

912 Biblical Interpretation

Spring 2023

Western Reformed Seminary

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Course objectives

1. To convince students of the importance of hermeneutics as a discipline.
2. To adequately survey the history of interpretation in the church, including significant errors.
3. To survey the transmission and translation of the Bible, New Testament textual criticism, and critical methodologies of interpretation.
4. To convey the principles used to accurately interpret the Bible.

Course Outcomes

1. Students will be able to explain why hermeneutics is vital to Christian ministry.
2. Students will be able to discern the most common errors in interpretation as they occur, and to recognize proper interpretation.
3. Students will know about the tools and methods necessary to carry out detailed, accurate interpretation of the Word of God, leading to a lifetime of profitable Bible study and teaching.
4. Students will be able to apply sound principles of interpretation in the preparation of Bible studies or sermons.
5. Students will be able to intelligently evaluate the interpretations of others, whether in person or in writing or in the media.
6. Students will demonstrate proficiency in proper interpretation of various biblical genres.

Course schedule

Jan. 26	Introduction, Notes Chapters 1, 2	---
Feb. 2	Notes Chapter 3	Assignments 1-2, 2-1, 3-# (your choice)
9	Notes Chapters 4	Assignment 4-#
11	Notes Chapter 4, 5	Assignment 5-#, Text Part 1 Due
18	Notes Chapter 5	Assignment 6-#
25	Notes Chapter 6	Assignment 8-1
Mar. 2	Notes Chapter 6	Assignment 9-#, Text Part 2 Due
9	Notes Chapter 7	Assignment 10-1, 2, 3
16	Notes Chapter 7	Assignment 12-2
23	Notes Chapter 8, 9	Assignment 13-3, Text Part 3 Due
30	SPRING RECESS	Assignment 14-1
Apr. 6	Notes Chapter 9	Assignment 15-1
13	Notes Chapter 10	Assignment 17-1, Text Part 4 Due
20	Notes Chapter 10	Assignment 18-1 or 2
27	Notes Chapter 11	Assignment 19-#
May 4	Notes Chapter 12	Assignment 20-1, 21-#
11	Notes Chapter 12	Assignment 22-2, Text Part 5 Due

Required reading

J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word*. 4th Ed. Zondervan Academic, 2020.

I recommend that you read at a pace to keep up with the assignments which are taken from the book.

Weekly Assignments

In place of regular examinations, you are required to complete the weekly assignments from the text as noted in the schedule. The # sign behind an assignment means you can choose which one of the assignments you want to do.

Grading

- Reading 40% Weekly Assignments 60%

Preface: Hermeneutics in Everyday Life

[Hermeneutics IN everyday life Perspicacious Perspectives on the Problems of Interpretation \(adoremus.org\)](http://adoremus.org) and elsewhere in cyberspace....

Suppose you're traveling to work and you see a stop sign. What do you do? That depends on how you *interpret* the stop sign.

A *postmodernist* deconstructs the sign (knocks it over with his car), ending forever the tyranny of the north-south traffic over the east-west traffic.

A *Marxist* refuses to stop because he sees the stop sign as an instrument of class conflict. He concludes that the bourgeois use the north-south road and obstruct the progress of the workers in the east-west road.

A "*progressive*" *Catholic* rolls through the intersection because he believes he cannot understand the stop sign apart from its interpretive community. Observing that the interpretive community doesn't take it too seriously, he doesn't feel obligated to take it too seriously either.

An *average Catholic* (or Orthodox or Coptic or Anglican or Methodist or Presbyterian or whatever) doesn't bother to read the sign but he'll stop if the car in front of him does.

A fundamentalist, taking the text very literally, stops at the stop sign and waits for it to tell him to go.

A *seminary-educated evangelical preacher* might look up "STOP" in his lexicons of English and discover that it can mean:

- 1) something which prevents motion, such as a plug for a drain, or a block of wood that prevents a door from closing;
- 2) a location where a train or bus lets off passengers. The main point of his sermon the following Sunday on this text is: when you see a stop sign, it is a place where traffic is naturally clogged, so it is a good place to let off passengers from your car.

An *orthodox Jew* does one of two things:

- 1) Take another route to work that doesn't have a stop sign so that he doesn't run the risk of disobeying the Law;
- 2) Stop at the sign, say "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who hast given us thy commandment to stop," wait 3 seconds according to his watch, and then proceed.

Incidentally, the Talmud has the following comments on this passage:

- (a) R[abbi] Meir says: He who does not stop shall not live long.
- (b) R. Hillel says: Cursed is he who does not count to three before proceeding.
- (c) R. Simon ben Yudah says: Why three? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, gave us the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.
- (d) R. ben Issac says: Because of the three patriarchs.
- (e) R. Yehuda says: Why bless the Lord at a stop sign? Because it says, "Be still and know that I am God".
- (f) R. Hezekiel says: When Jephthah returned from defeating the Ammonites, the Holy One, blessed be He, knew that a donkey would run out of the house and overtake his daughter; but Jephthah did not stop at the stop sign, and the donkey did not have time to come out. For this reason, he saw his daughter first and lost her. Thus he was judged for his transgression at the stop sign.
- (g) R. Gamaliel says: R. Hillel, when he was a baby, never spoke a word, though his parents tried to teach ihm by speaking and showing him the words on a ascorll. One day his father was driving through town and did not stop at the sign. Young Hillel called out: "Stop, father!" In this way he began reading and speaking at the same time. Thus it is written: "Out of the mouth of babes."
- (h) R. be Jacob says: Where did the stop sign come from? Out of the sky, for it is written: "Forever, O Lord, your word is fexed in the heavens."
- (i) R. ben Nathan says: When were stop signs created? On the fourth day, for it is written: "let them serve as signs."
- (j) R. Yeshuah says: ... (continues for three more pages)

A *Pharisee* does the same thing as an orthodox Jew, except that he waits 10 seconds instead of 3. He also replaces his brake lights with 1000 watt searchlights and connects his horn so that it is activated whenever he touches the brake pedal.

A *scholar from the Jesus Seminar* concludes that the passage "STOP" undoubtedly was never uttered by Jesus himself because being the progressive Jew that He was, He would never have wanted to stifle peoples' progress. Therefore, STOP must be a textual insertion belonging entirely to stage III of the gospel tradition, when the church was first confronted by traffic in its parking lot.

A *New Testament scholar* notices that there is no stop sign on Mark Street but there is one on Matthew and Luke Streets, and concludes that the ones on Luke and Matthew Streets are both copied from a sign on a street no one has ever seen called "Q" Street. There is an excellent 300-page doctoral dissertation on the origin of these stop signs and the differences between stop signs on Matthew and Luke Street in the scholar's commentary on the passage. There is an unfortunate omission in the dissertation, however; it doesn't explain the meaning of the text!

An *Old Testament scholar* points out that there are a number of stylistic differences between the first and second half of the passage "STOP." For example, "ST" contains no enclosed areas and 5-line endings, whereas "OP" contains two enclosed areas and only one line termination. He concludes that the author for the second part is different from the author of the first part and probably lived hundreds of years later. Later scholars determine that the second half is itself actually written by two separate authors because of similar stylistic differences between the "O" and the "P".

Another *OT scholar* notes in his commentary that the stop sign would fit better into the context three streets back. (Unfortunately, he neglected to explain why in his commentary.) Clearly it was moved to its present location by a later redactor. He thus exegetes the intersection as though the sign were not there.

Yet another *OT scholar*, because of the difficulties in interpretation, amends the text, changing the "T" to "H". SHOP is much easier to understand in context than STOP because of the multiplicity of stores in the area. The textual corruption probably occurred because SHOP is so similar to STOP on the sign several streets back, that it is a natural mistake for a scribe to make. Thus the sign should be interpreted to announce the existence of a shopping area. If this is true, it could indicate that both meanings are valid, thus making the thrust of the message STOP [AND] SHOP.

A "*prophetic*" preacher notices that the square root of the sum of the numeric representations of the letters S-T-O-P (sigma-tau-omicron-pi in the Greek alphabet), multiplied by 40 (the number of testing), and divided by four (the number of the world – north, south, east, and west), equals 666. Therefore, he concludes that stop signs are the dreaded Mark of the Beast, a harbinger of divine judgment upon the world, and must be avoided at all costs.

A *dispensationalist* might reason that the sign was created for an earlier time and does not apply today and will continue on through the intersection oblivious to oncoming traffic. He might also reason that you may choose to obey the stop sign, but if you do you will have to obey all traffic signs.

CHAPTER 1: NECESSITY OF HERMENEUTICS; DEFINITIONS

Biblical hermeneutics bridges the gaps between the Scriptures and us. We are separated from the Scriptures by culture, history, geography, language, thought pattern, and worldview. Thus, biblical hermeneutics will bring us (and the people to whom we minister) into the text and biblical homiletics will bring the text to the people where they are.

Good interpretation: “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)

ὀρθοτομοῦντα (“rightly dividing”) – originally this word meant “to cut a path in a straight direction” or “cut a road across a country that is forested or otherwise difficult to pass through in a straight direction” so that the traveler may go directly to his destination. When it came to the NT, its meaning was slightly changed to mean “to guide the word of truth along a straight path,” like a road that goes straight to its goal without being turned aside by wordy debates. Therefore, Paul urges Timothy, and all students of God’s Word, to work diligently in figuring out what the right interpretation of the Word of God is.

Bad interpretation: “He [Paul] writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.” (2 Pet 3:16)

Some portions of Scripture are simply written and easily interpreted; other parts are more difficult and require deeper study. The WCF recognizes this distinction. Not everything is clearly understood, but that which is most essential to Christian faith and life is clear to anyone using the normal means (reading, study, prayer, attendance on the preaching of the Word). This doctrine is called the *perspicuity of Scripture*.

“All things in scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.” (WCF 1:7)

Inspiration

Every student of the Bible must start with the presupposition that the Scriptures are inspired and inerrant. Inspiration and inerrancy cannot be proved by any scientific method, even though this method can confirm their truth at various points. This conviction must be a fruit of the Holy Spirit’s work of regeneration. Ultimately, while other sources of evidence may lead us to highly regard the Bible, we believe that the Bible is inspired and inerrant because it claims to be so, and the Holy Spirit gives us faith to believe.

The Interpreter’s Life and Attitude

- The interpreter must be born from above – John 3:1-12; 1 Cor 2:6-16
- The interpreter must depend on the Holy Spirit – 1 Cor 2:10-13; John 16:12-15 “In order to appreciate and use the Bible, the reader of it must himself have the same spirit which enabled its writers to understand their revelation of God and to record it.... To find in it the Spirit of God the reader must himself have that Spirit.” (Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, 13)
- The interpreter must study the Word and the things related to the Word (biblical languages, history, geography, culture, etc.) – Ezra 7:9-10
- The interpreter must humbly consult others.
- The interpreter must act upon the Word – Mark 4:24-25; Luke 8:21

Illumination in the Scriptures is not given just so the interpreter can look intelligent before his audience, but that he might live according to the light given and be an example both in speech and life. If we have hearing ears and obedient hearts we will be shown more.

DEFINITIONS

Hermeneutics

The science of interpreting written literature; biblical hermeneutics refers to interpreting the text of the Bible. The word comes from the Greek, found in various forms in the New Testament:

Luke 24:27 – “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded [διερμήνευσεν, *diermeneusen*] to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Also 1 Corinthians 14:26, 28.

Exegesis

The art of “bringing out” of the true meaning of the text by applying the principles of hermeneutics to a particular passage. The word comes from the Greek *exago*, which means *to lead* or *bring out* (see John 1:18 – “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him”).

Eisegesis

The opposite of exegesis, eisegesis brings one’s own ideas into the text, rather than bringing out the text’s ideas. The end result is often grave doctrinal and practical error.

The Grammatical-Historical-Theological Method

A method of exegesis in which the guiding factors are the grammar of a biblical passage, the literary and historical context of the passage, and the theological context of the author and the Bible as a whole. Often called “literal exegesis,” meaning the text should be interpreted as it would be by the average intelligent reader of the time of writing. This method recognizes normal patterns of language, including figurative patterns. More on this in Chapter 10.

Letterism

An extreme form of literal interpretation which does not recognize figures of speech, and unnaturally forces words and figures.

CHAPTER 2: TRANSMISSION AND TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

Old Testament

1. Early period
 - a. Not a lot of information from this period
 - b. We know that the book of the law was to be kept in the Ark of the Covenant (Deut 31:9-26).
 - c. The oracles of some of the prophets were preserved by their disciples – Isaiah’s disciples (Isa 8:16) and Jeremiah’s disciple (Jer 36:1-26).
 - d. Big push during Ezra’s time to preserve the sacred books (Neh 8:1-18).
2. Evidence from Qumran
 - a. Earliest biblical manuscripts
 - b. Confirm that there were several text types between the period of Antiochus IV and A.D. 70.
3. Masoretic text
 - a. Around A.D. 100, rabbi Aqiba and his colleagues established a uniform text.
 - b. This is the text quoted in the Mishnah, the Talmud, and other authoritative rabbinical literature.
 - c. This is the text that the Masoretes equipped with vowel points according to the masorah (tradition of vocalization).
 - d. This is the standard text used today.
4. Samaritan Bible
 - a. This is a Palestinian text with some alterations to vindicate the Samaritans’ claim to be true Israel.
 - b. Kept for us a textual tradition different than the Masoretic text.
5. Translations were also used by the Lord to transmit the text to us.
6. Different translations kept different textual traditions alive and available

New Testament

- A. All NT documents were written in Greek within the first century A.D.
- B. By the beginning of the second century the gospels and the Pauline writings were circulating as two collections.
- C. From the fourth century onward, we can distinguish text types that are initially related to geographical areas.
- D. Early in the history of the NT, many versions became available to the non-Greek speaking population, which helped preserve and transmit the text.
- E. The Lord used all these different traditions to preserve and transmit the NT text to us.

CHAPTER 3: CRITICAL METHODOLOGIES

Introduction

According to Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton (*Old Testament Today: A Journey from Original Meaning to Contemporary Significance*) the critical methodologies have been developed to address the following questions:

- How should we approach the various literary genres we find in the Bible?
- Was each book written at one sitting, or was there a longer process of composition?
- Could there have been previous editions of some of the books that have gone through stages of editing to reach the form in which we now have them?
- Do some of the books incorporate texts of one genre into the context of another genre?

“Critical scholarship” and “criticism” refer to the exercise of an expert sense of judgment about the text.

- Both conservatives and liberals use critical methodologies in their hermeneutics.
- The difference between the liberal and the conservative is his opinion of the text.

Some terminology:

- Diachronic – attempt to reconstruct the ways and means by which the text came to be in its present form (also called historical-critical)
- Synchronic – seek meaning in the form the text currently possesses; view text as self-sufficient, requires no outside information for interpretation (also called as literary).

Textual Criticism

- Designed to find errors that may have crept into the text through centuries of copying.
- The goal of the textual critic is to restore the text to its original canonical form.
- In the OT, there aren't as many manuscripts available. Thus, some of the corrections are done based on common sense and repeated accounts.
- The LXX also plays a very important part in the textual criticism of the OT.

- The NT has a wealth of manuscript evidence, both in Greek and in ancient translations. It is the best attested ancient writing.

Source Criticism in the OT

Sources were used in the compilation of some books in the OT:

- Chronicles and Kings name sources that were available to them.
 - The Book of the Annals of Solomon

1 Kgs 11:41 – Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did, and his wisdom, *are* they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?

- The Records of Gad the Seer and the Book of Nathan the Prophet

1 Chr 29:29 – Now the acts of King David, first and last, indeed they *are* written in the book of Samuel the seer, in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer.

- Joshua also used sources (the Book of Jasher)

Josh 10:13 –So the sun stood still, And the moon stopped, Till the people had revenge Upon their enemies. *Is* this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go *down* for about a whole day.

Source criticism seeks to identify which sections of a given book belong to which hypothetical source and then analyze the source.

Sections are assigned to different sources on the basis of perceived differences in style among different parts of the book.

If the source critic deems that something is too theologically advanced, then he might assign a different source to that portion.

- Centralized place of worship
- Festivals
- The Aaronic priesthood
- Monotheism Future restoration of Israel

When the source critic finds what the source is, then he studies that source.

Source criticism says that many books in the OT are made out of other books. An example is the Pentateuch of Moses, said to be the result of a complicated editorial process involving four original sources, J, E, D, and P.

Source Criticism in the NT

While some source criticism is used in the study of Acts and the epistles, by far the greatest field is the study of the Synoptic Gospels. There are several primary theories:

- Individual gospel theory
- Two-source theory
- Four-source theory
- Griesbach theory
- Memory theory

Some of these can overlap, such as memory theory and the individual gospel theory.

Form Criticism

- Concerned with identifying the oral history of the various parts of the text (singular *pericope*, plural *pericopes*, pronounced pə-rí-co-pe).
- Many sections of any book had functions in society in oral form that differ from their use in the present context.

Redaction Criticism

- Attempts to identify the logic and intent of the editor (redactor) who brought all the different sources together.
- The redaction critic looks at the final form of the text and tries to identify how the redactor reworked and reinterpreted the original sources.
- The JEDP source theory of the origin of the Pentateuch is the application of redaction criticism.
- In the Synoptic Gospels redaction critics discern individual theologies of each Gospel writer and of each of his sources.

Historical Criticism

- Attempts to reconstruct the events that are behind the biblical narratives.
- The OT narratives were produced with a theological motive or agenda, so they do not clearly or completely present details of the actual events.
- The historical critic tries to answer, “what did really happen?”

- Accounts such as David fighting Goliath, or the exploits of Samson, are legendary and the critic needs to find the “kernel” around which these legends were built.

Rhetorical Criticism

- Attempts to discover how the form of the literature aids the content in communicating the intended message.
- The critic looks for chiasms, *inclusio* (similar lines in the beginning and ending of section), etc.
- The critic identifies poetry and prose and sees how the style expresses the author’s thought.
- For more on this subject, see Chapter 11 of these notes.

Structural Analysis

- Focus solely on the literary character and features of the text to derive their meaning.
- Emphasis is put on plot, character development, use of motifs, vocabulary, syntax, etc.
- Excludes historical and archaeological backgrounds.

The Canonical Approach

- Everything besides the final form of the text is ignored.
- What really matters is the text we have today because that is the text that the community of faith has available to it.

Evaluating Critical Methodologies

Each methodology has tools that may be useful for the Bible-believing student to understand the biblical text. These may be used moderately and with caution as aids in interpretation.

Methodology that asserts that the text need not be factually true or may be inauthentic is not appropriate. Such methodology produces extreme skepticism about the actual contents of the text.

When interpreting the text, we must keep in mind that it is written in popular language, to be understood by the people. We should not expect esoteric meanings to be unearthed by applying hitherto unknown tools or methods.

CHAPTER 4: NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL CRITICISM

[This is a very brief summary. More detailed discussion takes place in the course Intermediate Greek.]

The Conventions of Textual Criticism (*Sigla, apparatus*)

Several systems of manuscript designation became obsolete by the sheer volume of witnesses.

The major Uncials (major early NT MSS written with capital letters) add a further complication by retaining Latinized titles which reflect either:

- Their original discoverer, benefactor, or present owner (e.g. D/Bezae),
- Their ancient or present residence (e.g. B/Vaticanus), or
- Some descriptive adjective (e.g. C/Ephraemi Rescriptus).

Here is how NT MSS are designated:

- Papyri: capital or gothic P and a superscript number; e.g., P⁵²
- Uncials: capital letters, then Greek capitals; thence numerals prefixed by 0; and in one instance, a Hebrew letter (a, Aleph [=01]); e.g., A (=02), B (=03), W (=032), 0216
- Minuscules: numerals not beginning with a 0; e.g., 33, 1241
- Lectionaries: numerals with an italicized / prefixed; e.g., /156
- Versions: the name of the version, e.g. Latin, Syriac, Coptic
- Church Fathers: the name of the father associated with the reading

Additional Symbols:

*	Original hand
c	Corrector
2,3,4	Successive correctors (a,b,c successive correctors of a D ^p)
pt	<i>partime</i> i.e. divided evidence
Byz	Majority of Byzantine mss
mg	Marginal reading
ms(s)	Manuscript(s)
sic	Abnormality reproduced
supp	reading supplied by later hand
vid	Apparent reading
()	i.e. a ms. Supports the reading in question, but with minor variation (s)

The Practice of Textual Criticism

Consider external evidence (MSS evidence)

Date

All things being equal, the earliest manuscripts may be considered relatively more proximate to the original in term of number of copies intervening.

“Witnesses that excel in antiquity prevail in authority.” (Tischendorf)

Moreover, age is among the least subjective elements in manuscript evaluation.

Note. It is not always the date of an individual MS which is most significant. The date of the text-type is of more weight than the date of the MS (i.e., a later MS may have a near original as its exemplar); e.g., the 10th century minuscule 1739 preserves a text which is closely related to P⁴⁶.

Place of origin (geographical distribution)

Primary areas are designated *Alexandrian*, *Western*, *Byzantine*, and *Caesarean*. Generally, a reading supported by dispersed witnesses is stronger than a provincial one.

Textual affinity (genealogical distribution)

“Variants must never be treated in isolation, but always considered in the context of the tradition. Otherwise there is too great a danger of reconstructing a ‘test tube text’ which never existed at any time or place.” (Aland)

Harmonizing agents/ attempts to sterilize/standardize

E.g., Tatian’s *Diatesseron* (170); Origen’s Caesarean text (254); Lucian’s ‘standard’ Byz recension (312); Constantine’s/Eusebius’ 50 copies (331); Jerome’s Vulgate (382); the Peshitta, the revised version of Syria (early 5th century)

Consider internal evidence (what it seems the author would have said or how a copyist might have made an error)

Intrinsic probability

How probable is it that a certain author would use such word or expression? This can be determined somewhat by consulting his writing elsewhere in the book and in any other of his books in the NT.

Note. “Conjectural emendation” can be a refuge for sloth or cowardice; we must not have the audacity to correct the original author.

“Such attempts amount to capitulation before the difficulties and are themselves violations of the text.” (Aland)

“The fault most often committed in the use of conjectural emendation has been to use it prematurely.” (Metzger)

Transcriptional probability

How likely is it that this is an error originated by a scribe (Hort’s description: “observed proclivities of average copyists.”)

(1) Unintentional errors

- Illiteracy (incompetence)

- Fatigue (inattention)

- Haste

- Faulty seeing
 - Rough surface of papyri

 - Orthographic
 - Ligatures

 - Nomina sacra

 - Easily confused uncials

 - Scriptio continua

- Faulty attention

- Faulty hearing – the scriptorium

- Faulty judgment – unconscious assimilation to parallels; incorporation of marginal glosses.

(2) Intentional “improvements”

- Fixing of perceived factual blunders (historical, theological, or grammatical)
 - “The characteristic of most scribal emendations is their superficiality, often combining ‘the appearance of improvements with the absence of its reality’ (W&H).” Metzger

- Smoothing orthography, grammar, style

- Harmonizing with known parallels (harmonistic corruption)
- Synthesizing readings – conflation for fear of losing any inspired reading (also called conflate readings)
- Sterilizing readings thought to be vulgar or vague
- Editorializing

“Internal criteria can never be the sole basis for a critical decision, especially when they stand in opposition to the external evidence.” (Aland)

The canons of textual criticism

- The reading is to be chosen which best explains the origin of the others.
- Witnesses are to be weighed rather than counted.
- Other things being equal, the shorter reading is to be preferred.
- As long as it makes sense, the more difficult reading usually is to be preferred.
- Generally:
 - Alexandrian readings are to be preferred.
 - The combination of Alexandrian and Western is to be regarded as strong.
 - Western witnesses alone are suspect.
 - All of the pre-Byzantine forms of text deserve a hearing.
 - Readings which are supported by only Byzantine witnesses are almost certainly secondary (however, the Byzantine text does have some early readings not recorded in one or another of the earlier families).

Chapter 5: GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF HERMENEUTICS

Controversial Areas

Linguistics and Philology

The development of languages and the significance of words creates problems when pieces of the developmental puzzle are missing, or when the significance of a term is seen primarily in the light of the present or with misunderstanding about the term's past historical and cultural importance. (e.g., *baptizo*)

Propositional Revelation

- What contains the meaning: words, sentences, or texts (genres included)? Issues:
- Can we use ordinary (i.e., non-argumentative) biblical sentences as proof-texts?
- Can we extract doctrine from texts? (philosophical propositions)
- Is the function of biblical sentences to convey propositions or information?
- Is meaning derived from words, or from literary forms? (If meaning is tied up solely in forms, then historical references are inappropriate. The argument of moderns against a literal, natural reading of the text stems from the desire to rationalize away what they do not accept by means they do not understand.)
- What is the difference between literature and historical narrative?
- C.S. Lewis (a *real* literary critic!): literature's parents are content and form. Have a "mythic" appreciation of the Bible. Summarize the main arguments and the reason for the whole argument.

Continuity/Discontinuity between the OT and the NT

Can we interpret the NT in the light of the OT? Vice versa? To what extent? NOTE: how this question is answered is at the root of the difference in millennial positions, as well as those between covenant theology and dispensational thought.

Is there a difference between the law of Moses and that of Christ? How much of a difference? Is the law of Moses abrogated by Christ? Fulfilled? Expanded? Matthew 5:17; Romans 2:12-16

Are Israel and the Church synonymous? Dichotomous? Similar? Analogous?

Sense and Reference

Determining the sense of a word is usually not too difficult. E.g., we know that the "witnesses" in Revelation 11 are those who testify of Christ. That's the sense. But figuring out the referents to which the word points is more troublesome. Who or what are they? Two individuals? Human or angelic? From the OT or contemporary? Two groups of people? Two divine institutions (perhaps Scripture and the Church)? Here are some guidelines for determining reference:

- Always approach a passage with humility. It is not possible to understand everything *completely* in the Scriptures.

- The Bible has priority over other data. NT interpretation of the \OT has priority over the interpretation of theologians.
- Clear texts have priority over obscure texts.
- The Spirit's illumination of the exegete has priority over the exegete's exegesis.

Inspiration and Inerrancy

[For an excellent survey of the doctrine of inspiration and its relation to hermeneutics, see Berkhof, *PBI*, ch. 4, "The Proper Conception of the Bible, The Object of Hermeneutica Sacra."]

- The definition question: superintendence or influence? 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:19, 21
- The human agency question: stenographers or commissioned contributors?
- The Divine agency question: considers the historical process from facts to ideas, the providential fitting together of the "puzzle," and the work of the Spirit (Matthew 22:43).
- The scope question: plenary or not?
- The verbal inspiration question: dictation or suggestion? Words or idea? Container or essence? ("infallible thought...implies words." – Hodge)
- The accuracy question: is it truly infallible?

The Scriptures were given by divine inspiration, and therefore are inerrant in their original form—the autographs. Several inferences follow from this truth:

Original language

The original language text must be the basis of all authoritative exegesis and the final arbiter in all disputes. This position cannot be usurped by the Latin Vulgate, or any English version.

Note the following consequences:

- Importance of original language study for theological education
- Importance of original language study for teachers of Bible and doctrine
- Danger of criticizing one version by another
- False approach of Roman Catholic Church concerning Vulgate
- Similar false approach of those who support the King James as final arbiter

Textual criticism first

Exegesis must be based on sound texts; the work of textual criticism must come first. One must be careful in preaching or in teaching the Scripture, to be sure he is basing his argument on a sound text (see notes, ch. 10). In these NT passages the textual evidence is absent or not clear.

- Mark 16:9-20
- John 5:3-4
- John 7:53 – 8:11
- John 14:17
- 1 John 5:7-8

There is a believing, Christian use for textual criticism of the Bible. The abundance of textual evidence gives us in most places a virtually certain text. The amount of variation is remarkably small. Even the worst texts teach the same doctrines as the best texts.

Relation to science, history, and philosophy

Exegesis need not necessarily conform to modern philosophical or scientific presuppositions.

We need a balance here. Obviously, exegesis will take into account “scientific” knowledge. Thus, we understand Jesus’ calling the local ruler Herod Antipas “that fox Herod” to be a figure of speech, since we know he was not a literal fox. The understanding of figures of speech in the Bible would have prevented such embarrassing stands taken by theologians in favor of a flat earth or a geocentric universe. On the other hand, modern opinions against supernatural events, such as the creation, the flood, the miracles of Scripture, the existence of spiritual personalities, should not bias our interpretation. Many have treated these passages rationalistically, or metaphorically, when the literal meaning is clearly intended and historically has been understood and assumed.

For an excellent discussion of the controversy between Galileo and the Roman Inquisition concerning astronomy and a defense of Galileo’s method of interpretation of the Bible, see H. J. Lee, “‘Men of Galilee, Why Stand Gazing Up Into Heaven’: Revisiting Galileo, Astronomy, and the Authority of the Bible,” *JETS* 53:1 (March 2010), 103-116.

One area of particular concern is the creation account of Gen 1-2 (and other passages). We must balance what is certain from science with what is certain from biblical exegesis. Too often scholars put undue weight on either their scientific conclusions (which may not be proved) or their biblical exegesis (which may go beyond the text). True science and true exegesis will ultimately agree, although we may not have sufficient information now to show the harmony.

Translations of the Bible

Much truth can be gained using versions. Since inspiration means that the words adequately express the ideas God intended, it follows that translations that are reasonably accurate will convey those same ideas. The Bible itself records the good use of translations, such as the Aramaic Targums being used in Nehemiah 8, and the frequent quotations of the Greek Septuagint OT translation in the NT.

Much good study can be done with the English Bible alone (or any other vernacular version). One should compare Scripture with Scripture, and be familiar with the Bible as a whole. Knowledge of the original languages of the Bible does not automatically confer good exegetical ability.

Unity of the Bible

All of Scripture presents one unified system of truth (as indicated in 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21). This fact leads to the following corollaries:

Analogy of faith

“The analogy of faith,” a phrase used in Rom 12:6, was developed as a concept by Augustine. It is a legitimate tool of exegesis, as long as each author and passage is allowed to speak for itself. This means that the interpretation of any particular passage should be agreeable to the interpretation of the Bible as a whole.

Harmonization

All passages which deal with the same topic should be interpreted to harmonize with each other.

- Samuel/Kings and Chronicles

Many of the chronological difficulties in comparing the two accounts have been satisfactorily answered by Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (1965). Other differences are accounted for by different theological outlooks or points—as “Satan” vs. “the Lord” leading David to sin (2 Sam 24:1; cf. 1 Chr 21:1).

- The four Gospels

There are many examples in the gospels of accounts which appear on the surface to be contradictory, but which with very little effort can be made to harmonize in various ways. We do not have sufficiently certain and complete data to assert that any account is actually in error, if we interpret them in a reasonable manner.

An example might be the healing of the centurion’s servant by Jesus (Matt 8:5-13 = Luke 7:1-10). Matthew says that the centurion came to Jesus and spoke to him, while Luke says he sent his friends to speak for him. Assuming both accounts are true, we conclude that probably Luke is more precise, indicating that the centurion spoke through his friends, and that Matthew is more general, in that the friends are not important to the account, since they simply relayed what the centurion instructed them to say, so that Jesus was in effect conversing with the centurion himself.

- Romans, Galatians, James

Are we justified by works, or by faith, or by both? And how was Abraham justified?

- Daniel, the Olivet Discourse, Revelation

What are the events surrounding the second coming of Christ? Will there be a future “great tribulation”?

Working with seeming discrepancies

Scripture never contradicts Scripture. Where there are seeming discrepancies the interpreter should seek to find a solution, or simply admit he is insufficiently informed.

Note comment of famous OT scholar and Princeton professor Robert Dick Wilson after studying the OT and its surrounding cultures for 45 years: "No one knows enough to say that there is an error in the OT."

Clear and obscure passages

Clear passages take precedence over obscure ones.

Since all of Scripture is unified, and the teaching of the clear passages can be more certainly determined, it follows that the meaning of obscure passages, which is more uncertain and capable of different interpretations, should be made to conform to that of the more clear passages.

1) Often prose passages take precedence over figurative or poetic ones.

cf. Acts 2:25-31 to Ps 16:8-11

cf. parables and their interpretations

2) A general statement in Scripture may be modified by a more particular passage.

Explicit statements define or condition implicit statements.

This is common with conditional elements or particular exceptions (e.g., Luke 16:18; cf. Matt 5:32; 19:9).

3) One clear passage on any subject, when based on a sound text and rightly interpreted, establishes that truth. Such a passage is called a "proof text." However, no key biblical truth rests on one text only.

4) The revelation of the Bible was given in a progressive manner ("progressive revelation"). Later revelation used the prior revelation as a base of understanding, as it added more information.

We do not expect later revelation to change the meaning of earlier revelation.

On the other hand, later revelation interprets and applies earlier revelation in ways not initially seen, yet in ways agreeable to the earlier revelation.

Examples:

- Nature of the church
- Good and evil spirits
- Work of the Messiah
- Intermediate state and eschatology
- Interpretation of the moral law

Silences of the Bible

The Bible is complete in that its revelation is concluded, but is not complete in the sense that it does not relate every event it could have.

Bible silences

Scripture is silent on certain matters (Deut 29:29; Matt 24:36; John 21:25; cf. the apocryphal stories of Jesus' childhood). To seek definite knowledge of such details is to seek revelation instead of illumination and is presumptuous. We should not be ashamed to claim ignorance on these matters. Some questions upon which the Scriptures are silent are "unprofitable," "vain," and "foolish" (Titus 3:9).

Rules of conduct

Although Scripture is silent concerning many details, yet it is not silent concerning principles of conduct. Here are some of these important principles:

- Acts 4:19, Obey God over men
- Rom 13, Authority of government
- Rom 14, Responsibilities of strong and weak
- 1 Cor 6, Going to law
- 1 Cor 13, Love

Where Scripture is silent, "weak brethren" are not to command "strong brethren" to obey commands, regulations, rites, etc., which they feel are logical deductions from explicit biblical commands (cf. Rom 14). This was the error of the Pharisees, and the Lord condemned them as well as their pious "logic" (Luke 11:46; Mark 7:11, cf. 1-5).

When considering apostolic example or commands, one must distinguish "essentials" from "accidents" (e.g., the "kiss of charity"; see also A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, ch. 42:21:1, p. 614, dealing with modes of baptism and of the Lord's Supper).

Degrees of Certainty

In these matters of applying principles of Scripture, as well as doctrines of Scripture, various degrees of certainty are to be recognized as legitimate:

- On fundamentals—no tolerance (cf. treatment of heretics in Titus 3:10-11)
- On convictions—some tolerance (cf. Rom 14:2-5; each to be fully convinced in his own mind)
- On preference—much tolerance
- On open items—all tolerance

Remember that people grow and change in these areas; so Christian toleration is called for. Note examples of Augustine's *Retractions*, Patrick Fairbairn's *Fairbairn versus Fairbairn* (a premillennial pastor, later an amillennial professor) and more recently such change-about as that of Arthur Pink (dispensationalist → covenant theologian).

Accuracy and Precision of the Bible

Since the Bible is inspired, it is truthful and accurate to the degree of precision intended by the authors. While some deny the truthfulness of the Bible, others go to the other extreme and force upon it standards of precision in detail or expression which it was not intended to bear. The Bible was written on the popular level, and it should be interpreted with its degree of precision being at the popular level.

Accommodation

The Bible contains accommodation to human beings. However, this accommodation never contains or transmits error. This accommodation is necessary in the use of human language itself. It is expanded by the use of the common speech in both testaments (cf. Koiné Greek).

As the Bible was given on the popular level, the fair interpreter will interpret it on that level. If he does, his interpretation will not contain error.

Anthropocentrism

Biblical descriptions of God and events are often anthropocentric. For example, God is described as having bodily parts (anthropomorphism) or human emotions (anthropopathism); note the perspective of the Babel account (Gen 11:5). As another example, Ps 104 and Gen 1-2 should be interpreted as taking place from the standpoint of people on the earth, avoiding the error made by many in the time of Galileo. Some passages in the OT speak of the souls of the dead as having no impact, the view from the earth.

Language of appearance

The Bible often uses the language of appearance. For example, bats are classified under the category of birds (Lev 11:13, 19). Insects, which have six legs, are described as “walking on all fours” (Lev 11:20-23).

Numbers

Numbers often are approximate. Compare Num 1-3 (round number subtracted from a precise number in Num 3:43-46). Thus the 200,000,000 troops (Rev 9:16) probably is a round number. Apparently approximate numbers are used to describe the golden sea of Solomon’s temple, with a diameter of 10 cubits and a circumference of 30 cubits (1 Kgs 7:23; $10 * 3.14 = 31.4$ cubits).

Perspicuity of the Bible

The Scriptures are perspicuous—i.e., they are written to be understood.

“If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.” (John 7:17; cf. WCF 1:7)

Understanding a moral as well as an intellectual issue

Except for infants and those incapable of rational understanding, everyone can understand the plan of salvation, the great truths of the faith, and the way of holy living. We are held morally responsible for unbelief (Heb 3:12, “a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away . . .”). It is not a merely intellectual matter.

Availability of understanding

The Scriptures contain a profitable message for everyone (2 Tim 3:16-17). Therefore, one need not arrive at a consciously articulated epistemology before exegeting the Bible. Christian philosophers have an important place in the church’s thinking; yet we should beware of any who claim to have a new “key” to understand the Bible or the world, which God’s people have not possessed before.

Availability of language

Some interpreters go beyond reasonable interpretation that is generally available and go to an extreme; they seek to squeeze more meaning from the text than it was intended to convey. The language used in the Bible was and is available to all intelligent readers. Here are a few examples of this kind of error:

Overuse of etymology

A word may include within its scope the etymological idea. Sometimes a word’s etymology provides helpful illustrative material.

However, the meaning of a biblical word is not to be derived from its etymology. Meaning is based on usage, and often a word’s meaning is far removed from its etymology. An example is the common mistranslation of the term “deepest darkness” in Ps 23 as its etymology, “shadow of death.”

Overuse of English

The meaning of a biblical word is not to be derived from its English translation.

Cf. “fish,” Genesis “kind,” “fornication,” “power” (from “dynamite”?)

Overuse of grammar

- Use of synonyms

- Different cases

- Different tenses

- Presence or absence of the article

- Strict use of prepositions

Remember the saying, “A little Greek is a dangerous thing.”

Singleness of meaning

It is not proper exegesis to find multiple meanings when the text contains ambiguous vocabulary or syntax. The author intended to convey one thought—we should try to determine what that thought is. It is better to state our preference, along with possible alternatives, than to say that all were intended. e.g., Gal 2:16, “the faith of Jesus”

As the Westminster Confession of Faith says, the Scripture’s meaning “is not manifold, but one” (1:9).

On the other hand, we should recognize the prophecies which may have their fulfillment in multiple events (e.g., Deut 28; Luke 21:24), or which may be fulfilled over an interval of time (e.g., Isa 61:1-2; cf. Luke 4:16-20). Likewise, some passages describe events or people which are typological of other events or people (e.g., Ps 69).

Place for scholarship

All passages are not alike plain. There are all degrees of difficulty within the Scripture, and some of the “simplest” passages are the hardest to understand. For this reason biblical scholarship and careful exegesis are necessary. Cf. Prov 26:4-5; 1 John 3:6, 9; 2 Pet 3:16, the “unlearned” twist Scripture to their own destruction.

Respect for scholarship of others

In light of the perspicuity of Scripture and in light of the Holy Spirit’s illumination of pious people of past generations, the views of commentators and others of former days are not to be despised. Cf. the “checking principle” of Bernard Ramm (*Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 118-19).

Therefore, sentiments like these are out of place: “I’m not interested in what Calvin or A. A. Hodge thought; they were only men. I’m interested only in what the Bible says!” Or, “I don’t use commentaries; I use the Bible!” Christian humility and modesty require us to respect the scholarly work of others, and, while being true to our own work and abilities under God, respectfully to consider their positions and arguments. It’s possible they thought of something we have overlooked!

Historical Context of the Bible

Scriptural revelation was given by God in a historical process, and must be interpreted in light of this fact.

The meaning of any passage must be in harmony with the historical circumstances which surround its writing or those which bear on its subject (e.g., the context of Isa 40-55 is not the time of its writing, but it is prophetically the time of the later return from captivity in Babylon).

An example of ignoring this important principle is the commentary of Habakkuk recently discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls; this commentary ignores the historical situation of Israel in the days of Habakkuk, and says Habakkuk is talking about the trials of the Jews during the time of the commentary (first century BC).

CHAPTER 6: HISTORICAL SCHOOLS OF HERMENEUTICS

Good sources for further study:

Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, Part 3, pp. 601-738

Frederick W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (1886)

The Cambridge History of the Bible (various authors; 1963-70; 3 vols.)

The standard hermeneutics books have discussions; Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, is especially good; pp. 23-84.

Trends of Error

The history of exegesis is quite complex, with each historical period containing many conflicting methods. However, in each major period there have been certain trends and established methods which later were considered misled. In this chapter we will examine the major trends, in the approximate chronological order in which they predominated or reached their zenith of popularity in the church. These trends are as follows:

1. Allegorizing away the natural sense
2. Equating traditional interpretations with Scripture itself
3. Unbelief: rejecting the natural sense
4. Subjectivism: judging every interpretation by current historical needs or philosophical outlooks

Afterwards, we will look at the literal school of interpretation.

The Allegorical Schools

Definitions

Allegory—an extended metaphor (an implied comparison)

Allegorical interpretation—treating material which is not evidently an allegory as though it were an allegory; giving a new, often arbitrary meaning to a text without sufficient basis; “spiritualizing”

Greek allegorism

The Greek gods were coming into disrepute. Allegorical interpretation of their histories made them into religious myths, which had spiritual value.

Often allegorism was employed by the Stoics as they interpreted the myths of ancient Greece and her gods. They extracted spiritual meanings from these stories which were compatible with the Stoical “four-fold remedy” for life:

1. Don't fear the gods (they don't exist)
2. Don't fear death (it is painless)
3. Don't fear pain (it is short)
4. Don't fear man (he can inflict only pain or death)

Jewish Allegorism

[See Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, ch. 1; also G. Vermes, "Bible and Midrash: Early OT Exegesis," in the *Cambridge History of the Bible* 1:199-231]

Rabbinical exegesis

Occasionally the Jewish expositors of Palestine engaged in this sort of interpretation of the OT (especially with the Song of Songs). Examples can be found in Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* 1, ch. 2-3, although he distinguishes the quality of the allegorism from that of the Hellenists (cf. Vol. 2, App. 9). In general, the Palestinian Jews were more normal in their exegetical methodology. See for example the basically sensible rules of interpretation taught by Hillel (enumerated by Berkhof *PBI*, 15-16, included below, p. 33).

Philo (20 B.C. – A.D. 54)

Philo was the supreme example of Jewish Hellenistic culture and allegorism. Philo developed allegorism into a system. It was his desire to synthesize the OT with the prevailing Greek philosophy; by using allegorism in the OT, he was able to remove many of the objections people had to accepting its statements. Several of the hermeneutical rules of Philo are quoted in Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, 149-152.

Christian Allegorism

The earliest Christian writers seem to have taken a more literal view of Scripture, but several famous fathers developed allegorism as a Christian system, and thus led the way for the standard Roman Catholic interpretations of the Middle Ages.

Christian writers had a double motive for allegorism: to find both the OT and the NT to be in harmony with accepted Greek philosophy, and to maintain and promote the OT as a Christian book.

Origen (A.D. 185-254)

Origen did not deny the literal meaning of Scripture, but he associated it with Judaism and with the common people. His teacher, Clement of Alexandria, was the first well-known and respected father to employ allegorism consciously as a system. Clement believed that any given text had five possible meanings:

- Historical sense – the actual event/statement
- Doctrinal sense – the obvious theological teachings of the text
- Prophetic sense – the predictive and/or typological significance of the text
- Philosophical sense – the stoical thought behind the text, revealing meaning in people and events
- Mystical sense – the deeper truths symbolized by people and events

Origen followed him and developed the system further. His influence was spread by his important position in Alexandria in Egypt, by his detailed and fine scholarship on the text of Scripture, and by his devotion to the church. Allegorism was natural for Christians who were already acquainted with Greek allegorism.

Augustine (A.D. 354-430)

Hearing the allegorical interpretations which the famous bishop and preacher Ambrose gave to the texts of Scripture, especially the OT, Augustine was able to overcome many of his philosophical objections to the Bible. Augustine later magnificently presented the classic allegorical interpretation of the kingdom of God as the church in his *City of God*. He justified allegorical interpretation by misinterpreting 1 Corinthians 3:6. In his *De Doctrina Cristiana*, a handbook of hermeneutics and homiletics, he tries to develop a theory of signs (rather advance modern concept!) as basic to hermeneutical studies, i.e., hermeneutics is a special branch of semantics. Similar to Clement and Origen, he also had “levels” of signs in his approach.

Roman Catholic allegorism

Through most of its history the Catholic Church has used Jerome’s Vulgate translation as the basis of its interpretation (Jerome, A.D. 340-420). Greek and Hebrew texts were relegated to enlightening the Latin. After the sixth century nearly all of the church’s exegesis was marked by extensive allegorizing. Gradually the so-called fourfold sense of Scripture was standardized:

1. Literal sense
2. Allegorical sense
3. Moral sense (or tropological sense)
4. Anagogical sense

Thus, the city of Jerusalem in a passage such as Ps 51:18 (“In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem.”) could be made to represent: (1) the literal city, (2) the church, (3) the human soul, and (4) the heavenly city.

The extremes are admitted, the mystical sense is prominent, perhaps because its subjectivity makes it less susceptible to criticism. The Church is the final, official interpreter, and Scripture is not allowed to conflict with the system. Rather, the concept of Scripture is broader, encompassing a “deposit of faith” in both written and unwritten forms. This also led to an elevation of the Fathers’ writings and thought to equivalency with the inspired text.

With this methodology in use, it is easy to see how exegesis became a dry shuffling of combinations of possible allegorical meanings, with the multitude of possible interpretations. In general, the method ignored the primary element in sound exegesis: *context*.

Protestant allegorism

With the Reformation came a new appreciation for the Bible as the only authority for the church. As a result, exegesis became more Bible-centered, with context replacing the role of church authority. The more literal interpretation of the Bible spread through the various doctrines. The early reformers still maintained a more allegorical interpretation of eschatological portions, however (e.g., both Luther and Calvin), although Calvin did not write a commentary on Revelation. Many of the “old-style” amillennialists allegorize much of the OT even today. Even in these cases, however, the allegorization is more controlled by supposed NT analogies than it was in former years.

Traditionalist interpretation

A second trend in hermeneutics became a source of error in succeeding centuries. This trend was to bestow absolute authority on the ecclesiastical or traditional interpretation of a passage.

Influence of battles with heresy

Many of the early heresies in the Christian church appealed to various portions of the Bible for support. Defenders of what are now considered fundamental Christian doctrines supported the orthodox doctrines from the Bible also, often giving a totally different interpretation to the same Scriptures from that given by the heretics. As the early church struggled with the various heresies surrounding the Trinity and the person of Christ, there needed to be some authority which could be appealed to, as a judge for biblical interpretation. In one way or another, the church itself became this authority.

The ecumenical and regional councils

Based on the example of Acts 15, many early controversies were settled by recourse to a gathering of church officials. These councils were considered authoritative to a greater or lesser degree—depending on the quality and number of the assembled divines, and upon whether or not their conclusion agreed with one's own. In the fourth century and beyond the state provided enforcement, which greatly increased their authority in the eyes of the church.

The bishops

From the second century onward, as diocesan bishops gained respect and authority in the major regions of the Roman Empire, their opinions were considered representative of the church in their area. If several or all of them agreed, their opinion was considered orthodox.

The pope

Gradually the Roman bishop became the most respected and influential bishop in the church. From the early Middle Ages on, his views ruled the church's doctrine. After the Eastern church broke away in the eleventh century, the pope continued to rule the Western church. Since the nineteenth century his views on doctrine or morals have been considered by Roman Catholics as infallible when he speaks *ex cathedra* ("from the throne"; i.e., officially). This ruling was made retroactive to the beginning!

The fathers

To support various doctrines, the Roman church considered the tradition of the church to be equally authoritative with the Scriptures. This tradition is recorded in the writings of the church fathers (Christian writers whose works are extant, dating from the Nicene age and before).

Many, most notably Abelard, have pointed to the glaring contradictions in the fathers. The official response was that the fathers are interpretational guides when they reflect the "uniform tradition of the church."

Scholasticism

Catholic scholars in the late Middle Ages, headed by Thomas Aquinas, sought to harmonize biblical theology with Aristotelian philosophy. The result was a wooden exegesis, which became not only the pattern, but also the authoritative conclusion, of all subsequent exegesis.

The Jesuit variation

In order to make church membership easier and Catholic doctrine and exegesis more palatable to educated and worldly people, the Jesuits developed the concept of “probabilism.” If two fathers diverged in their understanding of a doctrine or passage, either view was considered “probable,” and thereby could be held by orthodox Catholics (unless, of course, the church specifically forbade that interpretation). Thus a great many passages, with their ethical requirements, could be watered down. A great enemy of the Jesuits and of probabilism was Blaise Pascal (esp. in his *Provincial Letters*).

The Council of Trent (1545-63)

This lengthy and important council was called to counteract the progress of the Protestant Reformation and solidify loyalty to the Roman church. It in effect codified the superstitions of the Middle Ages, and made them official doctrine, which must be believed for salvation. The council also established a required mode of exegesis:

1. The only authoritative biblical text was the Latin Vulgate, Jerome’s translation of the Bible into Latin. No argument in controversy could be based on Hebrew or Greek originals.
2. The canon of Scripture included the Apocrypha.
3. The only authoritative interpretation of Scripture was that which the church as a whole, represented by the pope, declared.

[Allister McGrath writes extensively about the Protestant principle of individual interpretation and responsibility, along with its drawbacks and advantages in *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (2007).]

Ecumenical theology

In modern times Catholic exegesis and liberal Protestant exegesis are converging. Both now favor a critical approach to Scripture. The Catholic theologians are recognizing the need for some private judgment (especially when it opposes supernaturalistic orthodoxy). On the other hand, Protestants are recognizing the need for some authoritative interpreter other than the individual Christian, to unify the ecumenical movement and give it some clout. This normative interpreter is seen in the ecumenical church; “God still speaks through the church,” they say.

The new authoritarianism found in Protestantism is a dangerous trend. Because of our sinful natures human traditions nearly always tend to move away from God’s true message in the Bible. It is coming to the point when Catholic and Protestant theologians alike will claim that the Bible believers are unbiblical!

The Critical Schools

The denial of the supernatural, as a philosophical presupposition, has led to radical changes in biblical interpretation. As scholars in the visible church have denied the supernatural, they have had to find a proper understanding of the Bible in some way different from simple faith in its plain teachings.

[The history of these changes is summarized well in the *Cambridge History of the Bible* 3, ch. 7.]

Rationalism and Liberalism

The earliest deviation in this direction assumed the genuine belief of the biblical authors in the miraculous element in the Bible. This belief could be accounted for by misunderstanding on the part of the witnesses of the events (rationalism), or it could be due to the church adding to the “genuine” non-miraculous core, found, for example, in the pared down gospel of Mark (Liberalism). There is considerable overlap between these two views.

The history of the rise and fall of this school was beautifully traced for the life of Jesus research by Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*.

As an exegetical system, this approach has been disproved by both the theological left and the theological right. Rationalism demands more faith than that exercised by fundamentalists. And the tenants of Liberal theology reflect a very shallow exegesis of both the OT and the NT.

The consistent eschatological school

Following Schweitzer, many critics assumed that Jesus and the early apostles believed in a literal fulfillment of the Jewish prophecies in their own day. This hope was mistaken. Jesus was wrong. But his greatness lay in his absolute dedication to his religious belief and his consequent turning of the religious aspirations of millions to himself—the bending of history to his will, though in a way not perceived by him.

Most scholars have rejected this school, although they recognize many positive contributions it has made to understanding the importance of eschatology and its relation to the soteriology and the ecclesiology of the NT.

The neo-orthodox schools

Recognizing the spiritual bankruptcy of Liberalism, yet adhering to a critical view of the Scriptures, neo-orthodoxy has made use of philosophical existentialism to forge a new union between orthodox concepts of sin, with orthodox terminology, and a critical use of the Bible.

The main pioneer of this movement was Karl Barth, followed by Emil Brunner and Rudolph Bultmann. Of these three Barth was the soundest exegete, and Bultmann the most radical. However, Bultmann has had the strongest impact on technical biblical exegesis.

Barth taught that Christ is the Word of God, and that no revelation can take place through propositions—God is too distinct from man. The Bible is only a recollection of past non-verbal revelations. Man meets God only in existential divine-human encounters, which God dispenses in a sovereign manner.

Barth distinguished therefore the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith: *Geschichte* (faith’s history) vs. *Historie* (empirical history).

Bultmann developed the exegetical procedure of “demythologizing,” stripping the NT of its first century theological trappings, and re-clothing its central message in twentieth century concepts. Normally the result is hardly recognizable. This technique enables neo-orthodox preachers to affirm belief in orthodox doctrines by name, while considering them as religious myths with an entirely different meaning from that understood by the ordinary layman.

An interesting illustration of this shift is seen in William B. Kennedy, “Neo-orthodoxy Goes to Sunday School: The Christian Faith and Life Curriculum,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 58:4 (Winter, 1980), 326-39.

Subjectivism

It is most natural that when one studies the Bible, he would see in it both items that he would appreciate and fully sympathize with, and items that he would find objectionable or awkward. These reactions in the reader are largely based on his personal makeup, background, prior training, and environment. If one studies the Bible with a submissive spirit, he will be willing to adjust his thinking and eventually his feelings to agree with Scripture. On the other hand, the temptation is ever present to interpret the Bible differently, so as to agree with our thinking or with the prevailing culture. This is done for two reasons: to make us more comfortable with the Bible, and to make it easier to present the Bible to others. Already, we see that much of the allegorical school’s thinking is shaped by this subjectivism. However, it shows up frequently in other forms.

Medieval mysticism

Many Catholic writers of this period wrote pious interpretations of biblical portions, intended to awaken devotion to God or Christ, without much regard to exegesis. A famous example of this pious allegorism is that of Bernard of Clairvaux. Many of these writers especially liked the Song of Songs as a fruitful source of devotional re-interpretation. See Berkhof, p. 23, and Ramm, p. 60.

Pietism

The two most prominent leaders of this movement were Philip James Spener (1635-1705) and A. H. Francke (1663-1727). Spener’s book, *Collegia Pietatis*, encouraged Bible study, devotions, and prayer, and reveals an influence of Baxter in his thinking. Franke emphasized philology and practical application. Franke asserted that only the regenerate could understand the Bible, wanted believers to read the Bible through often, and to use commentaries sparingly in a supplemental role to the Scriptures. These men were reacting to the bitter theological feuds raging throughout Protestantism at the time, fueled by the dogmatism and fierce creedalism of the Post-Reformation. As Farrar has said, “They read the Bible by the unnatural glare of theological hatred” (*History of Interpretation*, 363-64).

The pietistic movement in Germany emphasized the importance of Christian love and service, and sought to de-emphasize the importance of doctrinal controversy. This movement had a strong influence upon the Moravians and Zinzendorf, as well as the Puritans, Wesley, Edwards, Matthew Henry, and the Quakers. The effort was to recover the Bible as “spiritual food.” It produced great missionary and benevolent efforts, but tended to neglect serious and scholarly Bible study. As a result, many of these works soon fell into serious doctrinal error and eventual apostasy.

Modern devotional Bible study

This approach to the Bible is very common—*e.g.*, on radio and television Bible programs. It has a good and needed place in the lives of Christians, but should not become a substitute for serious study of the Bible and contending for doctrinal purity. Ramm has noted two dangers of this method:

- A tendency to employ excess allegorism, especially in the OT
- A neglect of doctrinal portions or detailed exegesis, which are vital to the maintenance of orthodox Christianity

Social or political agendas

Frequently devotees of a particular school or movement in the public sphere desire to either blunt the Bible's opposition to what they believe, or even to enlist the Bible's support for it. They accomplish this by discovering new interpretations of the relevant Bible portions. These interpretations, not surprisingly, agree with their positions.

In American history passages were misinterpreted to justify black slavery and teach white racial superiority. Today examples of this kind of misuse of Scripture interpretation include those who use the Bible to justify sexual license or homosexuality, promote socialism by "liberation theology," further a "feminist theology," declare a "health and wealth" gospel, or promote the beliefs and practices of the New Age movement.

This abuse of Scripture deserves the ancient censure of Peter:

2 Peter 3:16 – "He [Paul] writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."

May the Lord keep us faithful to his own meaning when we interpret his Word!

The literal schools

What we have described as the grammatical-historical-theological method of exegesis has its roots in the history of exegesis. As one would expect, with the exception of the Middle Ages, the literal interpretation of Scripture has been well represented.

Jewish interpretation

Ezra is commonly viewed as the father of hermeneutics. Following his lead, Jewish literalists had some good principles in theory:

- A word is best understood in context.
- Comparing Scripture with Scripture.
- Clear passages have precedence over obscure ones.
- Paid close attention to grammar, spelling, figures of speech, etc.
- Use of logical deduction in application.
- Recognizing that God accommodates himself to men in his revelation.

The Jews in Palestine in NT times used several modes of interpretation, with the normal or literal mode predominating. For example, the seven rules of Hillel included the principles noted above; however, Hillel also made these rules often arbitrary and broader than the text justified, sometimes misusing these good rules in practice to come to exegetical conclusions which the text could not support.

These are the seven rules of Hillel:

1. "Light and heavy" – if it is true for the lesser important case, it is true for the more important case. The philosophers called this *a fortiori* (Latin for "with even greater strength"). Watch for the phrase "HOW MUCH MORE THEN." Eg.: Jeremiah 12:5; John 7:23; Matthew 12:11, 12; Romans 5:8-10
2. "Equivalence" – a common term used in two laws brings the same meaning in both places. Eg: 1 Samuel 1:10, "And let no razor come upon his head." Judges 13:5 of Shimshon, "And let no razor come upon his head, for the youth is a Nazirite to Elohim." We can conclude then Samuel was a Nazirite as was Samson by comparing these two related verses. Also think about how "day" is used in Genesis 1-3, and compare it to how it is used in other places that speak of the length of days in various contexts.
3. "Deduction" – arguing from specific cases to general principles. One explicit text serves as a foundation or a starting point so as to constitute a rule for all similar texts or cases. Eg.: Hebrews 9:11-12; compare with Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 10:16, 17.
4. "General and specific" – a general term followed by a specific term is limited by that specific term. Eg.: John 3:16-21, "God so loved the world...whosoever believeth in him."
5. "Specific and general" – a specific term followed by a general term is made general. Eg: Genesis 1:27, "And Elohim created the man in His image, in the image of Elohim created him-male and female He created them." Then in Genesis 2:7, 21 we have this general statement particularized.
6. "Analogy" – passages are to be interpreted so that they do not contradict one another. When two passages that seem to contradict each other, use a third passage to solve the apparent conflict. Eg.: Leviticus 1:1 & Exodus 25:22 ; resolved in Numbers 7:89. And, Romans 1:17 (Hab.2: 4) & Romans 3:10, Romans 2:6 & Romans 4:7-8 , all resolved in Genesis 15:6.
7. "Context" – always interpret a passage by its context (what precedes and immediately follows it). "One cannot properly handle context until he has a good grasp of biblical content. The interpreter must know the content of the book from which the particular passage he is interpreting comes. He needs to know the content of books in which there are passages devoted to the same theme which he is interpreting...Biblical content is essential for the much-needed grasp of context." (Mickelsen, *Interpreting The Bible*, p.100) Eg.: Matthew 13's parables. Note Jesus' explanatory comments regarding their purpose.

The Sadducees tended to be more literalistic than the Pharisees. It used to be thought that they accepted only the first five books of the OT, but recent scholarship has shown that they accepted the entire OT canon of the Jews (cf. Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and Its Background in Early Judaism* [1985]). Actually, the Sadducees did to some extent avoid some of the interpretive excesses of the Pharisees, such as letterism, externalism, and traditionalism (cf. Matt 15:1-6).

NT exegesis of the OT

Careful study of the use the NT makes of OT citations has shown that in the great majority of cases the NT interprets the OT in its normal, literal meaning. And even in those cases where the literal meaning is not so plain, a good case can be made for what we call the grammatical-historical-theological method of hermeneutics. For more detailed discussion, see Chapter 8, Special Hermeneutics, p. 45, below.

Antioch of Syria—Christian literalism

A center of Christian scholarship in the post-Nicene period, Antioch was the home of Chrysostom (fl. A.D. 375), Theodor of Mopsuestia (400), and Theodoret (450). They led a healthy reaction against the allegorizing of the Alexandrians. These writers are of lasting value. They employed literal exegesis, but recognized figures of speech. They understood the concept of progressive revelation, and preferred typology to allegory. They recognized that some texts are plain, without figures of speech or deeper levels of meaning, while some figurative passages have literal meanings behind them. Jerome, Augustine, and the Reformers were influenced by this school.

The Reformers

Precursors

The Reformation of the church was preceded by a hermeneutical reformation. Especially significant for Luther was Nicholas of Lyra (ca. 1300), who was a bridge to reformation hermeneutics (see Berkhof, *PBI*, p. 25).

Martin Luther

Luther's own study of the Bible led him to adopt a stance favoring the literal meaning of biblical statements. This was the ground on which he could stand against the collected authority of the church. A famous quotation of his: "I ask for Scripture, and you give me fathers." Yet Luther was no "enthusiast"; he made use of all the scholarly tools available to him.

Five principles to Luther's hermeneutics:

- Psychological Principle – Faith and illumination by the Spirit are essential.
- Authority Principle – Sola Scriptura
- Literal Principle – rejecting allegory, hold to primacy of the original languages and employ a grammatical-historical method.
- Sufficiency Principle – The Bible is sufficiently clear to be understood by devout believers with the of the Holy Spirit.
- Christological Principle – The function of interpretation is to find Christ. This is how Luther went about making the entire Bible "Christian."
- Law-Gospel Principle – Keep these concepts distinct (the Gospel is not a new law as per Catholic and Reformed thought). One is a schoolmaster, the other a redeemer.

Some have stated that Luther rejected James as a part of the biblical canon (quoting various prefaces to his translation of various books of the Bible). This attack is disproved by Luther's inclusion of James in his German Bible, and by his explicit statements (cf. his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 1520).

John Calvin

Calvin is justly considered the exegete of the Reformation. He picked up where Luther left off and developed the science of hermeneutics more thoroughly. His commentaries on every book of the Bible (except Revelation) still have great value, and are a dramatic break from most exegesis which predated him.

Calvin emphasized five points in biblical interpretation:

- The supreme authority of Scripture
- Divine illumination as the *sine quo non* of interpretation
- Scripture as the best interpreter of Scripture
- Priesthood of the believer
- Caution in prophecy, bound by historical settings

The Westminster Confession of Faith

The assembled divines in the seventeenth century who produced this confession reached a high point in the history of doctrine. Their chapter on Scripture (ch. 1) summarizes beautifully the Scriptural doctrine on this subject. The chapter has ten sections:

1. General and special revelation
2. The OT and NT canon
3. The Apocrypha excluded
4. The authority of Scripture from God
5. Evidences of Scripture's infallibility and authority
6. Completeness of Scripture for doctrine and life
7. Perspicuity of Scripture
8. Original languages and translations
9. Interpreting Scripture by itself
10. Our supreme authority: the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture

Of special interest to the subject of interpretation is paragraph 9:

“The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, (which is not manifold, but one,) it may be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”

Recently some writers have attempted to show that the Westminster Assembly did not hold to the inerrancy of Scripture. This position has already been refuted thoroughly by Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* (Vol. 6 of his collected works). Warfield proved from the writings of the Westminster divines what their intentions were when they spoke of the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. Note especially ch. 3, “The Westminster Doctrine of Holy Scripture” (pp. 155-257) and ch. 4, “The Doctrine of Inspiration of the Westminster Divines” (pp. 261-333). The observations of Roger R. Nicole are appropriate (in Appendix 6, “The Westminster Confession and Inerrancy,” in A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield, *Inspiration*). See also Richard A. Muller, “Scripture and the Westminster Confession,” in *Scripture and Worship: Biblical Interpretation and the Directory for Public Worship* (2007).

Current issues within the literal school

Within the ranks of those who hold to a literal form of interpretation of Scripture, there still are numerous differences and controversies. Conservative biblical interpreters have taken various stances on these issues:

- Dispensational vs. covenant hermeneutics
- Interpretation of prophecy
- Relation of law and grace
- Biblical writers' use of midrash, or other non-literal interpretation

In addition to books already mentioned, the following are significant in these controversies (note that this list only scratches the surface!):

- Dispensational hermeneutics: Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (1965), esp. ch. 5, "The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism," pp. 86-109.
- Amillennial hermeneutics: William Hendriksen, *Israel in Prophecy* (1968); Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Interpreting Prophecy* (1976)
- Gospel and law controversy—a controversial book: Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?* (1980); the subtitle shows his perspective on the conflict: *The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology*; cf. Mark W. Karlberg, "The Search for an Evangelical Consensus on Paul and the Law," *JETS* 40:4 (Dec., 1997), 563-79.
- Exegetical methodology of Jesus and apostles—another controversial book: Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (1975).

Chapter 7: RULES OF LANGUAGE

Since God gave us the Bible in particular language contexts, its meaning must be determined by careful study of the general rules of language and of the particular languages of Scripture. Preparation for this careful study is properly undertaken in the seminary's language courses. This chapter will survey some general rules of the biblical languages that bear on the interpretation of a passage. For illustrative purposes particular attention will be given to Greek syntax, but many of the same principles will apply to the interpretation of Hebrew or Aramaic texts.

Literal or normal exegesis

It is a general rule of language that statements are to be accepted at face value unless there exist adequate reasons for doing otherwise. Most language is intended to be understood "literally" or "normally." Cf. David Cooper: "If the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense." This principle is based on the perspicuity of Scripture, and on the normal principles that apply to all languages.

Figures of speech

As with other literature, the Bible abounds with figures of speech. The Bible was written as popular literature; it was designed to motivate and inspire as well as to educate. This type of writing requires such figures; here are some major types of figures of speech found in the Bible:

[See Berkhof, *PBI*, pp. 82-91, and the extensive work of E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*.]

Simile

- Stated comparison (uses such terms as *like* or *as*)

Matthew 23:37 – "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

Luke 10:18 – "He replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.'"

Metaphor

- Implied comparison (no term as *like* or *as*)

Luke 13:32 – "He replied, 'Go tell that fox [Herod Antipas], "I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'"

Matthew 23:33 – "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"

Parable

- Extended simile

Matthew 13:24, 31, 33 – "Jesus told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.' . . . He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like

a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field.' . . . He told them still another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.'"

Allegory

- Extended metaphor

Judges 9:7-20

⁷When Jotham [son of Gideon] was told about this [how Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem murdered his seventy brothers], he climbed up on the top of Mount Gerizim and shouted to them, "Listen to me, citizens of Shechem, so that God may listen to you. ⁸One day the trees went out to anoint a king for themselves. They said to the olive tree, 'Be our king.'

⁹"But the olive tree answered, 'Should I give up my oil, by which both gods and men are honored, to hold sway over the trees?'

¹⁰"Next, the trees said to the fig tree, 'Come and be our king.'

¹¹"But the fig tree replied, 'Should I give up my fruit, so good and sweet, to hold sway over the trees?'

¹²"Then the trees said to the vine, 'Come and be our king.'

¹³"But the vine answered, 'Should I give up my wine, which cheers both gods and men, to hold sway over the trees?'

¹⁴"Finally all the trees said to the thornbush, 'Come and be our king.'

¹⁵"The thornbush said to the trees, 'If you really want to anoint me king over you, come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, then let fire come out of the thornbush and consume the cedars of Lebanon!'"

2 Samuel 12:1-7

"The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, 'There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.'

"David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, 'As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.'

"Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: "I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. . . .'"

Ezekiel 16 [extended allegory of God and Israel as husband and wife]

John 10:1-18

¹“I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ²The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. ³The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech (*paroimi/a paroimia*), but they did not understand what he was telling them.

⁷Therefore Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

¹⁴“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me -- ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father -- and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ¹⁷The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life -- only to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Metonymy

- One thing or person called by the name of another

Hosea 3:5 – “Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king [actually, the Messiah]. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.”

Matthew 22:17 – “Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” (cf. “Uncle Sam”)

1 Peter 5:13 – “She who is in Babylon [probably Rome], chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.”

Revelation 2:20 – “Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.”

Synecdoche

- Whole for a part, or part for the whole

Matthew 23:23-24 – “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.”

Psalm 40:6 – “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.” (NIV)

Notice how this was understood as a synecdoche by the LXX and thus quoted in the NT:
“Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: ‘Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me.’” (Heb 10:5)

Euphemism

- Polite expression for something crude or harsh

Judges 3:24 – “After he had gone, the servants came and found the doors of the upper room locked. They said, ‘He must be relieving himself [Heb. and KJV, “covering his feet”] in the inner room of the house.’” Here the NIV has replaced the Hebrew euphemism with a more literal translation.

This is a cultural matter; in another case the NIV uses a euphemism to replace a Hebrew figure of speech which we would consider crude—1 Sam 25:22, “May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male [literally, as in KJV, “one who pisses against the wall”] of all who belong to him!” (same figure is repeated in v. 34).

John 11:11 – “After he had said this, he went on to tell them, ‘Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.’”

Acts 7:60 – “Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep.” (a remarkable statement for such a violent death!)

Litotes

- Calculated understatement

Acts 20:12 – “The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted (Greek, “were not a little comforted”).”

2 Corinthians 9:4 – “For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident.”

Hyperbole

- Calculated exaggeration

Numbers 13:33 – “We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.”

Joshua 11:4 – “They came out with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots—a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.”

1 Samuel 15:7-8 – “Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, to the east of Egypt. He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword.”

[Actually, this is a typical ANE exaggeration; many Amalekites remained (1 Sam 27:8). See an excellent discussion of this OT phenomenon in Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (2011). This type of hyperbole is frequently found in battle accounts in the contemporary literature and monuments.]

Ezekiel 28:1-16 – “The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre, “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “‘In the pride of your heart you say, ‘I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god in the heart of the seas.’ But you are a man and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god.’” ...

¹¹“The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “‘You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones.’”

[Note that this passage is speaking in highly figurative language of the human king of Tyre. Biblical laments often include an exaggerated description of the former glory contrasted with the later state of ruin. A lack of understanding figurative language in Ezekiel has led some to interpret this passage as referring to Satan before his fall; see the standard commentaries.]

Obadiah 4 – “‘Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,’ declares the LORD.”

Luke 10:15 – “And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.”

Irony

- Critical, humorous sarcasm

Job 12:2 – “Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!”

Job 12:7-8 – “But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you.”

Zechariah 11:13 – “And the LORD said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter—the handsome price at which they priced me!’ So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter.”

1 Corinthians 4:8 – “Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings—and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you!”

Recognizing figures of speech

We should note that these figures of speech still point to literal truth, which can be determined from the context, not to some esoteric meaning requiring a second revelation to understand. The figures can be recognized as such from the nature of the statement (which would be impossible to interpret literally, as Jesus' saying he was a door) or from the immediate context (as Jesus' saying he was a shepherd). To be useful a figure needs to be recognized as such; hence it would be expected for the author to make it clear a figure is intended. That being the case, figures of speech are recognized in each passage by almost all interpreters. We should be doubtful that a statement of Scripture is figurative when it is regarded as a figure of speech by only a portion of interpreters.

The Meaning of Words

The meaning of individual words in the text can be determined to a greater or lesser extent in these ways (in their order of importance):

The word's context

This is the most important single indicator of a word's meaning. If the meaning of the sentence is fairly clear, the word's meaning normally fits in that sentence, making as little semantic contribution to the total meaning as possible. This is a general linguistic principle. To all appearances the Bible language follows this principle.

Occasionally a writer will use a word in an unexpected manner to grab attention or make a play on words. This literary "shock value" is unusual or rare, giving it its strength. Normally there will be indicators in the context that this is what is going on. However, it is wrong to assume in most contexts that words mean as much as possible.

The word's usage

The usage of a particular word or word group in other contexts often sheds light on its usage in the particular context. This is its *usus loquendi* ("local usage").

A problem with this method is that often words have different meanings in different contexts. For example, the English word *set* can have many meanings, depending on the sentence. In Scripture the word *law* is used differently by Paul from one usage to another, even in the same book. Paul and James use *faith* with different meanings.

To be helpful, it is best to study the word's usage in the closer context, if found there. Then, look in the same book; then, in the same author; then, in the same testament; then, in the entire Bible; finally, in other literature. Often this total usage of a word will help to reveal its meaning in the passage under concern. An example is the word for sexual sin found in Jesus' statement on divorce in Matt 5 and 19 (πορνεία *porneia*, translated "fornication" in the KJV).

Several sources and helps are available for such studies. These include printed lexicons and concordances, and now computer databases.

The word's meaning in similar languages

Sometimes there are very few usages of the word in question in that language, but the same root is found in cognate languages. This happens most frequently in Hebrew. Certain questionable Hebrew words can be given fairly clear definitions by similar terms in Ugaritic, found in contexts that give a definition to the term. The study of other Semitic languages does help with the lexicography of Hebrew.

The word's etymology

Note that this is the least desirable way to define a word. In certain rare instances there is little other evidence, and guessing at a word by its etymology is feasible, especially if the meaning would fit the immediate context.

The problem with this method is that words often in meaning do not equal the sum of their parts. This is particularly true since words change in meaning over the years. For example, in English we would be hard put to explain how *hoodwink* could be derived from *hood* and *wink*. The false conclusions of this method could be illustrated by *butterfly* and *manufacture*.

It is a pitfall commonly fallen into by preachers and Bible teachers to explain a Greek or Hebrew word by its etymology. However, it is possible to use etymology in teaching for purposes of illustration or as an aid to memory, as long as the meaning demonstrably is derived from context and usage.

Conducting word studies

Frequently it is profitable to study how a word is used by a particular author, or in the Bible as a whole. A thorough study of a word's usage in its contexts is called a word study.

Two cautions when undertaking word studies:

- Be sure the meaning in each example is clear from the context, not imposed from other contexts.
- Be sure the conclusions are not too dogmatic, remembering that words can be used in different places with different meanings.

Contexts to be searched if studying a word in the Greek NT would be these:

- Biblical usage (OT, LXX, NT)—BDAG, *TDNT*, Moulton & Geden concordance of the Greek NT, Hatch & Redpath concordance of the LXX, Englishman's Greek concordance

For a good article comparing BDAG (3rd ed.) to Louw-Nida's lexicon with its semantic domains, see Vern S. Poythress, "Greek Lexicography and Translation: Comparing Bauer's and Louw-Nida's Lexicons," *JETS* 44:2 (June 2001) 285-96.

- Inscriptional or papyri usage—Moulton & Milligan NT lexicon based on the papyri and early inscriptions
- Classical and LXX usage—Lidell & Scott lexicon (3 sizes)

- Patristic usage—much in BDAG, *TDNT*
- Cognate usage—much in BDAG, *TDNT*

Such words as these make fruitful word studies: baptize, body/flesh, church, gospel, hell, justify, love, mystery, soul, wine, Zion

Several Bible software and Internet programs make these searches much easier and more complete.

A similar set of resources would be used for studying words in the Hebrew OT.

Chapter 8: SPECIAL HERMENEUTICS

This chapter of notes will briefly discuss several areas in the Bible which involve special kinds of exegesis because of the specialized nature of the material.

Typology

[See Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, esp. pp. 334-95; Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture* (reprinted; 2 vol. in one); S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., *The Old Testament in the New*; Leonhard Goppelt, *Types* (1939; E.T. 1982); W. Edward Glenny, "Typology: A Summary of the Present Evangelical Discussion," *JETS* 40:4 (Dec., 1997) 627-38.]

A type is a person or event that God has ordained to be a pointer to another, usually greater, person or event (called the "antitype"). Examples from Scripture:

- Adam → Christ (representative head of his people)
- Events in Israel's coming from Egypt → events in Jesus' life
- David → Christ (both sufferings and kingship)
- Antiochus Epiphanes → the future Antichrist

It's important not to "overdo" typology in interpretation. There should be good biblical justification before we declare a person or event to be a "type" of another person or event. They can be similar or illustrative without being a type. For a fuller discussion of typology, see chapter 10 of these notes, below.

Numerology

[See Terry, 380-90; esp. John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology* (1968; excellent treatment of the subject)]

Two extremes to avoid

Some take all numbers to be significant of symbolic meaning, as did the ancient gematria. In this way, for example, they give meanings to the 153 fish taken by the disciples in John 21 (this is a "triangular number," $1 + 2 + 3 + \dots + 17$).

Others deny all symbolism in numbers, even though in many texts the author seems to go out of his way to invoke certain numbers (esp. in John and Revelation).

Symbolic numbers

Numbers most commonly considered to be symbolic are the following (see the chart in Davis, pp. 122-23):

- 3 (?)
- 4
- 6 (?)
- 7
- 10

- 12
- 40
- 70
- 1000
- Numbers in the Daniel-Revelation complex (3½, 42, 1260)

Literal numbers

Note that the symbolic use of numbers, even if granted, does not negate their literal use. An example to prove this point would be the length of David's reign, given as forty years; yet this is literal, since the text explains it was the sum of 7 and 33 years (2 Sam 5:5).

"It is thus by collation and comparison of the peculiar uses of these numbers [4, 7, 10, 12] that we can arrive at any safe conclusion as to their symbolical import. But allowing that they have such import as the foregoing examples indicate, we must not suppose that they thereby necessarily lose their literal and proper meaning." (Terry, 383-84)

Terry goes on to state that he prefers the literal understanding of Daniel's and Revelation's time periods (p. 385).

The number seven

Numbers had symbolic usage in noncanonical writings in OT times; but the only number to be clearly symbolic in the Bible is 7. See John J. Davis, pp. 103-24, where the other numbers are discussed.

Supernatural events

As noted earlier, the Christian believes in the possibility and reality of "supernatural" events in history. These include acts of direct divine intervention in our space-time universe, such as the creation itself, the universal flood, the miracles recorded in the OT, and those recorded in the NT as being performed by Jesus and his disciples, and the predicted eschatological events.

While the interpreter does not go out of his way to find miracles in the Bible, he does not seek to rationalize either, or to dissolve them into myth. It is generally granted that the biblical world considered miracles as possible, and would have understood the biblical text as asserting their reality. We believe the modern Christian should receive the biblical revelation with the same "naïve" approach.

We note also that the biblical miracles are not sensationalistic. In each case there is a clear purpose, either in a practical need, or in an intended teaching. Jesus did not perform miracles gratuitously (Matt 4:3-4; 16:1-4). We also note that the miracles are not absurd or grotesque, as the old saying goes, "The whale swallowed Jonah; Jonah didn't swallow the whale!" We also see that there were long periods even in biblical history when God did not act through miracles, but through ordinary providence.

One can see the cessation of miracles at the closing of the apostolic period, both in the later NT books and in the early Christian fathers. Miracles are not to be expected until the eschaton.

CHAPTER 9: BIBLICAL GENRES

Sources

[Genres of Biblical Literature and How to Study Them | Orchard Hill Church](#) Brady Randall

[The Many Genres of Scripture - Bible Gateway Blog](#) Mel Lawrenz

[How should the different genres of the Bible impact how we interpret the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

[I've borrowed heavily from the sources above, rearranged and interspersed with each other's comments and my own.]

Introduction

"The Bible is a work of literature. Literature comes in different genres, or categories based on style, and each is read and appreciated differently from another. For example, to confuse a work of science fiction with a medical textbook would cause many problems—they must be understood differently. And both science fiction and a medical text must be understood differently from poetry. Therefore, accurate exegesis and interpretation takes into consideration the purpose and style of a given book or passage of Scripture. In addition, some verses are meant figuratively, and proper discernment of these is enhanced by an understanding of genre. An inability to identify genre can lead to serious misunderstanding of Scripture." [GotQuestions]

The main genres found in the Bible are these: narrative/history, law, wisdom/poetry, epistles, prophecy/apocalyptic literature. The summary below shows the differences between each genre and how each should be interpreted:

Narrative/History

"This [genre] includes books of the Bible or sections of books which simply tell the story of what happened. Exodus is an expansive, epic narrative. Ruth focusses on the story of one family. Acts tells the spectacular events of the first generation of Christians, as they were led and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Narrative tells us what happened, according to the purposes of the author. Sometimes there are spiritual lessons from events, and sometimes we are just gaining the context of the history of God's people." [Lawrenz]

"Much of the Old Testament is written in narrative form, often written as a third-person account giving early Israelite history. This is often mixed with prayers, speeches, and direct discourse. This genre blends historical reporting with theological interpretation. These stories are meant to show God's faithfulness towards His people and His promises as well as to reveal His sovereignty over history. We'll examine literary analysis in Chapter 12 of these notes that specifically relates to narratives in due course.

"Within Hebrew Narrative, one can find the following types:

1. **Comedic** – A story with a happy ending which is usually characterized by a problem which resolves in solution such as the story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50).
2. **Heroic** – A story built around the life of a leading character, focusing on the struggles and triumphs of the person a representative of the whole group such as the story of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 12-25).

3. **Epic** – A hero story on grand scale exhibiting nationalistic interests and often containing supernatural characters and events such as the Hebrew Exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12-19).
4. **Tragic** – A story portraying change in fortune, often from prosperity to catastrophe focusing on outcome of human choice such as the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 (Hill and Walton, 50).”

[Randall]

NT Special Narratives: Gospels

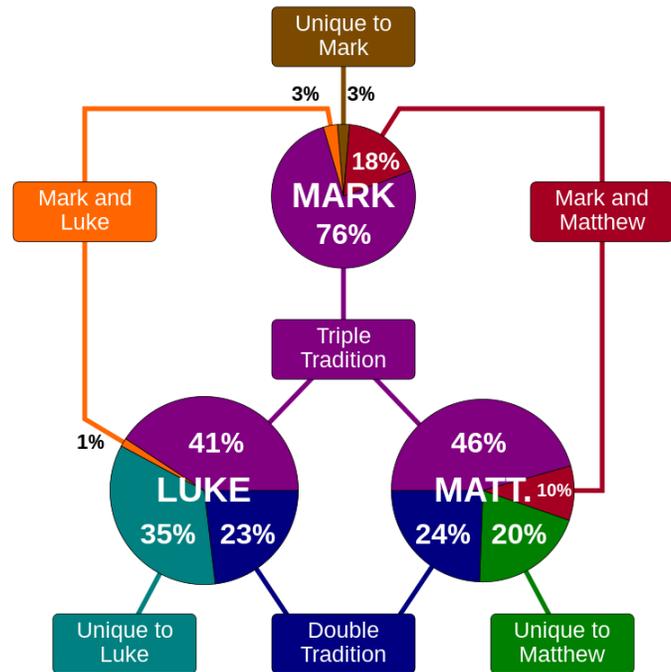
“The Bible’s four gospels paint four portraits of Jesus. While each gospel follows him on the same journey, they recount it a little differently. They had their own methods, styles, purposes, audiences, and (probably) sources—making each portrait of Jesus uniquely valuable.

“Despite their unique qualities, the first three gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—share many of the same accounts of Christ, often shared in the same order and with the same wording. Because of their similar perspectives on Jesus’ ministry, together they’re known as the synoptic gospels. (The word “synoptic” comes from the Greek word *synoptikos*, meaning “able to be seen together.”)

“While the differences between the gospels can be a challenge for us, these similarities can be problematic, too. The parallel passages between the synoptic gospels have left scholars with pressing questions about their origins. If Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote about Jesus’ life and ministry from different perspectives, why are they so similar? If four people witnessed a car accident or a parade, they’d probably have loosely similar timelines, but significant variations in how they remember dialogue, what details they recall or omit, and how they describe it all. Yet these three gospels are remarkably similar. How did that happen?

“The uncertain relationship between the synoptic gospels is known as ‘the synoptic problem.’”

Relationships between the Synoptic Gospels



By Original: AlecmconroyDerivative work: Popadius - This file was derived from: Relationship between synoptic gospels.png; CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=27903558>

[What Are the Synoptic Gospels, and Where Do They... | Zondervan Academic](#)

The following is from [Principles for Reading and Interpreting the Gospels – Church and Gospel](#), by Michael Bryant:

“Below are principles for reading and interpreting the Gospels responsibly.

“(1) Have a basic understanding of three major categories related to each Gospel: history, literature and theology. History relates to a Gospel’s background and includes such matters as the author, setting, date and purposes.

Literature includes such things as genre (type of literature) and structure (outline). Theology relates to a Gospel's major themes. A well-written Study Bible will provide information related to each of these categories (e.g., *NIV Study Bible*). They are important as they provide the context (e.g., setting, structure) and rules (e.g., genre) for reading the Gospels responsibly.

“(2) Read the Gospels. Read the Gospels from beginning to end (i.e., start at the beginning). Read the Gospels repeatedly. Read the Gospels taking note of the details (e.g., Mark 5:35-41, esp. vv. 39, 41). Read the Gospels paying attention to what Jesus says and does (e.g., Mark 10:32-34). Read the Gospels paying attention to the editorial comments made by the biblical author (e.g., Mark 7:19; Luke 18:9). Read the Gospels paying attention to what characters say about/to Jesus (e.g., Mark 9:7). Read the Gospels reflecting on your personal response to their message. Unfortunately, many people do not read the Bible very carefully. Do your best to be a careful reader of Scripture.

“(3) Pay attention to the introduction (beginning) of each Gospel as it reveals the major theological emphasis of the writing. Matthew's major theological theme is Jesus is the Messiah and this is revealed in the introduction (Matt 1:1; see also 1:16, 17; 16:16). Mark's major theological theme, Jesus is the Son of God, is also made known in his introduction (Mark 1:1; see also 15:39). The same is also true with John (i.e., Jesus is the divine Christ, the Son of God, John 1:1). Luke is a little different, however.

“(4) Look for repetition of key themes. See, e.g., the theme of “kingdom” in Matthew 13: Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:10-11, 18-19), Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matt 13:24), Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matt 13:31), Parable of the Leaven (Matt 13:33), Parable of the Hidden Treasure (Matt 13:44), Parable of the Costly Pearl (Matt 13:45) and Parable of the Dragnet (Matt 13:47). The “kingdom” in Matthew refers to the rule or reign of God.

*“(5) Ask, “What is the **author** trying to say?” And, “What message does he seek to communicate about key themes/ideas in his Gospel?”* You must recognize that each Gospel author is trying to communicate with his readers. Pay attention to what he is trying to say. Don't read your own, personal meaning into the text.

“(6) If you are reading a Gospel and are unsure as to what theme the writer is seeking to communicate, keep in mind that both Christology or discipleship are good choices. Why do I say this? Christology and discipleship are two important themes in each Gospel, though Christology is the more significant theme. Granted, while they are not the main theme of every verse, they are quite prominent in many passages.

“(7) Recognize that like other ancient literary works, the Gospels do not always present events in the chronological (historical) order in which they occurred. Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 each contain an account of Satan's temptation of Jesus. One cannot help but notice that there is an important difference, namely, the order of the temptations. Either Matthew or Luke has rearranged the order of the temptations for the purpose of emphasizing a certain theological theme (e.g., Matthew put the temple in the middle to emphasize the temple to his Jewish audience). Rearranging the chronology of historical events was acceptable literary practice in ancient times, not literary error.

“(8) Know how a passage relates to its immediate context as well as to the overall structure of the entire Gospel. Here we refer to literary context. For example, Luke 9:18-22 (passage) is part of a larger context known as the so-called “Travel Narrative” (Luke 9:51-19:27), which comprises about thirty-eight percent of Luke's Gospel. The Travel Narrative itself is part of the overall structure of Luke's Gospel and is significant because it shows Jesus traveling to the cross, His final destination.”

NT Special Narratives: Parables

Parables as figures of speech

Parables, as extended similes, are designed to convey in a vivid manner a particular truth. They should be treated as any other figure of speech. A parable's meaning is single, not multiple; and it normally can be determined by its context.

Purpose of parables

It appears that the parables of Jesus were given for two different reasons:

- To make a teaching vivid and plain (Luke 15—the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son; Matt 21:45—the wicked tenants)
- To make a teaching obscure (Mark 4:11-12—the sower)

Sometimes it is hard for us to determine if a given parable was hard or easy for Jesus' audience to interpret. NT critics such as Albert Schweitzer have exploited this fact to raise questions about the integrity of the NT history. However, we must remember that we have the benefit of centuries of Christian knowledge; to the original hearers the meaning of many of Jesus' parables may well have eluded them.

Two major types of parables

Simple parables are designed to teach one central idea (Matt 18—the unmerciful servant, Luke 10—the Good Samaritan, Luke 15—the lost son). The primary danger with such parables is the tendency to make each detail teach some spiritual or eschatological truth, to make the parable “stand on all fours.”

Complex parables are designed to illustrate a complex of ideas, with many points of intended comparison (Matt 13—the sower, Matt 21—the tenants, Matt 22—the wedding banquet). Such parables can be identified by the context, which would interpret the various details, or by the parable itself, which closely and obviously parallels a historical situation.

Some important books on parables

- Richard Chenevix Trench, *Notes on the Miracles and the Parables of Our Lord* and *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord* (ca. 1860; the first book named has more footnotes)
- A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ* (1889)
- W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Gospel Parables in the Light of Their Jewish Background* (1936)
- H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (1938)
- Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (1954)

Law

“This type of literature was around before the Old Testament was written as Law collections were published in Mesopotamia as early as 2000 B.C. Old Testament Law includes commandments, statutes, and ordinances. This includes the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The purpose of law is to express God's sovereign will concerning government, priestly duties, social responsibilities, etc. Knowledge of Hebrew manners and customs of the time, as well as a knowledge of the covenants, will complement a reading of this material.

“The purpose behind the Law was to regulate the moral, religious, ceremonial, and civil life of Israel as she sought to maintain holiness in her covenantal relationship with God. Most of the Law format takes place in declarative and prescriptive covenant stipulations for the Hebrew people.

“When interpreting the Law in the Bible, specifically in the Old Testament, it is helpful to look at it through the eyes of Jesus who said in Matthew 5,

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.” – Matthew 5:17

“Many elements of the Civil and Ceremonial Law have become fulfilled in Christ. Hebrews 10 notes,

“The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason, it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.” – Hebrews 10:1”

[Randall]

However, this does not mean that the Law has nothing to say to the Church. For one thing, God is the same, yesterday, today, and forever, and does not change. The principles behind the laws remain, even if the outward practice has been abrogated due to the changes of socio-political-cultural structures, not to mention the work of Christ. So, when examining a Law passage, use your exegetical and hermeneutical tools to discern the moral and theological concepts upon which any particular law is based. You will then have the basis for contemporary application at your disposal.

Wisdom/Poetry

“This is the genre of aphorisms that teach the meaning of life and how to live. Some of the language used in [wisdom literature](#) is metaphorical and poetic, and this should be taken into account during analysis. These include books of rhythmic prose, [parallelism](#), and metaphor, such as Song of Solomon, Lamentations and Psalms. We know that many of the psalms were written by [David](#), himself a musician, or David’s worship leader, Asaph. Because poetry does not translate easily, we lose some of the musical “flow” in English. Nevertheless, we find a similar use of idiom, comparison and refrain in this genre as we find in modern music. This is all of Psalms and sections of other books. The power of poetry comes through the use of vivid figurative language (“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.” [Ps. 42:1](#).) Also, ideas are repeated, sometimes with the same words, other times with synonyms (synonymous parallelism). The Psalms and other poetic sections of the Bible communicate ideas, but they especially express emotion. They show life in its fullness. Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes are collections of wise sayings meant to shape the moral and ethical lives of their readers. They cover many practical topics. The book of James in the New Testament in many ways is like Proverbs in the Old Testament.” [GotQuestions]

“The wisdom literature includes instructional books of Proverbs and Song of Songs as well as Job and Ecclesiastes. Some Psalms (1, 37, 49, 112) also fit this category.

“Two characteristics of Hebrew poetry includes rhythm of sound and rhythm of thought. It was often musical in nature and could be sung or chanted with musical accompaniment. Part of the purpose of the Wisdom Literature was the idea that the accumulated knowledge of experience and observation can be taught to the following generations. Wisdom in the Old Testament is the practical art of being prudent and insightful so that one might have success in life.

“Thus, wisdom in some of the biblical literature can be read as the way things “generally” go and not always absolute promises. This idea can be seen played out in many of the Proverbs. Proverbs attempts to uncover basic truth out of life by way of comparison.” [Randall]

[The following is an excerpt from [5. The Poetical Books | Bible.org.](#)]

“The previous survey of the first seventeen books (Law and History), Genesis through Nehemiah, covered the whole history of the Old Testament. All the remaining books, *Poetical* and *Prophetical*, fit somewhere into the history of those seventeen books. The next section to be covered, the *Poetical*, is a much smaller section consisting of five books—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. Before examining them, we should note certain characteristics that all of these five books have.

“The seventeen books which lie behind us are *historical*. These five poetical books are *experiential*. The seventeen historical books are concerned with a *nation*, as such. These five poetical books are concerned with *individuals*, as such. The seventeen have to do with *the Hebrew race*. These five have to do with *the human heart*. These five so-called “poetical books” are *not the only poetry* in the Old Testament Scriptures. There are stretches of unexcellable poetry in the writings of the prophets, which we shall come to later ... We ought clearly to understand, also, that the term “poetical” refers only to their *form*. It must not be thought to imply that they are simply the product of human imagination.... These books portray real human experience, and grapple with profound problems, and express big realities. Especially too they concern themselves with the experiences of the *godly*, in the varying vicissitudes of this changeful life which is ours under the sun.

IMPORTANT COMPARISONS

THE PLACE OF THE POETICAL BOOKS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

“The Old Testament divides into four major sections which relate to the nation of Israel as God’s chosen people in the following manner from the standpoint of their major characteristics or focus:

1. The *Law*—relates to Israel’s moral life.
2. The *Historical*—relates to Israel’s national development and life.
3. The *Poetical*—relates to Israel’s spiritual life.
4. The *Prophetical*—relates to Israel’s future life as fulfilled in the Messiah.

THE RELATION OF THE POETICAL BOOKS TO EACH OTHER

1. The Book of Job—*Blessing* through *Suffering*.
2. The Psalms—*Praise* through *Prayer*.
3. The Proverbs—*Prudence* through *Precept*.
4. Ecclesiastes—*Verity* through *Vanity*.
5. Song of Solomon—*Bliss* through *Union*.

THE PERIODS OF THE POETICAL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

“While Hebrew poetry occurred throughout Old Testament history, there were three primary periods of poetic literature.

- I. The Patriarchal period—Job (c. 2000 B.C.)
- II. The Davidic period—Psalms (c. 1000 B.C.)
- III. The Solomonic period
 - A. Song of Solomon—a young man’s love

B. Proverbs—a middle-aged man’s wisdom

C. Ecclesiastes—an old man’s sorrow (c. 950 B.C.)25

CHRIST IN THE POETICAL BOOKS

“As noted previously, Christ, the Messiah, is the heart of all the Bible. With the two disciples on the Emmaus road who were so saddened and perplexed over the events of the previous days as the crucifixion, death, and reports of the resurrection, the resurrected Savior came along side and explained the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27). Then later when he appeared to the eleven and He said: “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, than all things which are written about Me in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44).

“With this in mind, before launching into the overview of each of these poetical books, it would be well to get their Christological perspective. Regarding this element Geisler writes:

“Whereas the *foundation* was laid for Christ in the Law and *preparation* was made for Christ in the books of History, the books of Poetry reveal the *aspiration* for Christ in the hearts of the people. They aspired to a life fulfilled in Christ in both an explicit and an implicit way, both consciously and unconsciously. The following list will serve as an overall guide to the Christ-centered aspirations of the poetical books:

1. Job—aspiration for *mediation* by Christ.
2. Psalms—aspiration for *communion* with Christ.
3. Proverbs—aspiration for *wisdom* in Christ.
4. Ecclesiastes—aspiration for ultimate *satisfaction*.
5. Song of Solomon—aspiration for *union* in love with Christ.

(*A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1977, p. 181.)

HEBREW POETRY

THE NATURE OF HEBREW POETRY

“Hebrew poetry, so characteristic of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon), is unlike English poetry which emphasizes rhyme and meter. Hebrew poetry relies on **other characteristics** for its impact. Parallelism is the chief characteristic of biblical poetry, but it has other features that distinguish it from the typical prose or narrative we find in the rest of Scripture. First, there a relatively greater conciseness or terseness of form, and second there is a greater use of certain types of rhetorical devices. These are parallelism, rhythm, a rich use of imagery, and figures of speech.

THE THREE KINDS OF HEBREW POETRY

“There are three kinds of poetry: (1) lyric poetry, which was originally accompanied by music on the lyre (the Psalms); (2) didactic poetry, which, using maxims, was designed to communicate basic principles of life (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes); (3) dramatic poetry, which used dialog to communicate its message (Job and the Song of Solomon).

THE TWO KEY ELEMENTS OF HEBREW POETRY

“**Parallelism**. In contrast to English verse which manipulates sound and emphasizes rhyme and meter, Hebrew poetry repeats and rearranges thoughts rather than sounds. Parallelism refers “to the practice of balancing one thought or phrase by a corresponding thought or phrase containing approximately the same number of words, or at least a correspondence in ideas.”27 There are several types of parallel arrangement of thoughts, with three being basic.

1. *Synonymous*—the thought of the first line is basically repeated in different words in the second line (2:4; 3:1; 7:17).

2. *Antithetical*--the thought of the first line is emphasized by a contrasting thought in the second line (1:6; 34:10). They are often identified with "but."
3. *Synthetic*--the second line explains or further develops the idea of the first line (1:3; 95:3).
4. *Climactic*--The second line repeats with the exception of the last terms (29:1).
5. *Emblematic*--One line conveys the main point, the second line illuminates it by an image (42:1; 23:1).

"Figures of Speech. Like the Hebrew language itself, Hebrew poetry uses vivid images, similes, metaphors, and other rhetorical devices to communicate thoughts and feelings. Some of these are as follows:

1. *Simile*: This is the simplest of all the figures of speech. A simile is a comparison between two things that resemble each other in some way (cf. [Ps. 1:3-4](#); [5:12](#); [17:8](#); [131:2](#)).
2. *Metaphor*: This is a comparison in which one thing is likened to another without the use of a word of comparison as in "like" or "as." In [Psalm 23:1](#), David says, "The Lord is my Shepherd," that is, He is to me like a shepherd is to his sheep (see also [84:11](#); [91:4](#)).
3. *Implication*: This occurs when there is only an implied comparison between two things in which the name of one thing is used in place of the other (cf. [Ps. 22:16](#); [Jer. 4:7](#)).
4. *Hyperbole*: This is the use of exaggeration or over statement to stress a point ([Ps. 6:6](#); [78:27](#); [107:26](#)).
5. *Paronomasia*: This refers to the use or repetition of words that are similar in sound, but not necessarily in sense or meaning in order to achieve a certain effect. This can only be observed by those who can read the original Hebrew text. [Psalm 96:10](#) reads, "For all the gods (kol-elohay) of the nations are idols (elilim). This latter word means *nothings*, or things of *naught*; so that we might render it, "The gods of the nations or imaginations."**28** (see also [Ps. 22:16](#); [Prov. 6:23](#)).
6. *Pleonasm*: This involves the use of redundancy for the sake of emphasis. This may occur with the use of words or sentences. In [Psalm 20:1](#) we are told, "May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob set you *securely* on high!" Here "name" appears to be redundant. It means *God Himself* and has more emphasis than if only the term "God" had been used.
7. *Rhetorical question*: The use of a question to confirm or deny a fact ([Ps. 35:10](#); [56:8](#); [106:2](#)).
8. *Metonymy*: This occurs where one noun is used in place of another because of some relationship or type of resemblance that different objects might bear to one another ([Ps. 5:9](#); [18:2](#); [57:9](#); [73:9](#)).
9. *Anthropomorphism*: The assigning of some part of the human anatomy to God's Person to convey some aspect of God's being like the eyes or ears (cf. [Ps. 10:11, 14](#); [11:4](#); [18:15](#); [31:2](#)).
10. *Zoomorphism*: The assigning of some part of an animal to God's Person to convey certain truths about God (cf. [Ps. 17:8](#); [91:4](#)).

....

Epistles

"The letters of the New Testament were communications to specific individuals or groups for specific and varied purposes. The apostle Paul meant Romans to be an overarching description of Christian faith, whereas 1 Corinthians was occasioned by problems, including a list of questions they had for Paul ("now concerning the matters you wrote about," [1 Cor. 7:1](#)), and the letters to Timothy were to encourage and guide a younger church leader in a challenging spot. Epistles are "occasioned" texts, and so we need to get at the circumstances that led to them being written." [Lawrenz]

"These are letters written to specific audiences, usually from an Apostle to a particular church or to an individual. There are 21 letters written in the New Testament. The general format followed was with the following: salutation, thanksgiving/prayer, body, exhortation/instruction, and conclusion. It is critical to understand the historical setting for each letter to best interpret how to apply the letter today." [Randall]

"An [epistle](#) is a letter, usually in a formal style. There are 21 letters in the New Testament from the apostles to various churches or individuals. These letters have a style very similar to modern letters, with an opening, a greeting, a body, and a closing. The content of the Epistles involves clarification of prior teaching, rebuke, explanation, correction of false teaching and a deeper dive into the teachings of Jesus. The reader would do

well to understand the cultural, historical and social situation of the original recipients in order to get the most out of an analysis of these books.” [GotQuestions]

Prophecy/Apocalyptic

This is probably one of the most disputed areas of biblical interpretation. This disagreement stems from the nature of the subject: prophetic language often is more obscure than historical narrative, and the events predicted are not so readily identifiable, and are perhaps still in the future. “The Prophetic writings are the Old Testament books of Isaiah through Malachi, and the New Testament book of Revelation. They include predictions of future events, warnings of coming judgment, and an overview of God’s plan for Israel. Apocalyptic literature is a specific form of prophecy, largely involving symbols and imagery and predicting disaster and destruction. We find this type of language in Daniel (the beasts of chapter 7), Ezekiel (the scroll of chapter 3), Zechariah (the golden lampstand of chapter 4), and Revelation (the four horsemen of chapter 6). The Prophetic and Apocalyptic books are the ones most often subjected to faulty [eisegesis](#) and personal interpretation based on emotion or preconceived bias. However, [Amos 3:7](#) tells us, “Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.” Therefore, we know that the truth has been told, and it can be known via careful exegesis, a familiarity with the rest of the Bible, and prayerful consideration. Some things will not be made clear to us except in the fullness of time, so it is best not to assume to know everything when it comes to prophetic literature.” [GotQuestions]

“The four major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) and the 12 minor prophets (Hosea through Malachi) are all God’s word to his covenant people, warning them and bolstering them during periods of pronounced spiritual and national danger. They are mostly oracles, later written down. We gain spiritual lessons from them about the disposition of God (e.g., disappointed, indignant, sorrowful, tender, caring), and the condition of the people addressed (e.g., frightened, disobedient, humbled, arrogant). We must read Old Testament prophetic books as God’s challenge to the original audiences, and then we apply the lessons to our day.” [Lawrenz]

Prediction as possible

It is necessary to recognize that God can, and in fact did, predict the future. Much debate is based on the opposite presupposition (e.g., the meaning of Daniel’s four kingdoms, the meaning of the Olivet Discourse in the three Synoptic gospels).

Recognition of fulfilled prophecies

Many OT and NT predictions have already been fulfilled. This can be seen from the events themselves (Dan 11; Jn. 21), or from specific notices in the Bible (Isa 7:14 in Matthew).

Unless there is reason to believe otherwise, we should assume that fulfilled prophecies do not require a second fulfillment.

“Double fulfillment” as a concept introduces a dangerous element into exegesis; it is better to recognize the valid element of typology in those few cases when it seems called for (e.g., in Ps 69:21).

Literal nature of prophecy

In cases where it can be tested, biblical prophecy seems to follow the normal pattern of literal exegesis, within the normal parameters of figurative language (e.g., Daniel’s beasts, which nonetheless represent literal kingdoms).

Here are some examples of prophecies that were fulfilled literally, even when from the prophecy alone we might not have expected such a literal fulfillment:

- * Josiah and priests' bones (1 Kgs 13:2-3; 2 Kgs 23:15-16)
- * Jesus riding on donkey (Zech 9:9; Matt 21:5)
- * Jesus' virgin birth (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:22-23)
- * National judgments on Israel, Babylon, Tyre, etc. (see many examples in John Urquhart, *Wonders of Prophecy* [1925])
- * Thirty pieces of silver to betray Jesus (Zech 11:11-12; Matt 27:9)
- * Peter's manner of death (John 21:18-19)
- * Paul's arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:11, 30, 33)
- * Destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 21:6, 20)

In many of these cases one would not expect or require such a literal fulfillment as actually occurred.

Symbolic language

In spite of the general literal nature of prophecy, there is in many cases an increase in the level of figurative language employed to describe literal events, persons, or nations. This is especially evident in several OT prophets such as Daniel and Zechariah; and in the NT in Revelation. When the text itself does not explain the symbolism (as it does in Rev 17, for example), one must be cautious when interpreting the details of the prophecy.

Often certain symbols have a fairly constant meaning throughout various books, as "horn" being a symbol of strength or kingly power.

Apotelesmatic nature of prophecy

Many prophecies in the Bible are "viewed from a distance," i.e., are seen with no apparent break between them. Fulfillment is often flexible, with longer or shorter gaps between the events, as in Isa 7.

This feature of prophecy serves a purpose: it prevents date setting. God is free in history; he is not tied down to a written time schedule; and man's response is not prejudiced.

Charity in interpreting prophecy

The prophetic portions of Scripture are among the most difficult to interpret. For this reason they should not provide the basis for needless division and strife in the church. "Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Relation of prophecy to different eschatological schemes

In general, the different eschatological viewpoints handle prophecy with different degrees of literalness.

- * Amillennialism (old style)
- * Amillennialism (new style)
- * Postmillennialism
- * Historic premillennialism
- * Dispensational premillennialism

Of course, within each category various interpreters employ different degrees of literal vs. allegorical or figurative interpretation.

“The biblical prophets deal with eschatology (dealing with the final stage of the plan of God in history) differently than the prophets of ancient Near Eastern literature. An example of this can be found in Isaiah 46:9-11.

“In prophetic literature, the symbolism is sometimes used to conceal rather than reveal (Hill and Walton 407). Hill and Walton suggest the following tips when reading Prophetic Literature:

1. Think of prophecy as a syllabus explaining the outworking of God’s plan rather than as simple prediction.
2. Be careful to distinguish between the message of the prophesy and the fulfillment of the prophesy.
3. The first step in interpreting a prophetic oracle is to identify to which category it belongs.
4. A vision is not the message but the occasion for the message.
5. The prophet’s message is not hidden in uninterpreted symbols.” [Randall]

There are difficult interpretation issues because often the vision of the prophet is treated as the message of the prophet. The vision is usually the occasion of the message.

Apocalypics

At this point, an overview of apocalypics (a subcategory of prophecy) is timely.

1. Apocalypse in literature (OT/NT, non-canonical)

The Greek term ἀποκάλυψις means “a revelation.” The biggest period of the development of apocalyptic literature occurred between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D., when the Jews were crying out for God to end His silence to them.

- a. Understood as the disclosure of divine secrets by divine intervention.
- b. Not necessarily eschatological – can be divine interpretation of present events as well.
- c. Not the result of exegesis.
- d. Always given to some authoritative figure.

Revelation is the only apocalyptic book that claims its author as the one to whom the revelation is given, and the only one which is epistolical.

- e. Usually begins with a summary of the great figure’s life.

There is no need for John to do so in Revelation, though some have interpreted chapter 1 as such.

- f. Uses a different form of typology than does regular prophecy.
 - (1) Interpretation is necessary from an angel or other messenger.
 - (2) The prophets often understand their message, at least in the short-term implications of it, while apocalyptic writers long for understanding.

- g. Good definition: the divine interpretation of history given to an authoritative figure.
 - (1) *History* here is understood as any event in time, whether it be past, present, or future.
 - (2) The point is the message to be understood by the readers.
 - (a) Daniel's message is directed to the people in exile.
 - (b) John's message is directed to people in persecution.

In other words, whatever is going on *now*, God is in control!

- (3) The point is not to give meaning to every detail, but rather to express meaning as an overall impression.
 - (4) History is a key difference between biblical religion and other religions – the Bible is very much tied to history.
 - (a) Prophecy deals with history by viewing it from within history; i.e., looking at what God has done. Anticipation based upon past experience/revelation and present action.
 - (b) Apocalyptic deals with history by viewing it from outside history; i.e., looking at what God is doing/will do. Anticipation based upon present action/future revelation, with past revelation firmly in view.
- 2. Handling non-canonical claims to authority by looking at the difference in Daniel and Revelation.
 - a. First, Daniel and Revelation keep their feet in history rather than taking leave from reality as do most other apocalypics.
 - b. Second, Daniel and Revelation don't overly work hard to convince you of authorship – the others work too hard to convince you.

How then do you interpret Daniel and Revelation? As it was meant to be read and interpreted: in an historical context.

Revelation is a response to a time of tribulation in the Roman Empire, centering on the churches of Asia Minor. The book teaches endurance in light of the fact that vindication is coming (*not escapism!*). Some think the book was written 69-70 A.D., with some good arguments.

Daniel deals with what to do with Gentile rule over God's chosen people. Jews are still asking this question, as evidenced by holocaust literature.

Conclusion

"When we sit down to study the Bible we recognize what genre we are looking at in order to gain a head start in getting at the meaning. If we don't account for genre we will certainly misunderstand and misapply the truth of God's word. Genres also show how God's word is wide and varied and deep, and worthy of a lifetime of study. [GotQuestions] God is not the author of confusion ([1 Corinthians 14:33](#)), and He wants us to "correctly [handle] the word of truth" ([2 Timothy 2:15](#))." [Lawrenz]

"Ultimately, knowing how to interpret a particular genre of the Bible is crucial for understanding its meaning and message. Yet, without the Holy Spirit's illuminating power, the biblical text will appear as any other ancient piece of writing. God promised that His Word would ultimately accomplish its purpose and not return to Him void. (Isaiah 55:11) Rather than being a document that was written hundreds of years ago, it is alive and active.

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. – Hebrews 4:12

“Studying each passage in the form of its particular genre, asking for the help of the Holy Spirit in understanding the text, and reading the text in the midst of biblical community are some of the best practices for ascertaining the meaning of the biblical text.

“However, knowing what it says, what it meant, and even what it means is one thing. Living out and obeying the commands of the Bible is quite another. God ultimately invites us to know the Author of the magnificent collection of writings and live out His commands. Rather than just simply reading the Bible, let the Bible read and transform you!” [Randall]

Helpful books

Here are some books on prophetic interpretation from various schools. They represent only a handful from a vast literature, but they are available and give a fair view of the competing systems.

Patrick Fairbairn, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (1865)

David Brown, *Christ's Coming, Will It Be Pre-millennial?* (1876)

George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom* (3 vols., 1884)

Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (1962)

J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (1973)

Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (1974)

George E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (1975; a revision of *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 1964)

Robert G. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (1977)

Christopher Roland, *The Open Heaven* (1982)

John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (1998)

David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity* (1991)

CHAPTER 10: OLD TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

OT quotations in the NT

[Thorough modern discussion: G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Baker, 2007).]

Some Statistics

Roughly one tenth of the New Testament consists of Old Testament quotations. A conservative count discloses 295 explicit references to the Old Testament (it does not include allusions or literary parallelism; the UBS NT index lists 318 citations). These quotations occupy 352 verses in the New Testament (the equivalent of the epistle to the Romans).

94 verses from the Pentateuch, 99 from the prophets, and 85 from the writings are quoted in the New Testament (the difference in the number of Old Testament verses is accounted for by the repetition of some of the verses in the New Testament).

The Sources of Quotations

Most Greek New Testaments place OT quotes in bold print, with different degrees of selectivity:

- * UBS Greek text—contains a double index (OT order, NT order), containing quotations and allusions
- * Nestle-Aland Greek text—contains a thorough list in OT order

There are several collections of these quotations, arranged in parallel columns:

- * Thomas Hartwell Horne, *Introduction to the Scriptures* (8th ed., 1839), 2/1: pp. 281-323
- * C. H. Toy, *Quotations in the NT*
- * Robert G. Bratcher, *OT Quotations in the NT* (UBS; rev. ed., 1961; uses the ERV)
- * Gleason L. Archer and G. C. Chirlichigno, *OT Quotations in the NT: A Complete Survey* (1983)

Thorough discussion of all quotations, in NT order: G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (2007)

It is generally accepted that the sources from which the NT writers took their quotations are the Hebrew text and the Septuagint. For a while, scholars insisted that the Septuagint was the only source for quotations and they would go through great textual gymnastics to show that every New Testament quotation followed the Septuagint textual tradition.

On the other hand, some thought that elevating the Septuagint to such status was disparaging to the Hebrew text. So, they insisted that the New Testament writers had taken every quotation from the Hebrew text, even when the quote matched the Septuagint word for word.

Calmer and more objective minds have concluded that the great majority of the quotations of the Old Testament is from the Septuagint rather than from the Hebrew text. For example, the Septuagint text of Mal 3:1 is an accurate translation of the Masoretic text of the same passage. Yet, Matthew, Mark, and Luke agree literally in a rendering that is noticeable different from the Masoretic and Septuagint texts.

NKJ Mal 3:1 – Behold, I send my messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the LORD of hosts.

LXX Mal 3:1 – Behold, I send forth my messenger, and he shall survey the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come into his temple, even the angel of the covenant, whom ye take pleasure in: behold, he is coming, saith the Lord Almighty.

Matt 11:10 – For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send my messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’

Mark 1:2 – As it is written in the Prophets: “Behold, I send my messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.”

Luke 7:27 – This is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send my messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’

The Formula and Method of Quotations

The New Testament writers did not use any uniform method in quoting the Old Testament. Sometimes they quoted word for word, sometimes just the general sense is given, or the citation is just an allusion to the passage instead of a formal quotation. All the New Testaments writers, except Luke, grew up with and were trained on the Hebrew Scriptures. So, the language of the Old Testament was part of who these men were, and they used it liberally.

There are also many different formulas used to introduce an Old Testament quotation. The more common formulas are, “it is written,” “according as it is written,” “the Scripture says,” “it was said,” and “according as it is said.” Sometimes the place of origin is indicated:

Mark 12:26 – But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?

Acts 13:33 – God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: ‘You are my Son, Today I have begotten You.’

Rom 11:2-3 – God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, “LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life”?

But more frequently Moses, the Law, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or some other prophet is mentioned as writing or saying what is quoted. The New Testament writers seemed to assume that the people to whom they were writing were so familiar with the Old Testament that they just needed a passing reference in order to know what the writer was writing about.

One particular formula that deserves a more careful analysis is found in Matthew and John. It occurs for the first time in Matt 1:22:

NKJ Matt 1:22 – So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

In this first instance, we find the full form of the formula (“this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet”). In most of the other instances, the shorter “that it might be fulfilled” (ἵνα πληρωθῆ | *hina plerothe*) is used (Matt 2:15; 4:14; 21:4; John 12:38; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 18:9, 32; 19:24, 36). We find some variations as far as the Greek preposition and other words added to the formula, but overall the meaning seems to be the same.

NKJ John 12:38 – that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: “Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”

John 12:38 – ἵνα ὁ λόγος Ἰσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου πληρωθῆ ὃν εἶπεν, Κύριε, τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν; καὶ ὁ βραχίον κυρίου τίνι ἀπεκαλύφθη;

NKJ Matt 2:23 – And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Matt 2:23 – καὶ ἐλθὼν κατώκησεν εἰς πόλιν λεγομένην Ναζαρέτ· ὅπως πληρωθῆ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν ὅτι Ναζωραῖος κληθήσεται.

The question that this particular introductory formula poses to the interpreter is whether the events being referred to happened as a means to the fulfillment of the prophecy or the fulfillment of the prophecy was just an outcome of the event. In other words, did God design the events as a means of bringing to pass what he had foretold through prophets (*telic*)? Or, did the events just so happen to fulfill prophecy but were not designed necessarily to be a means of fulfilling prophecy (*ecbatic*)?

One does not need to look very far into the Scriptures to see that this introductory formula has a *telic* meaning. The Scriptures themselves speak of the necessity for the fulfillment of everything that predicted or typified Christ (Luke 24:25-26, 44-45).

Acts 1:16 – Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

The Purpose of the Old Testament Quotations

The New Testament writers seem to have quoted the Old Testament with four different purposes at different times:

1. They quoted prophecy to show their fulfillment in the events described (see discussion above).

2. They quoted non-prophetic portions of the Old Testament with the purpose of establishing a doctrine:
 - a. Paul quotes the Old Testament to establish the total depravity of man (Rom 3:9-19).
 - b. Paul quotes the record of Abraham's belief in God to show that man is justified by faith rather than works (Rom 4:3).
 - c. Paul quotes the law in Deuteronomy to show that Christ is the fulfillment of the law (Rom 10:4-9).

3. They quoted the Old Testament to refute and rebuke an opponent – Matt 22:29-32, 41-46.

John 10:34-36 – Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods”’? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”

4. They quoted or alluded to the Old Testament to illustrate a point or to paint images in the readers' minds or to show the divine unity of the Scriptures.
 - a. Jesus' reference to Solomon in the Sermon on the Mount.
 - b. The imagery in Revelation that parallels the imagery in Ezekiel.

Current trends

Evangelical scholars now are debating this issue. It has important ramifications for the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, as well as for exegesis.

- * Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (1975). Longenecker maintains that many NT quotes of the OT, while supporting a proper conclusion, employ exegetical principles from Judaism which we cannot and should not use.
- * On the other hand, S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., *The Old Testament in the New* (1980) deals with several “difficult” cases, showing the importance of literal interpretation with the recognition of genuine typology in the historical situation of the OT.
- * See also Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the OT in the New* (1985); and Darrell L. Bock, “Evangelicals and the Use of the OT in the New, Parts 1 and 2” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142:567-68 (July-Sept. and Oct.-Dec., 1985); R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (1971; reprint 1982).
- A good modern summary: Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Darrell L. Bock, and Peter Enns, *Three Views on the New Testament use of the Old Testament* (2007)

Suggested approach

Rather than assuming that the NT writer is lifting the OT quote out of context, or using it in some sort of improper sense, we should look deeper to see the theological connection between the two passages.

It is helpful to assume that the OT passage as quoted in the NT, has the same meaning that it has in its OT context. With that in mind, often we can see that the NT passage takes on a richer meaning itself. (E.g., John Battle, "Paul's Use of the OT in Romans 9:25-26," *Grace Theological Journal* 2:1 [Spring, 1981], 115-29).

Quotations in General

In the Scriptures one finds four classes of quotations:

1. Old Testament parallel passages and quotations of the Old Testament

- Gen 11:10-26 compared with 1 Chr 1:17-27 (genealogies of Noah)
- Gen 46 compared with Num 26 (children of Israel/Jacob)
- Ps 18 compared with 2 Sam 2 (song of David when victorious)
- 2 Kgs 18-20 compared with Isa 36-39 (Hezekiah: attack by Sennacherib and illness)
- 2 Kgs 24-25 compared with Jer 52 (fall of Jerusalem)
- Large portions of the books of Samuel and Kings are appropriated by Chronicles
- Textual parallels such as Ps 42:7 and Jonah 2:3

Ps 42:7 – Deep calls unto deep at the noise of your waterfalls; all your waves and billows have gone over me.

Jonah 2:3 – For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; all your billows and your waves passed over me.

2. New Testament quotations from the Old Testament

- These quotations are manifold and of varied forms
- In most cases they are taken verbatim, or nearly verbatim, from the LXX
- In some instances they are a translation of the Hebrew text

Matt 2:15 – and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called my Son.”

NKJ Hos 11:1 – When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

LXX Hos 11:1 – Early in the morning were they cast off, the king of Israel has been cast off: for Israel is a child, and I loved him, and out of Egypt have I called his children.

- Some of the quotations differ considerably from both the Hebrew and LXX
- Sometimes several Old Testament passages are blended together:

2 Cor 6:16-18 – And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.”

Exod 29:45 – I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God.

Lev 26:12 – I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be my people.

Isa 52:11 – Depart! Depart! Go out from there, Touch no unclean thing; Go out from the midst of her, be clean, you who bear the vessels of the LORD.

Jer 31:1 – “At the same time,” says the LORD, “I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.”

Jer 31:9 – They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim is my firstborn.

Jer 31:33 – But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jer 32:38 – They shall be my people, and I will be their God;

Ezek 11:20 – that they may walk in my statutes and keep my judgments and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezek 36:28 – Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Ezek 37:27 – my tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Zech 8:8 – I will bring them back, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be my people and I will be their God, in truth and righteousness.’

- Sometimes the Old Testament passage is merely paraphrased, summarized or hinted at:

John 7:38 – “He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

Prov 18:4 – The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook.

Isa 12:3 –Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Isa 44:3 – For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit on your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring;

Eph 5:14 – Therefore he says: “Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”

Isa 60:1-3 – Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, and his glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Heb 13:15 – Therefore by him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.

Hos 14:2 – Take words with you, and return to the LORD. Say to him, “Take away all iniquity; Receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.

3. New Testament quotations from the New Testament

- Paul quotes the gospel of Luke:

1 Tim 5:18 – For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

Luke 10:7 – And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.

- 2 Pet 2 seems to appropriate a considerable amount of Jude.

4. Quotations from non-biblical writings and oral tradition

- Paul quotes a saying of Jesus that is not recorded in the gospels:

Acts 20:35 – I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

- Old Testament books used other historical accounts:
 - The Book of the Wars of the Lord – Num 21:14
 - The Book of Jasher – Josh 10:13
 - The Book of the Acts of Solomon – 1 Kgs 11:41
 - The Book of Shemaiah – 2 Chr 12:15
- Jude quotes from the pseudepigraphal Book of Enoch and also makes allusion to traditions of the fall of the angels, and the dispute between Michael and the devil over Moses' body:

Jude 1:6 – And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

Jude 1:9 – Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Jude 1:14 – Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints."

- Paul probably relied on oral tradition for the names of the magicians that opposed Moses.

2 Tim 3:8 – Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith;

- Paul quotes from the Greek poets Aratus, Menander, and Epimenides:

Acts 17:28 – for in him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'

1 Cor 15:33 – Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

Titus 1:12 – One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."

CHAPTER 11: TYPOLOGY

Overview of the Word “Type” (τύπον) in the New Testament

John 20:25 – The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

The print of the nails were visible marks that identified Christ as the crucified one

Acts 7:43 – You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, images which you made to worship; and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.”

This word denotes idolatrous images.

Acts 7:44 – Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen,

Heb 8:5 – who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See *that* you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

Here this word denotes the model after which the tabernacle was made.

Acts 23:25 – He wrote a letter in the following manner:

Here this word denotes the form or style of a letter.

Rom 6:17 – But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

The word denotes a kind of doctrine.

Phil 3:17 – Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

The word is used in the sense of an example or pattern of Christian living and character (see also 1 Thess 1:7; 2 Thess 3:9; 1 Tim 4:12; Titus 2:7; and 1 Pet 5:3).

All of the above uses of the word type (*tu/pov tupos*) are proper uses. Yet, they did not give origin to the more technical theological meaning of this word. The following passages use the word in the sense that theology books use it:

Rom 5:14 – Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of him who was to come.

1 Cor 10:6 – Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

1 Cor 10:11 – Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Theological Definition of Types

A type is always something historical that is intended, according to God's purpose, to foreshadow something corresponding to it in the future. It is a person, an institution, office, action, or event in the Old Testament that foreshadowed a truth clearly revealed in the New Testament. The fulfillment of a type is the antitype. For example, Adam is a type of Christ. Conversely, Christ is an antitype of Adam.

“In the science of theology it properly signifies the preordained representative relation which certain persons, events, and institutions of the Old Testament bear to corresponding persons, events, and institutions in the New.” (Milton Terry)

Distinction between Types and Symbols

Types and symbols are figures of thought in which material objects are made to convey spiritual ideas to the mind. However, they differ from each other in that a symbol may represent a thing in the past, present, or future. A type, on the other hand, is always point to the future. A type is fulfilled in the New Testament whereas a symbol usually point to something that has already been accomplished and does not have a prophetic value.

Two examples of symbols:

The rainbow is a symbol God's covenant mercy and faithfulness

Gen 9:13-16 – I set my rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant which *is* between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* on the earth.

The bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are a symbol of the body and blood of Christ.

Sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between a symbol and a type. In 1 Kgs 11:29-31 we find a symbolical-typical action taken by Ahijah.

1 Kgs 11:29-31 – Now it happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the way; and he had clothed himself with a new garment, and the two were alone in the field. Then Ahijah took hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you.

The rendering of the garment symbolized a divided nation, but also typified the dividing of the nation that took place under Rehoboam and Jeroboam.

Identifying types

[Here we will follow Terry's outline.]

1. There must be some notable point of resemblance or analogy between the type and the antitype. This does not mean that the type and antitype are completely identical. If that were the case, the Scriptures would be speaking of the same thing

- Adam and Christ (Rom 5:14-20; 1 Cor 15:45-49)

Notice in Paul's description of Adam's typification of Christ that he lists more points of dissimilarity than he does of similarity.

We should always expect to find in the antitype something higher and nobler than in the type because "he who built the house has more honor than the house."

2. There must be evidence that the type was designed and appointed by God to represent the thing typified.
 - Experiences of Israel (1 Cor 10:6; v. 11, τυπικῶς *tipikos*)

We cannot go around finding types in places where there is no contextual warrant for them. On the other hand, we should not have an extreme position that would say that only what is explicitly declared type by the New Testament could be considered a type. We must keep in mind that the culmination of God's revelation is Christ. So, we should expect to see a shadow of Christ in places that are explicitly declared to be typical.

3. The type must prefigure something in the future. It must serve in the divine economy as a shadow of things to come.
 - Statement of Col 2:17; Heb 10:1

Col 2:16-17 – So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Heb 10:1 – For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

Types of types

[Following Terry, pp. 338-40]

1. Typical persons

A typical person sustains some character or relation with the history of redemption. Adam is a type of Christ because of his representative character as the first man and federal head of humanity. Elijah is a type of John the Baptist in the spirit and power of his prophetic ministry. Abraham's faith in God's Word and subsequent justification make him a type of all who are justified by faith "apart from the deeds of the law" (Rom 3:28). His offering of Isaac made him a type of all who have working faith.

Here are other important personal types:

- Adam (Rom 5:14, 19; 1 Cor 15:45)
- Melchizedek (Ps 110; Heb 7)
- David (Ps 69)
- Elijah, type of John the Baptist (Matt 11, 17)
- Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, type of future Antichrist (Dan 7, 9, 10-11)

2. Typical institutions

- Sabbath (Heb 4)
- Sacrifices (Col 2)
 - 1 Peter 1:18-19 – knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.
- Passover (John 1; 1 Cor 10)
- Tabernacle (Heb 8)

3. Typical offices

- Prophet (Deut 18)
- Priest (Ps 110)
- King (2 Sam 7)

4. Typical actions or events

- Flood (2 Pet 3)
- Exodus (Matt 2-7)
- Manna, rock, water in the wilderness (John 6; 1 Cor 10)
- Bronze serpent (John 3)
- Jonah and great fish (Matt 12)
- Restoration from Babylon (Rev 18)

Chapter 12: THE PROCEDURES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AS FOUNDATIONAL TO PREACHING

Exegetical Labor

These steps are helpful in the actual exegesis and interpretation of the text. They include careful, detailed work. They are not appropriate for devotional reading of the Bible, although they often will lead the student into new and wonderful devotional insights. The Bible should never become a dry textbook.

The student should keep records of his exegetical work. These records should not be too detailed and a burden, but they should enable him at a later time to retrace his steps without having to hunt up all his books again.

Key Assumptions of the Grammatical-Historical Method

Definitions

- Grammatical (Content)
 - The Bible was delivered in normal human communication forms as literature. To understand it you must know how and why language works.
- Historical (Context)
 - The Bible originated in time and the time must be understood for the Bible to be understood.

Steps in exegetical study

1. Prayer
 - a. A continual attitude during study
 - b. A good idea to formalize at the outset
 - c. Recognizes the need for illumination
2. Translation
 - a. First a formal-equivalence translation
 - b. As study progresses, develop a dynamic-equivalence translation

- c. Use a format that allows space for word definitions of unknown words and explanation of difficult forms
 - d. For those without language training, consult a variety of good translations
3. Textual criticism
 - a. Note any textual variants (in NT, check Nestle-Aland)
 - b. Make initial decision in difficult cases
 4. Determine the context
 - a. Note the general context

Questions to ask of the text related to history.

These questions must be asked and answered before you can get a good grasp on the grammatical side of the text. Start with the Scriptures as your first source of information, then branch out as required into extra-biblical sources.

- Who is the author? (Describe him)
 - Who is the speaker? (Describe him or her)
 - When was the text written?
 - Determine the historical context, including the cultural and societal constraints and practices that were in place at the time.
 - To whom was it written? (Describe them)
 - For what reason was it written?
- b. Ascertain the historical background or parallels
 - i. Use harmonies to find parallels in OT narrative, in the Gospels, in Paul's epistles
 - ii. Use dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc., to identify historical or cultural terms, dates, individuals, etc.
 - iii. Employ maps and atlases for events in the OT or in life of Jesus or Paul or other characters
5. Carefully study the wording of the text

a. *Questions to ask of the text related to grammar (content)*

The idea is to determine both the denotative and connotative meaning in a text.

- What is the big idea conveyed by the sentences?
- Do you understand the syntax of the passage? Use diagramming if necessary.
- What are the pericopes of the passage?
- What forms of figurative language are used?
- What do the figures allude to? Check historical background for clues.
- What effect does the genre have on the meaning?
- What do individual words mean (usage, not root)?
- What is the literal, natural sense meaning?
- Does it make sense?
- Is it consistent with the rest of the context and the Bible's message as a whole?
- Can a word mean more than one thing as it is used in a passage? (e.g., *law* in Romans 7)
- What emotional mood does the passage convey, and what effect does that mood have on how the material should be read?
- Do historical factors warrant a figurative interpretation? How so? (e.g., Ezekiel's temple)
- Is the passage quoting another biblical passage? It needs interpreting, too.

b. Literary/Rhetorical analysis applied to the text

[Adapted, Allen P. Ross, *Exegesis and Exposition*, vol 1, "Literary Analysis of the Text," 1986.]

"...structure and texture...are the means of directing the reader's focus in the story." – Ross

- Consider structure
 - Pericope indicators
 - Framing
 - Chiasm/inversion
 - Symmetry and order variation
 - Motif repetition
 - Quotations

- Subordinate clauses and parentheticals

 - Consider texture
 - Repetition

 - Paronomasia & phonetic wordplays

 - Paronomasia = a wordplay involving sound and sense

 - Phonetic wordplay = involving sound only

 - Double intent (words with double meanings, e.g., Genesis 40:13, 19)

 - Allusions and foreshadowing (You have to know the referents well.)

 - Notional features – especially important with narrative passages
 - (“the settings, referents, actions, and ideas as they occur within the text” – Ross)

 - List every being, object, and place

 - List every way in which a being, object, or place is referred to.

 - Determine what has the prominent use in the narrative. (Statistical analysis)

 - Make a summary of event-line statement within the text (i.e., the “plot”)

 - Map the verbs of the narrative: what nouns do they go with? Who or what ins the most active? Which advance the plot, and which are static?

 - Identify the thematic referents in the story.

 - Correlate all the above with the findings of the studies of previous repetitions within the text to determine the theme. (e.g., “and it was so” in the creation account, building up to the creation of man)

 - Scenes – note where the changes in settings, character, mood take place.

 - Figurative language
- c. This study can be as detailed as you wish, but note two extremes:
- i) Too much detail—never get finished

 - ii) Too skimpy—end up relying on commentaries

6. Compare with other Scriptures

“The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.” (WCF 1:9)

- a. OT quotes in the NT (see prior notes)
- b. Doctrines and conclusions must fit with overall teaching of the Bible
- c. Find other passages on the same subject (commentaries, theologies, and theological dictionaries will help)
- d. Each portion should be interpreted with integrity; keep a balance between the passages.

7. Check with commentaries

- a. The “checking principle”
- b. Beware of totally new ideas
- c. Especially look for overlooked arguments or passages
- d. Develop a taste for commentaries

8. Outline the exposition of the passage

- a. Outline the passage
- b. Paraphrase the passage; expanded translation
- c. Finalize your dynamic translation (not a loose translation)
- d. List arguments under debated points
- e. Note especially helpful references and quotations
- f. Chart out the significant parallel or related passages

This material now is ready to form the basis of a biblical lesson or message, or a series of messages or lessons!

Final cautions and guidelines

- Avoid approaching the Bible as a collection of proof texts for your system.
- Exercise restraint – don't let flights of fancy take you beyond the text.
- Cross-reference as much as practical.
- Periodically step back and view your interpretation in light of the whole of Scripture.
- Beware of a prophet's foreshortened horizon.
- Always let context be the final determiner of meaning.
- Remember that many times the referent of a given prophetic passage will not be absolutely certain until the event occurs or the individual(s) appear(s).
- Make 2 Timothy 2:15 your hermeneutical credo.