aramaic and the New Testament was written in Greek), or forms, they do record His essential message for humanity. Any modification of traditions, by the Gospel authors, were done under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

2.4 Form Criticism

2.4.1 Explanation of Form Criticism

Form criticism, seeks to get behind the written sources, by studying and analyzing the "form" of individual Gospel traditions. It describes the characteristics of the various forms and how they emerged in the period of oral transmission in the Church (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 176).

The basic axioms of form criticism, are as follows:

1. The Gospels are “popular” or “folk” literature and are not the work of just one person, but belong to a community. These communities shaped the stories they contain (Black & Dockery 1991, p.178). Therefore, the Gospel authors were not authors, in the true sense, but collectors and editors (Marshall 1985, p. 153).

2. Most of the material circulated orally and as individual units, for at least 20 years (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 178).

3. Units of tradition were used, as the occasion required. Only useful traditions were retained. Only rarely, are they recorded in chronological order (Marshall 1985, p. 154).

4. As units were used, they took on a particular form, according to their function in the community. The form reflects the thoughts of the early Church (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 176). Therefore, it is possible, to deduce a unit’s “life-setting,” (German: Sitz im Leben) from its form. (Marshall 1985 p. 154). Life-setting denotes an area of Church life such as worship, teaching, and evangelism, and only rarely does it indicate, the actual historical situation that gave rise to the Tradition (Marshall 1985, p. 154).

5. Form criticism, assumes the results of source criticism and tradition criticism (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 179).

Rudolf Bultman and Martin Dibelius have identified the following forms:

1. **Paradigms/Pronouncement Stories:** These are brief stories, which culminate in an authoritative saying of Jesus or a saying about the reaction of on-lookers (Marshall 1985, p. 155).

2. **Legends/Stories about Jesus:** These are stories told to exalt a great figure and present a person as an example to follow. The term legend, does not necessarily mean, they are unhistorical, although this is often, the assumption (Black & Dockery

1991, p. 184).

3. **Tales/Miracle Stories:** These are self-contained highly descriptive stories, that show pleasure in giving details (Marshall 1985, p. 156).

4. **Sayings/Exhortations:** This is independent teaching material such as wisdom sayings, prophetic sayings, legal sayings, and “I” sayings (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 184).

5. **Myths:** These are narratives showing interactions between mythological characters and humans. The supernatural breaks into human domain (Marshall 1985, p. 157).

Form criticism has exegetical implications in passages, like Mark 2:18-20. Mark 2:18-19a, is a pronouncement story, but vs. 19b-20, do not fit this form. Therefore, they must be an addition by the early Church (Marshall 1985, p. 159).

2.4.2 Evaluation of Form Criticism

One of the problems with form criticism, is that the form categories are often based on content, rather than actual form. Although form and content do influence each other, some categories are simply, stylistic descriptions. Also, many sayings and stories have no “common” form and many have “mixed” form. Some, may even fall, into multiple categories (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 187). If forms have no or little distinction, they couldn’t have been created and shaped by the early Church, as claimed by many form critics (Marshall 1985, p. 158-159).

For Mark 2:18-20, it all depends on the definition of “pronouncement story.” What if the definition is too rigid? Form critics talk about “law of tradition,” as if they are well-proven scientific laws of development of oral traditions. This is not the case. Except for Luke, the Gospel writers were Jews, and therefore, it is reasonable to assume, transmission of traditions would have occurred, in a similar fashion to Rabbinic

teachings. Rabbis were concerned with accurate transmission and so would the early Church (Stein 1988, p. 187-192). The probability of eyewitnesses, keeping checks on the integrity of the traditions, is also disregarded, by many form critics (Stein 1988, p. 193-203).

Form criticism, does have some positive insights. It does help in understanding the period between AD 30 and AD 50. Searching for the Sitz im Leben, aids exegesis, because knowing how the tradition functioned, in the early Church, indicates how it should speak today. However, this is not always possible. The early Church preserved traditions, because they were useful. This helps to understand that the Gospels are practical references, not just biographies of Jesus. Understanding the form, is also very important, for accurate exegesis (Marshall 1985, p. 161).

The descriptive features, of form criticism, provide the greatest aid to interpretation. They help to focus on the author's style and structure of argument (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 192).

2.5 Redaction Criticism

2.5.1 Explanation of Redaction Criticism

Redaction criticism, builds on the results of source and tradition criticism. It treasures and examines the editorial work of Gospel authors, in order to see their emphases and purposes (Stein 1988, p. 238). It seeks to uncover the theology and setting of the author, by studying the way they modified traditions, arranged them, and stitched them together. It asks, why the author included, excluded, or modified a particular tradition and tries to identify distinctive patterns, interests, and theological ideas (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 199-200).

Redaction Criticism, involves analyzing individual traditions comparing it with parallels, in order to identify common and unique phrases and words. It also involves analyzing the whole Gospel, in comparison with other Gospels. The seams

(introductions and conclusions) link traditions together, provide setting, and often, theological emphasis. Summaries and tradition structures give clues to major theological overtones. Unique elements indicate which way the story is going and repeated phrases show emphasis and special interests. As the Gospel unfolds, individual traditions interact, to produce the intended message (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 208-211). Considering an author's vocabulary and style, is also helpful (Marshall 1985, p. 185).

2.5.2 Evaluation of Redaction Criticism

Results of redaction criticism, are highly subjective and should not be accepted, uncritically. The huge variation, in results, shows this clearly (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 213). There is no doubt, that Gospel authors shaped and modified traditions to fit their Gospel's purpose, but presuppositions about the nature of traditions, their transmission, and modification are suspect. "Redaction" does not mean, unhistorical "theologizing." (Marshall 1985, p. 187-188). Many critics are highly skeptical and assume every redaction is a creation, and therefore, unhistorical. However, omission and addition are not criteria for historicity, but for style, emphasis, and purpose. Not every jot and tittle carries theological weight (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 213). It should also be noted, that meaning is found, in the overall periscope, not the redactions (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 215).

History and theology are not mutually exclusive. There is no reason why an author cannot emphasize a theological concept, using a historical event. Gospel authors were interpreters, but there is no reason to assume, they were mis-interpreters.

Redaction criticism, is still an important tool. It shows how inspiration took place when authors selected, arranged, and highlighted various traditions, in order to communicate a special message to their readers (Black & Dockery 1991, p. 216). This gives the Gospels their individual character and is why we have four of them (Marshall 1985, p. 191).

3. Conclusion

The conclusions of historical criticism, must not outweigh the evidence, that supports them. This has been a major problem. Many critics have used huge leaps, in logic, to arrive at ridiculous and unsubstantiated conclusions.

Critical methods, used with common sense and operating in a framework that does not exclude the supernatural, are an important and necessary aid, to Biblical interpretation. This results in a better grasp of the grammatical and historical sense of the Bible. The course of Biblical history is clarified and it is possible to see the gaps in our knowledge more clearly. The historical character, of the Bible, is emphasized. The great differences in culture and society between the Biblical world and the modern world, are highlighted along with the proper purpose of a passage. This all leads to, enhanced theological insight (Krentz 1975, p. 64-66).

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A Glossary of Rhetorical Terms with Examples

Socrates: The fact is, as we said at the beginning of our discussion, that the aspiring speaker needs no knowledge of the truth about what is right or good.....In courts of justice, no attention is paid, whatsoever, to the truth about such topics; all that matters, is plausibility.....There are even some occasions when both, prosecution and defense should positively suppress the facts, in favor of probability, if the facts are improbable. Never mind the truth -- pursue probability through thick and thin, in every kind of speech; the whole secret of the art of speaking, lies in consistent adherence to this principle.

Phaedrus: That is what those who claim to be professional teachers of rhetoric, actually say, Socrates.

--Plato, *Phaedrus* 272

Alliteration	Anacoluthon	Anadiplosis	Anaphora	Anastrophe
Antistrophe	Antithesis	Aporia	Aposiopesis	Apostrophe
Archaism	Assonance	Asyndeton	Brachylogy	Cacophony
Catachresis	Chiasmus	Climax	Euphemism	Hendiadys
Hypallage	Hyperbaton	Hyperbole	Hysteron-Proteron	Irony
Litotes	Metaphor	Metonymy	Onomatopoeia	Oxymoron
Paradox	Paraprosdokian	Paronomasia	Personification	Pleonasm
Polysyndeton	Praeteritio	Prolepsis	Simile	Syllepsis
Synchysis	Synecdoche	Synesis	Tautology	Zeugma

Alliteration: repetition of the same sound, beginning several words in sequence.

- * Let us go forth to lead the land we love. J.F. Kennedy, Inaugural
- * Vira valid is cum viribus luctant. Ennius
- * Veni, vidi, vici. Julius Caesar

Anacoluthon: lack of grammatical sequence; a change in the grammatical construction, within the same sentence.

- * Agreements entered into when one state of facts exists -- are they to be maintained, regardless of changing conditions? J. Diefenbaker

Anadiplosis: (“doubling back”) the rhetorical repetition of one or several words; specifically, repetition of a word that ends one clause, at the beginning of the next.

- * Men in great place are thrice servants: servants of the sovereign or state; servants of fame; and servants of business. Francis Bacon
- * Senatus haec intellegit, consul videt; hic tamen vivit. Vivit? Immo vero etiam in senatum venit. Cicero, In Catilinam
- * Aeschines 3.133

Anaphora: the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, or lines.

- * We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the

cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.-- Churchill.

* Nihil agis, nihil moliris, nihil cogitas, quod non ego non modo audiam, sed etiam videam planeque sentiam. Cicero, In Catilinam

* Lysias, Against Eratosthenes 21

* Demosthenes, On the Crown 48

Anastrophe: transposition of normal word order; most often found in Latin, in the case of prepositions and the words they control. Anastrophe is a form of hyperbaton.

* The helmsman steered; the ship moved on; yet, never a breeze up blew. Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

* Isdem in oppidis, Cicero

* Demosthenes, On the Crown 13

Antistrophe: repetition of the same word or phrase at the end of successive clauses.

* In 1931, ten years ago, Japan invaded Manchukuo -- without warning. In 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia -- without warning. In 1938, Hitler occupied Austria -- without warning. In 1939, Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia -- without warning. Later, in 1939, Hitler invaded Poland -- without warning. And now, Japan has attacked Malaya and Thailand -- and the United States -- without warning.

--Franklin D. Roosevelt

* Aeschines, Against Ctesiphon 198

Antithesis: opposition, or contrast of ideas or words in a balanced or parallel construction.

* Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice, moderation in the pursuit of justice, is no virtue. --- Barry Goldwater

* Brutus: Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more.
Shakespeare, Julius Caesar

* “The vases of the classical period are but the reflection of classical beauty; the vases of the archaic period are beauty itself.” Sir John Beazley

* Demosthenes, Olynthiac 2.26

Aporia: expression of doubt (often feigned) by which, a speaker appears uncertain as to what he should think, say, or do.

* Then the steward said within himself, “What shall I do?” Luke 16

* Demosthenes, On the Crown 129

Aposiopesis: a form of ellipse, by which, a speaker comes to an abrupt halt, seemingly overcome by passion (fear, excitement, etc.) or modesty.

* Demosthenes, On the Crown 3

Apostrophe: a sudden turn from the general audience to address a specific group or person or personified abstraction - absent or present.

* For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar’s angel.

Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him. Shakespeare, Julius Caesar

Archaism: use of an older or obsolete form.

* Pipit sat upright in her chair some distance from where I was sitting; T.S. Eliot, "A Cooking Egg"

Assonance: repetition of the same sound, in words close to each other.

* Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

* O fortunatam natam me consule Romam! Cicero, de consulatu

Asyndeton: lack of conjunctions between coordinate phrases, clauses, or words.

* We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardships, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty. J.F. Kennedy, Inaugural

* But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. Lincoln, Gettysburg Address

* Demosthenes, On the Crown 200

Brachylogy: a general term for abbreviated or condensed expression, of which, asyndeton and zeugma are types. Ellipse, is often used, synonymously. The suppressed word or phrase, can usually be supplied easily, from the surrounding context.

* Aeolus haec contra: Vergil, Aeneid

* Non Cinnae, non Sullae longa dominatio. Tacitus, Annales I.1

Cacophony: harsh joining of sounds.

* We want no parlay with you and your grisly gang, who work your wicked will. W. Churchill

* O Tite tute Tati tibi tanta tyranne tulisti! Ennius

Catachresis: a harsh metaphor involving the use of a word beyond its strict sphere.

* I listen vainly, but with thirsty ear. MacArthur, Farewell Address

* Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis. Propertius I.1.1

Chiasmus: two corresponding pairs, arranged not in parallels (a-b-a-b), but in inverted order (a-b-b-a); from the shape of the Greek letter chi (X).

* Those gallant men will remain, often in my thoughts and in my prayers, always. MacArthur

* Renown'd for conquest, and in council skill'd. Addison et pacis ornamenta et subsidia belli. Cicero, Pro lege Manilia

* Plato, Republic 494e

Climax: arrangement of words, phrases, or clauses in an order of ascending power. Often, the last emphatic word, in one phrase or clause, is repeated as the first emphatic word of the next.

* One equal temper of heroic hearts,
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. Tennyson, Ulysses

* Nonne hunc in vincula duci, non ad mortem rapi, non summo supplicio mactari imperabis? Cicero, In Catilinam

* Facinus est vincere civem Romanum; scelus verberare; prope parricidium necare: quid dicam in crucem tollere? Verbo satis digno tam nefaria res appellari nullo modo potest. Cicero, In Verrem

* Demosthenes, On the Crown 179

Euphemism: substitution of an agreeable or at least non-offensive expression, for one whose plainer meaning might be harsh or unpleasant.

* When the final news came, there would be a ring at the front door -- a wife in this situation finds herself staring at the front door, as if she no longer owns it or controls it-- and outside the door would be a man...come to inform her, that unfortunately something has happened out there, and her husband's body now lies incinerated in the swamps or the pines or the palmetto grass, "burned beyond recognition," which anyone who had been around an air base very long (fortunately, Jane had not) realized, was quite an artful euphemism to describe a human body, that now looked like an enormous fowl that has burned up in a stove, burned a blackish brown all over, greasy and blistered, fried, in a word, with not only the entire face and all the hair and the ears burned off, not to mention all the clothing, but also the hands and feet, with what remains of the arms and legs, bent at the knees and elbows and burned into absolutely rigid angles, burned a greasy blackish-brown, like the bursting bodyitself, so that this husband, father, officer, gentleman, this ornamentum of some mother's eye, His Majesty the Baby of just twenty-odd years back, has been reduced to a charred

hulk, with wings and shanks, sticking out of it. Tom Wolfe, The Right Stuff

Hendiadys: use of two words connected by a conjunction, instead of subordinating one to the other, to express a single complex idea.

* It sure is nice and cool today! (for “pleasantly cool”)

* I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Psalm 116

* Perfecti oratoris moderatione et sapientia. Cicero, De oratore

Hypallage: (“exchanging”) transferred epithet; grammatical agreement of a word with another word which it does not logically qualify. More common in poetry.

* Exegi monumentum aere perennius regalique situ pyramidum altius, Horace, Odes III.30

Hyperbaton: separation of words, which belong together, often to emphasize the first of the separated words or to create a certain image.

* Speluncam Dido dux et Troianus eandem Vergil, Aeneid
4.124,165

Hyperbole: exaggeration for emphasis or for rhetorical effect.

* My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes and on thine forehead gaze;

Mistress”

Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty-thousand to the rest. Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy

* Da mi masia mille, deinde centum,
Dein mille altera, dein secunda centum,
Deinde usque altera mille, deinde centum. Catullus, to his.

Hysteron Proteron: (“later-earlier”): inversion of the natural sequence of events, often meant to stress the event which, though later in time, is considered the more important.

* “I like the island, Manhattan. Smoke on your pipe and put that in.” -- from the song “America,” West Side Story, lyric by Stephen Sondheim (submitted *per litteram*, by guest rhetorician Anthony Scelba)

* Put on your shoes and socks!

* Hannibal in Africam redire atque Italia decedere coactus est.
Cicero, In Catilinam

Irony: expression of something which is contrary to the intended meaning; the words say one thing, but mean another.

* Yet, Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honorable man. Shakespeare, Julius Caesar

Litotes: understatement, for intensification, by denying the contrary of the thing being affirmed. (Sometimes used synonymously with meiosis).

* A few unannounced quizzes are not inconceivable.

- * War is not healthy for children and other living things.
- * One nuclear bomb can ruin your whole day. (meiosis)

Metaphor: implied comparison, achieved through a figurative use of words; the word is used not in its literal sense, but in one analogous to it.

* Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage. Shakespeare,
Macbeth

* ...while he learned the language (that meager and fragile thread....by which, the little surface corners and edges of men's secret and solitary lives may be joined for an instant, now and then, before sinking back into the darkness....)
Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom!

* From Stettin, in the Baltic, to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. W. Churchill

Metonymy: substitution of one word for another, which it suggests.

- * He is a man of the cloth.
- * The pen is mightier than the sword.
- * By the sweat of thy brow, thou shalt eat thy bread.

Onomatopoeia: use of words to imitate natural sounds; accommodation of sound to sense.

* At tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit. Ennius

Oxymoron: apparent paradox, achieved by the juxtaposition of words, which seem to contradict one another.

* Festina lente

* I must be cruel, only to be kind. Shakespeare, Hamlet

Paradox: an assertion, seemingly opposed to common sense, but that may yet have some truth in it.

* What a pity, that youth must be wasted on the young. George Bernard Shaw

Paraprosdokian: surprise or unexpected ending of a phrase or series.

* He was, at his best, when the going was good. Alistair Cooke on the Duke of Windsor

* There, but for the Grace of God -- goes God. Churchill

* Laudandus, ornandus, tollendus. Cicero on Octavian

Paronomasia: use of similar sounding words; often etymological word-play.

* ...cull'd cash, or cold cash, and then it turned into a gold cache. E.L. Doctorow, Billy Bathgate

* Thou art Peter (Greek petros), and upon this rock (Greek petra) I shall build my Church. Matthew 16

* The dying Mercutio: Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man. Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet

* Hic est sepulcrum haud pulchrum feminae pulchrae.

Personification: attribution of personality to an impersonal thing.

* England expects every man to do his duty. Lord Nelson

* Nunc te patria, quae communis est parens omnium nostrum, odit ac metuit et iam diu nihil te iudicat nisi de parricidio suo cogitare. Cicero, In Catilinam

Pleonasm: use of superfluous or redundant words, often enriching the thought.

* No one, rich or poor, will be excepted.

* Ears pierced while you wait!

* I have seen no stranger sight, since I was born.

Polysyndeton: the repetition of conjunctions in a series of coordinate words, phrases, or clauses.

* I said, "Who killed him?" and he said, "I don't know who killed him, but he's dead all right," and it was dark and there was water standing in the street and no lights and windows broke and boats all up in the town and trees blown down and everything all blown and I got a skiff and went out and found my boat, where I had her inside Mango Bay and she was all right, only she was full of water. Hemingway, After the Storm.

* omnia Mercurio similis, vocemque coloremque
Et crinis flavos et membra decora iuventae Vergil, Aeneid 4.558-9

* Horae quidem cedunt et dies et menses et anni, nec praeteritum
tempus umquam revertitur, nec quid sequatur sciri potest. Cicero, De senectute

Praeteritio: (=paraleipsis): pretended omission for rhetorical effect.

* That part of our history, detailing the military achievements, which
gave us our several possessions....is a theme too familiar to my listeners for me to
dilate on, and I shall therefore, pass it by. Thucydides, "Funeral Oration"

* Let us make no judgment on the events of Chappaquiddick, since
the facts are not yet all in. A political opponent of Senator Edward Kennedy

Prolepsis: the anticipation, in adjectives or nouns, of the result of the action of a
verb; also, the positioning of a relative clause, before its antecedent.

* Vixi et quem dederat cursum fortuna peregi, Vergil, Aeneid 4.653

* Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.

Simile: an explicit comparison between two things using 'like' or 'as.'

* My love is as a fever, longing still.
For that, which longer nurseth the disease, Shakespeare, Sonnet CXLVII

* Reason is to faith, as the eye to the telescope. D. Hume

* Let us go then, you and I,
While the evening is spread out against the sky,

Like a patient etherized upon a table....T.S. Eliot,
The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

Syllepsis: use of a word with two others, with each of which, it is understood differently.

* We must all hang together or assuredly, we will all hang, separately. Benjamin Franklin

Synchysis: interlocked word order.

Synecdoche: understanding one thing with another; the use of a part for the whole, or the whole for the part. (A form of metonymy).

* Give us this day, our daily bread. Matthew 6

* I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.
T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

* The U.S., won three gold medals. (Instead of, The members of the U.S. boxing Team won three gold medals).

Synesis: (=constructio ad sensum): the agreement of words, according to logic, and not by the grammatical form; a kind of anacoluthon.

* For the wages of sin, is death. Romans 6

* Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ

unto them. Acts 6.

Tautology: repetition of an idea in a different word, phrase, or sentence.

* With malice toward none, with charity for all. Lincoln, Second Inaugural

Zeugma: two different words, linked to a verb or an adjective, which is strictly appropriate, to only one of them.

* Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall burn the living record of your memory.

* Longa tibi exsilia et vastum maris aequor arandum. Vergil, Aeneid

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