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Change, Tradition, and Hermeneutics

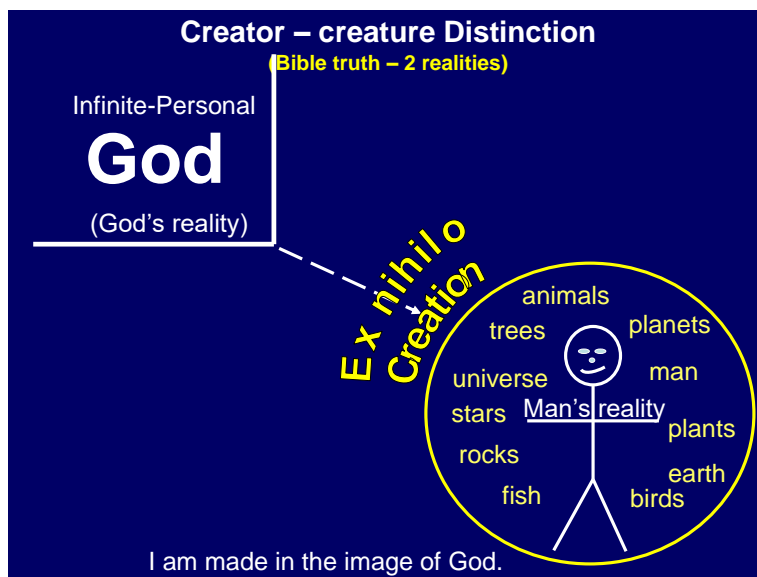
Good Morning. It is my privilege to be able to be with you today.

Today I want us to consider some things about change, tradition, and hermeneutics.

When I was trying to put this together, it was hard to stay focused because so many linking ideas would pop into my head and I would run with an idea until I'd have to stop and refocus, reminding myself of what it is that I really wanted to communicate. The title may sound a bit disjointed, but let's see if we can make sense of it.

I know a number of people I would like to see change their attitude toward the Bible, as I'm sure you do. Some of these people are unbelievers, many of them are believers.

Many unbelievers see no need for the Bible or "religion", or whatever you want to call it, because all religions have some truth in them, but not enough to convince them. They feel more comfortable as a cynic, even though they, deep in the quietness of the mind, know that God exists (Romans 1:18-20), they continue to suppress that knowledge because if they admit that there is a God that would mean that they are responsible sinners before an all holy Creator.

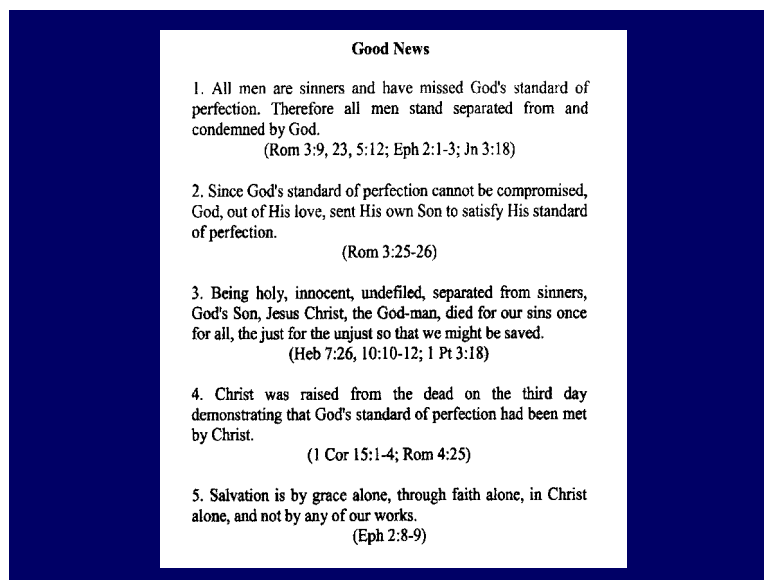


The so-called "unbeliever" denies that God exists. He utterly denies this picture. Yet, Ecclesiastes 3:11 tells us "...He (God) has put eternity into man's heart..." (ESV) and we have a sense of destiny. Still, the unbeliever, or repressor, is responsible to God even in his denial.

However, when it comes to the believer changing their attitude toward the Bible, it becomes more of an involved question of who or what influenced their thoughts about the bible, how were they taught, and how much they have bought into the world's viewpoint.

I find myself having difficulty using the word “Christian” when talking about saved individuals. The word “Christian” has come to be a title for anyone who believes in something with “God”, or “Christ”, or “Spirit” in it, or who attends, however infrequently, a “church”, or even worse, the person labeled a “good” person.

The words “save” and “salvation”, derive their meaning from the theological soteriology of a particular “faith” or belief system. The word “faith” takes on a different meaning according to the doctrinal views of an age (Reformation age, Medieval Roman Catholic age), or a denomination, cult, etc. Why is it that we don’t believe the same doctrines, hold to the same truths, profess the same “faith”? I know that there are legitimate theological differences that are acceptable, but in the large picture, we have such divergent views of Baptism, Confirmation, the Lord’s Supper, Faith, Israel’s purpose, Christ’s Kingdom, Assurance of Salvation, the Atonement of Christ, Exclusivity, what is meant by “the Church”, what its mission is and its worship, who belongs to the “Clergy”, what the Bible is, individual rights in the Church, and on and on.

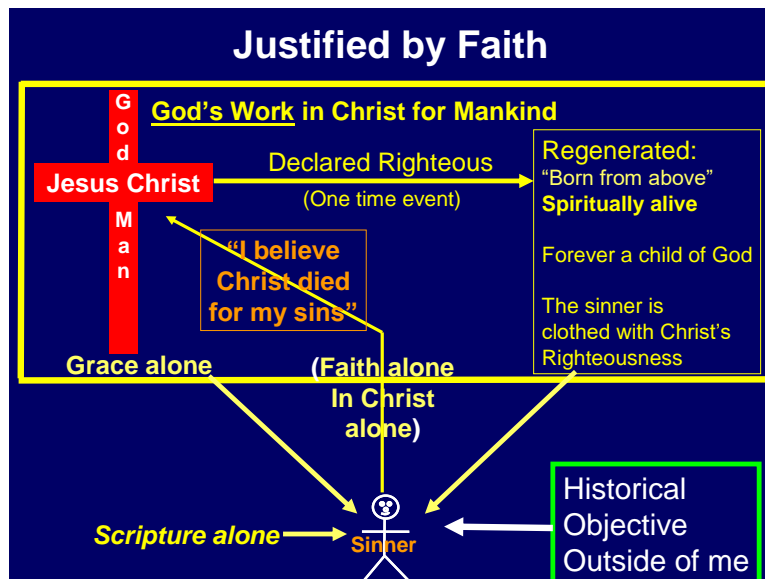


Good News

1. All men are sinners and have missed God's standard of perfection. Therefore all men stand separated from and condemned by God.
(Rom 3:9, 23, 5:12; Eph 2:1-3; Jn 3:18)
2. Since God's standard of perfection cannot be compromised, God, out of His love, sent His own Son to satisfy His standard of perfection.
(Rom 3:25-26)
3. Being holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, God's Son, Jesus Christ, the God-man, died for our sins once for all, the just for the unjust so that we might be saved.
(Heb 7:26, 10:10-12; 1 Pt 3:18)
4. Christ was raised from the dead on the third day demonstrating that God's standard of perfection had been met by Christ.
(1 Cor 15:1-4; Rom 4:25)
5. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and not by any of our works.
(Eph 2:8-9)

On the back of our Sunday bulletin, there are printed the propositions and supporting verses to understand the “good news of Jesus Christ” – that we are sinners and cannot attain to the required standard of perfection that God’s holiness demands, that God sent His Son to meet that perfect standard, who Jesus Christ is, that He died for the sins of all mankind, that He was raised from the dead three days later and that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

So, from the study of Scripture, we are able to put together in a logical way – a presentation of the “Good News” of Jesus Christ and our need for him.



Let's look at this in picture form again.

The sinner has been presented propositions from Scripture about the dilemma that he is in (God-Man-Sin), about who Jesus Christ is (God/Man) and what He has done to redeem, reconcile, and satisfy God's wrath. Perhaps he has heard these propositions a number of times before and resisted them. But this time, by God's Grace, as he rethinks them, he accepts, that is agrees with the propositions as true and believes that Christ truly died for his sins and places his faith alone in Christ alone for his salvation.

At that point a sinner is

- “saved” i.e. declared righteous,
- re-born, made spiritually alive;
- becomes a child of God and has
- Christ's Righteousness imputed to him,
- along with many other blessings we learn about in Scripture.
- But notice, all of this is “outside” of the sinner”. It is by faith alone.

Now, let's take some time to consider the “well, then what?” question. I've just said that the sinner becomes re-born, i.e. made spiritually alive, and becomes a child of God.

As newborns we need to be properly fed and cared for while we “grow” spiritually and that can only come from the Word of God. The churches that don't take the Bible seriously end up with immature, confused, and self-absorbed members.

The men and women who put themselves out as “ministers of your souls” and yet rely on the use Psychology books for counseling are denying the existence of “sin” and are advocating that man, through education, motivation, and self-awareness can overcome himself and become better.

Survey of 3,000 Protestant Clergymen

“A considerable number rejected altogether the idea of a personal God. God, they said, was the **Ground of Being**, the **Force of Life**, the **Principle of Love**, **Ultimate Reality** and so forth. A majority of the youngest group cannot be said to believe in the **Virgin Birth** or to regard **Jesus as divine** in the traditional way in which most Protestants were brought up.”

In the Bible software I use, I came across an interesting item. Some years ago, (the article said ten years), McCall's magazine reported on a survey of 3,000 Protestant clergymen. Their article stated, “A considerable number rejected altogether the idea of a personal God. God, they said, was the Ground of Being, the Force of Life, the Principle of Love, Ultimate Reality and so forth. A majority of the youngest group cannot be said to believe in the Virgin Birth or to regard Jesus as divine in the traditional way in which most Protestants were brought up.” No names were mentioned, but from an earlier study, you can include the Emergent Church Movement as well as a number of Protestant groups in this number. This is called apostasy.

Apostasy

In a broad sense, apostasy is stated to be a “falling away” from the faith. What faith? A falling away from the faith the person once professed. Well, by this definition then I am a fallen-away, or apostate Catholic, because I once placed my “faith” in that belief system. I would also be considered a heretic, as would we all. But if a Lutheran becomes a Catholic, does he become a Lutheran apostate? By this definition - yes.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum has a better definition of apostasy in his *Messianic Bible Study Collection*.

Apostasy: Definition

Apostasy can be defined as “the departure from the truth that one professed to have.”

Fruchtenbaum, A. G. (1983). Vol. 33: The Messianic Bible Study Collection (21).

He writes, “Apostasy can be defined as ‘the departure from the truth that one professed to have.’” He continues, “It does not mean that they actually possessed the truth. Seldom do apostates actually possess the truth. Rather, it is a departure from a truth they professed to have because of an affiliation with a particular church.”



Each Christian church, and every “wannabe” Christian church, bases its belief system on Scripture. By doing this they are acknowledging that authoritative truth (eternal truth) can be found there. But the problem is which church, which doctrines, which teachings hold true to Scripture?

Since the Reformation, and the establishment of a group of protesting people in a movement called “Protestantism”, there have been multiple breaks from beliefs developed from the interpretation of Scripture, until today we have the establishment of many Protestant churches that are protesting nothing! So we find some churches using Scripture plus their tradition, or very little scripture and a lot of ritual, or using Scripture as a moral spanking switch, or no Scripture and just a pleasant interchange of spiritual experiences and a few songs. And a number of the so-called “leaders” of these churches are Biblically apostate and heretical! And to presume that they have enough of an understanding of God’s revelation to veer off as they have is the ultimate height of arrogance and self deception. To think they are teaching anything other than a human level goodness and promoting man’s self inflating ego would be less than the truth.

Tradition

Whether you’ve grown up in straight laced Baptist church, the mystical Roman Catholic Church, or a sentimental hand waving Pentecostal or Charismatic church, that’s the “tradition” you come from. The things taught, the songs sung, the rituals performed have been embraced as “sacred” to you.

Asking the question “what church do you belong to?” implies:

What theology and doctrines do you form your life around?

This, in turn, will dictate:

- What social gatherings you attend
- What rituals you perform
- What “outreach” you have
- What missions you support

What “ministries” you have in your church

What size your church is

What affiliations your church has

What view of Israel you have

.....and, as a result, this is what you will teach your children.

They, in turn, will accept this teaching as “true” and teach their children the same beliefs, and until the teachings are challenged by solid scriptural teaching, the cycle continues through generations! False teaching brings subjectivism, instability and confusion.

Unfortunately, the young person or baby is baptized into a particular church tradition with or without their consent. The family to whom they belong has always belonged to this particular religion or church (i.e. Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, etc) and proudly proclaim, “that’s what our children will be”! So continues the tradition and the clinging to a particular church and the pressure from the family and other members of that church make it very difficult to change.

It’s only by the grace of God that some people begin to understand that ritual, tradition, and weak sermons are not satisfying anymore, and they begin to look around for something else. But here arises a big problem – these people know what they don’t want, but don’t really know what they are looking for. There are so many false teachers who don’t know biblical doctrine that it’s no wonder that people are confused!

And, as we get closer to Christ’s return for His Church, we know that apostasy will become great, and I can’t help but think that we are there. The question is, has apostasy gone on too long for it to turn around? Have we, like Israel, gone beyond the point of return in idolatry and carnality that God has “let us have our foolish way”?

Here’s another problem. Many people don’t know the difference between “I think” and “I feel”. The natural draw of wanting to “sense” God, to “touch” Him as it were, to have the Holy Spirit truly guide me, tell me what to do, to have Jesus living within my heart, changing me gradually into Himself and living His life through me – these are the mystical desires of sincere religious people and ones that drive men and women into monastic life. I know those feelings. However, these are the desires of the spiritually immature and are not grounded in the doctrines of Scripture. We live in a world of “sound bites”, of Scriptural snippets on church electronic readouts – “Come, follow Me”, or “Do what He tells you”, or “Be led by the Spirit”. There’s nothing wrong with these, per se, but they are misleading when taken out of context. They tend to leave one with a mystical view above and beyond what Scripture actually says. This is the great danger of our times. People don’t want to take the time to “think”, to read, to ponder, to understand a verse in context. They would much rather pick and choose verses that help them “feel God’s presence”, and that is what makes the seduction of **Mysticism the number one enemy** of proper Biblical interpretation and leads people into the tunnel of subjectivism. At that point you are not interested in “thinking” about or pondering the propositions of Scripture for truth, but are more interested in seeking those fragmented Scriptural verses, or reading a devotional that will produce the desired feelings and emotions that make you feel “loved”.

Please understand the difference between that which is objective i.e. outside of us - God’s Word and the fuzzy-wuzzy warmth of subjectivism (feelings). Sanctification or “loyalty to God” is through obedience to His Word, not nice feelings.

How do false teachers, knowingly or unknowingly, entice believers into believing such strange and bizarre “doctrines” as they do?

First, let’s take another look at how we humans obtain what is called “knowledge”.

The Basis of Knowledge			
	SYSTEM	STARTING POINT	METHOD
Autonomous Systems Of Perception	RATIONALISM	Innate ideas Faith in human ability.	Independent use of logic & reason
	EMPIRICISM	Sense perceptions External experience; Scientific method Faith in human ability	Independent use of logic & reason
	MYSTICISM	Inner, private experience; intuition Faith in human ability	Independent, Nonlogical, nonrational, nonverifiable.
Divine View point	REVELATION	Objective revelation	Dependent use of logic & reason

Adapted slide from Dr. Robert Dean

We acquire knowledge through three systems: through Rationalism, Empiricism, and Mysticism.

Through the system of **Rationalism**, we begin with innate ideas from the mind (rather than learned through experience), and we place our faith in human ability. And the method used is the independent use of logic and reason.

Through the system of **Empiricism**, we begin with sense perceptions; external experience; scientific method, and again, we place our faith in human ability. And the method is again the independent use of logic and reason.

Through the system of **Mysticism**, now we begin with inner, private experience or intuition, and again, we place our faith in human ability. However, and watch the difference, the method is independent, but non-logical, non-rational, and non-verifiable.

So from these three systems we get all human information for Human Viewpoint and Human Knowledge.

We now begin to understand the mind of the Pagan. He wants nothing to do with God. He is only interested in man's ability, with the acquired and collective knowledge of other humans through science and philosophy to shape his world and make sense of life. He relies entirely on his human logic and reason, or his inner, private experience, and intuition. The individuals that hold to this position have created their own personal god in their own image.

But there is **one more way** that humans can attain knowledge, a fourth system.

It is through the system of **Divine Revelation**, where we begin with the objective revelation of God, where we find the method now is using human logic and reason in submission to God's system.

From this system we get God's Viewpoint and Divine Knowledge.

This system of attaining knowledge is one that is entirely outside of us. It is the revealing of truths that we would never have received from the three human systems. We have to "go to" scripture and read it. It is objective Truth given to us from God. It is not infused into us. Nor can we read it haphazardly. It also requires that our human logic and reason be subject to this revelation, along with the subjecting of

our inner, private experience, and intuition. It claims complete authority because it is God’s revelation, in God’s words, graciously given to created mankind who is made in God’s image, and who possess characteristics such as choice, conscience, love, and knowledge that are finite replicas of their Creator’s divine attributes.

Remember: The Bible possesses its authority over us - independently of us.

This is a good look at how we gain knowledge. However, what has man done with the Scriptures?

Where Man wants Scripture			
	SYSTEM	STARTING POINT	METHOD
Autonomous Systems Of Perception	RATIONALISM	Innate ideas Faith in human ability.	Independent use of logic & reason
	EMPIRICISM	Sense perceptions External experience; Scientific method Faith in human ability	Independent use of logic & reason
	MYSTICISM	Inner, private experience; intuition Faith in human ability	Independent, Nonlogical, nonrational, nonverifiable.
	SCRIPTURE: Subject to Human Knowledge		

Human Knowledge

Adapted slide from Dr. Robert Dean

He wants the Bible to look no different from and be subject to the rest of human systems of acquired knowledge, so that Rationalism, Empiricism, and Mysticism govern the Bible. The Bible must be subject to my intellect and my perception of reality!

However, the Bible is a book that divides father from son, mother from daughter, separates and condemns the unbeliever, mystifies the curious, and ignores the skeptic.

When you look at the variations and shades of religious thought we have around today, you are confronted with a smorgasbord of slogans like “feel good about yourself”, “Come, get the Spirit”, “Let us shower you with love”, “We have a program for you”. They sound like hawkers outside the circus tent inviting you to come see their show. “Personalized” religion; “meet the needs of the members” – that’s how you grow a church – make the church relevant to the 21st century. Wait a minute!

The Word of God is the Word of God and we spend our lifetime learning from it. It is not a “living document” that is edited and updated with the changing cultures.



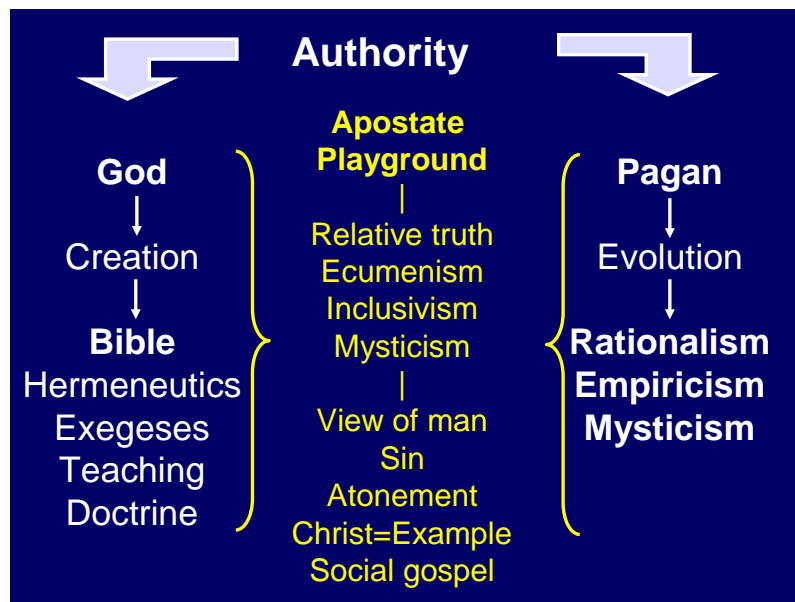
Jeremy Thomas has clearly stated one of the purposes for this church:

“A chief purpose of Fredericksburg Bible Church is to counteract the irrationalism of the age and to expose the errors of the teachers of the church.

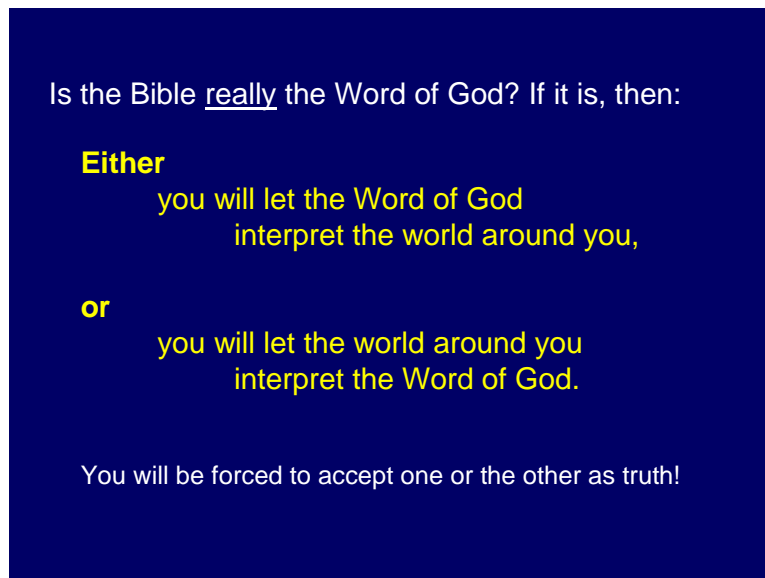
Our emphasis—on the Bible as the sole source of knowledge, on the primacy of truth, on the supreme importance of correct doctrine, and on the necessity for systematic and logical thinking—is rare. To the extent that the church survives—and she will survive and flourish—it will be because of her increasing acceptance of these basic ideas and their logical implications”.

Jeremy Thomas: September 2008

So the battleground is the fertile mind of man. Let’s take another look at the two “authorities” we must choose from. We say that the Authority of God is supreme or the authority of Man is supreme – and that there is no neutrality. But the reality is that both sides want to meet somewhere in the middle.



Here we have what I have called the “Apostate Playground”- or an accommodation attempt. Actually, this is the area of supposed religious “neutrality”, filled with relative truth. This is a dangerous area. This is where the mind of man with his rationalism and mysticism takes over the authority of God’s Word. This is where the objective Word of God is made subjective to man’s desires. This is where a person reads a passage of Scripture out of context and makes doctrine out of it. This is where a person reads into Scripture what he wants Scripture to read back to him, or tries to make Scripture something of a great mystery and is continually looking for the “key” to unlock the coded messages. I see this as the area of the false teachers and false teachings that the New Testament writers warned about. Men who have stepped out from under the authority of Scripture and refuse to accept it as it is written, but continually twist, misinterpret, even deliberately misconstrue passages to entice people to their authority. This is the area that people get lulled into and confuse the objective revelation of God with the subjective, independent use of human reason and mysticism.



Is the Bible really the Word of God? If it is, then:

Either
you will let the Word of God
interpret the world around you,

or
you will let the world around you
interpret the Word of God.

You will be forced to accept one or the other as truth!

Since the Bible is its own authority, then the teaching that “there are only two ways of looking at this world” is correct – from God’s perspective, or man’s perspective.

**If the Bible is truly the Word of God, then,
Either you will let the Word of God interpret the world around you, or
you will let the world around you interpret the Word of God.**

It all comes down to correct biblical hermeneutics, doesn’t it? So, how do you go about interpreting the Word of God?

Hermeneutics

When it comes to the interpretation of the Bible, nothing could be more fundamental. This is where we begin. The rest of our understanding hinges on this teaching.

However, this is where I see such diversity! Depending on your denominational affiliation, you will generally find a range of interpretation from the far left to the far right, or seemingly no interpretational methodology at all.

First, let’s define Hermeneutics.

Definition

“Hermeneutics is the study of the principles of interpretation.
Exegesis consists of the actual interpretation of the Bible, the bringing out of its meaning, whereas hermeneutics establishes the principles by which exegesis is practiced.”

Charles Ryrie's *Basic theology*

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From Charles Ryrie's *Basic theology*:

“Hermeneutics is the study of the principles of interpretation.
Exegesis consists of the actual interpretation of the Bible, the bringing out of its meaning, whereas hermeneutics establishes the principles by which exegesis is practiced.”

So let's look at a few of the various views of hermeneutics.

The Allegorical view.

Charles Ryrie writes: An allegory is a symbolic representation. Allegorical hermeneutics stands in contrast to literal hermeneutics and is usually resorted to when the literal sense seems unacceptable to the interpreter.”

Dr. Dwight Pentecost in his book *Things to Come* states 3 dangers to Allegorical interpretation:

Allegorical Dangers

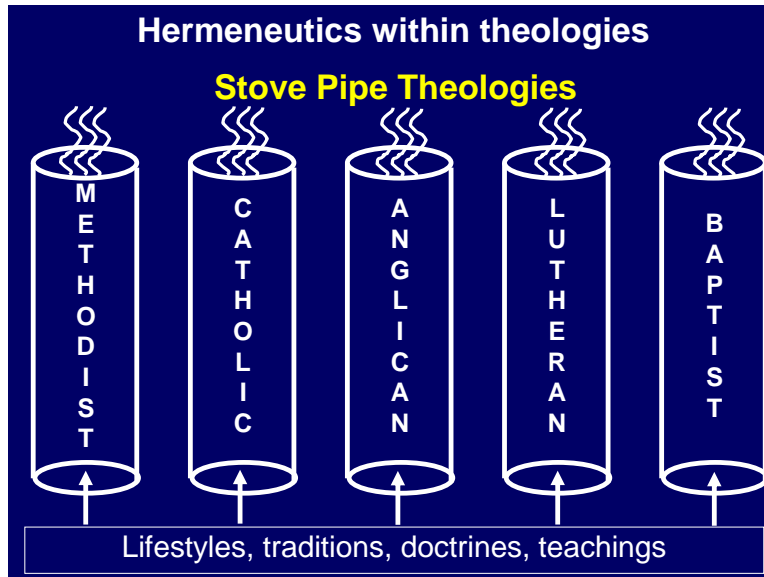
J. Dwight Pentecost in his book *Things to Come*:

- “(1) The first great danger of the allegorical method is that it does not interpret Scripture.....
- (2) The basic authority and interpretation ceases to be the Scriptures, but the mind of the interpreter.....
- (3) A third great danger in the allegorical method is that one is left without any means by which the conclusions of the interpreter may be tested.”

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The Hermeneutical view from within a given theology.



Aside from the Roman Catholic Church, we have seen various denominations arise from the Reformation that over time developed their own lifestyles, traditions, doctrines, and teaching from calcified 16th century creeds or variations of them.

So, too, the hermeneutic they use to interpret Scripture stems from, and is influenced by, each denomination’s lifestyles, traditions, doctrines, and teachings, which is their particular theology.

Likewise, the influence of the culture of the world will bring conflict within the church.

Hermeneutics from an Egalitarian view.

For example, the Evangelical Feminists (Egalitarians) have the same attitude as their worldly sisters fighting to break the glass ceilings in the corporate world. “Be all you can be”, “Equal rights for women”, fairness, equality, interchangeability of man and woman. From a human viewpoint these all sound just and right, but God isn’t a corporation. Fairness has nothing to do with the creation ordinance of the authority structure shown in the institutions of responsible dominion, marriage, and family of Genesis 1, 2, and 3. Male headship and male leadership are clearly defined. The post modern church is heavily influenced by women desiring “to take control”, “rise to the top”, all in the name of “women’s rights”, “fairness”, and “equality”. So strong is this desire that their hermeneutical approach is driven by it, and it is a highly emotional issue!

I’ve summarized a few of the Evangelical Feminist principles of interpretation from the book:

Evangelical Hermeneutics by Robert L. Thomas

The Hermeneutics of Evangelical Feminism (Chapter 13 – Author: Paul W. Felix Sr.)

- Restrict teaching to original audience, with no universal application.

- Use a “clear” text such as Gal 3:28 to determine the less clear ones regarding role of women.
- See the relationship between slave and master being parallel to that between wives and husbands.
- Declare that text is culture limited.
- See many texts as Patriarchal and Sexist, promoting assumptions of a negative view of females.

and then from the book, *Evangelical Feminism* by Wayne Grudem, there is what is called a “Trajectory” hermeneutic: which is “a means of interpreting the Bible in which our final authority is not found in what is written in the Bible itself, but is found later, at the end of a “trajectory” along which the New Testament was progressing at the time it was being written.” Supporters include R.T.France, David Thompson.

Alright, let’s move on.

The Plain Sense view

Hidden among the many “Christian interpretations” is a small group that holds to a normal, grammatical-historical interpretation that places importance on words, how they fit together to make a sentence, how sentences are strung together to form and express a thought, and how that thought links with another expressed thought to form an idea, a truth, or a proposition.

This work is carried on by scholarly men who are called “exegetes”. These are men who study the constructs and nuances of New Testament Greek and Hebrew, who study the historical times and customs of the Israelite people in the Old Testament, and spend so much time looking at what the authors of the New Testament wrote. Why do they spend so much time doing these studies? The answer is that they believe that the Bible is truly the Word of God delivered to us through some 40 different authors during a period of ~1600 years, all of which was orchestrated, superintended, and overseen by the 3rd Person of the Holy Trinity, and they want to treat it with the reverence, respect, and honor that it deserves. The rules for interpretation keep them from wandering into the trap of reading something into the text to prove a point, or not letting Scripture disturb your pre-existing theology. The idea is that truth comes from Scripture and the rules of interpretation help keep the interpreter honest.

For example:

- **Rule of Normal, Literal, Plain Sense**
 - When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the language and grammar in the context indicate clearly otherwise
- **Rule of Authorial Intent**
 - We search for the original author’s meaning and not the original audience’s understanding or our own meaning. In other words, it doesn’t matter what it means to you. It matters what the author means
- **Rule of Single Meaning**
 - A single text can have only a single meaning

- Interpretation is one, application is many

➤ **Rule of Context**

Look at the immediate verse, previous verse, the verse after, the chapter, the book, other books by the same author, New Testament or Old Testament, the whole Bible,

and there are many others. Jeremy has given us more examples from an earlier teaching. You will find them at the end of this teaching.

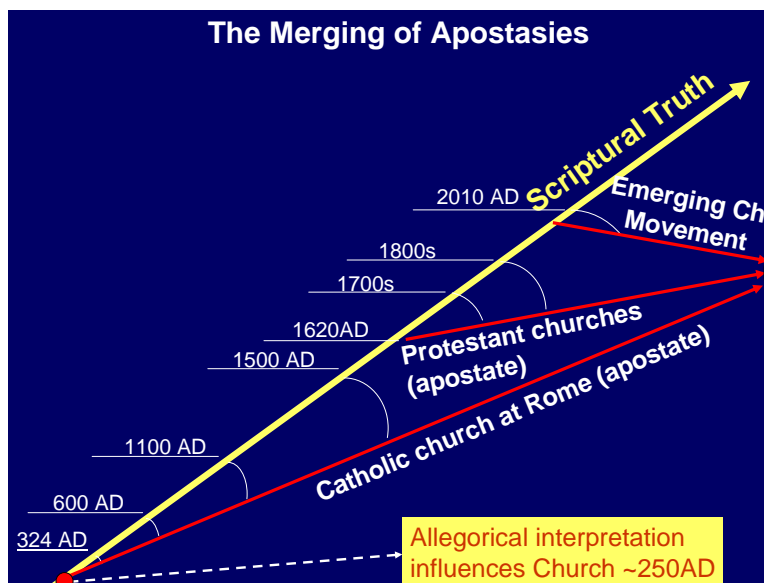
That is why Jeremy Thomas spends 40-50 hours or more a week preparing lessons for us, so we can be properly fed God’s Word.

That’s why we would be wise to make use of the hard work that Jeremy has done in his exegetical study and teachings found on our website. They are an excellent source for review, reference, and for use in studying with others.

And, so we begin to see the importance and significance of proper “hermeneutics”, and why so many churches capitulate to “the needs of the members” rather than explaining through God’s word what the members need!

And we cannot allow the use of the Egalitarian hermeneutic that filters everything through Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”, and claim that that verse makes it ok for women to have equal rights with the male leadership in the church for teaching, overseeing, and administration. What that interpretation is advocating is the interchange of male and female authority; that it’s “ok” if men are taught by women or women are taught by men, or women become ordained ministers because we are “equal” in the Lord. Equal in salvation, yes! But, that’s not the way God established the creation ordinance of the authority structure and roles in Genesis chapters 1, 2, and 3, and we see that structure carried over into the New Testament.

The path of the normal, grammatical-historical hermeneutic has not been a well traveled one.



The early church fathers held to a normal interpretation, but the allegory of Greek thought and philosophy brought forward by Philo, and especially from a young theologian in Alexandria, named Origen, influenced and changed the Church's hermeneutical methodology.

The horizontal line represents the principles of the normal, grammatical-historical hermeneutic to understand Scriptural Truth.

From approximately 250AD to 1500AD, the Church accepted and embraced "allegorical" interpretation as the norm. However, this is not to say that there weren't pockets of believers that read with normal interpretation during this time.

The Reformers had a sense of proper hermeneutics in the 1500s, when one of their battle cries was Sola Scriptura – "Scripture alone" as final authority.

The Reformation Movement brought the focus back to the normal reading of Scripture for a while, but eventually it gave way to the Enlightened Age of Reason, and allegory came back, and its influence in interpretation is still alive and well in our day.

The liberal theologians, the "visionary" theologians of the Emergent Church Movement and others, cannot accept a normal, grammatical-historical interpretation, because it does not fit their preconceived ideas of what Christianity should be, and so they, too, move to the apostate position.

The greatest need we have is to get into an assembly of Christians that have committed themselves to teach the full counsel of God: verse by verse, explaining the doctrines as Scripture develops them, using a normal, grammatical-historical hermeneutic, so that the newborn gets the spiritual nourishment that is needed to grow and understand God's Word better. The God-established institutes of responsible dominion, marriage, and family are severely under attack and the men in these assemblies need to step forward with the desire to learn and understand God's will for them as leaders in the work place, marriage, and family; men who will build a network of biblically sound men desirous of the same spiritual goals, where they can become "iron sharpening iron" (Prov. 27:17). This is not just for "elders" or "deacons" – yes, there will be levels of spiritual maturity and spiritual gifts, but each man is held responsible for learning Scriptural principles for the purpose of leading his own marriage, and in leading his own family.

In conclusion, we are witnessing the effects of the various hermeneutical attempts to gain control over Scripture and what we find is: the church trying to accommodate the world's view of fairness and equality, and ending up with false church messages, false gospel messages, unbiblical and heretical doctrine taught by false teachers everywhere.

Yet, it is a bitter-sweet situation. On the one hand, we know that the Church apostasy happens before Christ comes at the Rapture – and this we desire! But, on the other hand, there is sadness because those baby believers are not being fed the real truth of Scripture. Their spiritual lives are stunted and generations of children are in jeopardy of not being taught the gospel of Jesus Christ. All we can do is thank God that He has control of history and that the period of grace is still present!

Let us pray.....

From Jeremy Thomas' Teaching: July 23, 2006 – Rev 19-20 – Hermeneutics, Exegesis & Systematic Theology

You must know the rules of the game before you play. You must follow the rules of the game in order to win.

The game is exegesis, and the rules of the game are hermeneutics. There are several such rules that you must follow. If you don't its cheating and there is a penalty. Let me give you eight:

2. Rule of Normal, Literal, Plain Sense
 - When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the language and grammar in the context indicate clearly otherwise.¹
 - This is not wooden literalism. Wooden literalism leaves no room for figures of speech
 - Literal interpretation includes *direct* signification (e.g. “it rained forty days and forty nights” Gen 7:12) and *indirect* signification or figures of speech that are common to all languages (e.g. “inwardly false prophets are ravenous wolves” Matt 7:15).
3. Rule of Authorial Intent
 - We search for the original author's meaning and not the original audience's understanding or our own meaning. In other words, it doesn't matter what it means to you. It matters what the author means
4. Rule of Single Meaning
 - A single text can have only a single meaning
 - Interpretation is one, application is many
5. Rule of Context
 - Immediate Verse (e.g. John 3:16)
 - Verse before (John 3:15)
 - Verse after (John 3:16)
 - Chapter (John 3)
 - Book (John)
 - Other books by same author (1, 2, 3 John, Revelation)
 - NT or OT (NT)
 - Whole Bible
6. Rule of Double Reference
 - Two prophecies butted up against one another with no indication of a large gap of time in between (Jer 29:10-14; Zech 9:9-10)
7. Rule of Double Recurrence
 - One event explained generally and then the same event explained in detail (Gen 1 & 2; Ezek 38 & 39)
8. Rule of Progressive Revelation
 - The Bible came from God to man over time and not all at one time
9. Rule of Analogy of Faith
 - All interpretations must harmonize with one another
 - The Bible is a consistently harmonious witness
 - God cannot contradict Himself

I show you these just to show you how careful one must be when trying to interpret the Word of God. This short example clearly indicates a more scholarly approach and one that is in keeping with respect one must have when handling the Word of God.

¹ This definition is a modification of a statement made by Cooper, David L., *Messiah: His First Coming Scheduled* (Los Angeles, CA: Biblical Research Society, 1939), 546.

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