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Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

Lecture Notes

These notes have been compiled from a series of lectures presented by Dr. Robert Stein. They do not represent actual class notes written by Dr. Stein.

Scripture references are from the ESV unless noted.

Biblical Hermeneutics
Robert Stein

Contents

1. Introduction to the Class	3
2. Early Beginnings to the Present	4-6
3. Hermeneutical Issues Involved in Translation	7-8
4. Various Involved with Translation	9-10
5. An Introduction to Hermeneutics- Part 1	11-13
6. An Introduction to Hermeneutics- Part 2	14-15
7. A Vocabulary for Interpretation- Part 1	16-19
8. A Vocabulary for Interpretation- Part 2	20-21
9. A Vocabulary for Interpretation- Part 3	22-23
10. The Role of the Holy Spirit	24-27
11. The Miraculous in Scripture	28-30
12. G. B. Caird, The Language and Imagery of the Bible	31-32
13. Proverbs	33-35
14. The Genre and Language of Prophecy	36-37
15. Further Examples of Prophecy	41-44
16. Prophecy and the Beginning Discussion of Mark	45-47
17. Prose and Poetry, and Examples from the Old Testament	48-51
18. Types of Poetry in the Bible	52-54
19. Idioms	55-57
20. The Genre of Exaggeration- Part 1	58-59
21. The Genre of Exaggeration- Part 2	60-61
22. Introduction to Parables	62-65
23. Interpretation of Parables	66-70
24. Allegory and Historical Narrative	71-75
25. Clues to Interpreting Historical Narrative	76-78
26. Understanding the Letters in the New Testament	79-81
27. How Sentences Are Understood	82-85
28. The Genre of Covenant	86-90
29. Psalms	91-93
30. The Books That Make Up the Bible	94-99

1. Introduction to the Class

I. Overview of the Course

II. Recommended Reading

- *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, Revised Edition* by Williams W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr.
- *Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* by Robert H. Stein
- *Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* by Paul D. Wegner

III. Goal of the Course

- Introduce students to an overview of the history of the English Bible
- Introduce students to a conceptual framework for Bible interpretation
- Master a vocabulary for biblical interpretive studies
- Discussion of the various genres found in the Bible and their respective rules of interpretation

2. Early Beginnings to the Present

I. Early Beginnings to the Present

a. The Making of the English Language

i. Anglo-Saxon dialect

The Anglo-Saxon dialect began in the 5th century as an amalgamation of languages. Sometimes referred to as Old English, it became the common dialect of England.

ii. French influence

In the 11th century, William the Conqueror from France conquered England and thus brought a French influence which eventually became the English language.

b. Early Translations

The Latin Vulgate was the bible of the early church but most people in England couldn't read or write. Bible stories were learned through art; e.g. paintings, stained glass windows, traveling troubadours who told stories through songs.

i. John Wycliffe

John Wycliffe translated the 1st bible into the English language from the Latin Vulgate in 1382. He was a pre-Luther/Calvin reformer. This translation occurred before the printing press and was thus handwritten.

This translation led to criticism of the clergy as people began to read the Bible for the first time and recognize discrepancies in the character and practices of the religious leaders. In response, there was a "clamping down" on the use of translations in the common language. By 1414, it became a capital offense to be caught reading the Bible in the English language.

ii. William Tyndale

In 1526, William Tyndale published the 1st Bible in English to be translated from Greek and Hebrew texts. It was printed in Germany due to opposition from Henry VIII in England. This was an excellent translation that served as a basis for most English translations that followed

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

including the KJV. Tyndale was a Luther supporter and adopted Luther's revised order of NT books.

Tyndale was kidnapped by followers of King Henry VIII and was burned at the stake outside of Brussels in 1536.

iii. Miles Coverdale

Cloverdale was a disciple of Tyndale who printed the 1st Bible in the English language in completion. He was the 1st person to separate the Apocrypha from the rest of the OT. Previously, these books were intermingled with the OT books of the original Hebrew. The Cloverdale Bible was also the 1st Bible to use versification. Previous translations divided books by chapters, but not by verses.

iv. Thomas Matthew (John Rogers)

John Rogers was another follower of Tyndale who published the Matthew Bible in 1537. He was also martyred after his true identity was determined.

v. Richard Taverner

The Taverner's Bible was published in 1539 with King Henry VIII's approval. This was largely a revision to the Matthew Bible.

King Henry VIII became supportive of the reformers due to his desire for divorce. By the time of his death, in 1545, England had become a predominately protestant society.

vi. The Great Bible

Published in 1539, this Bible was named due to its size. It was the 1st authorized Bible (authorized by Henry VIII). This Bible sought to be more palatable to the Roman Catholic clergy by reverting back to the traditional ordering of the NT books.

vii. The Geneva Bible

Published in Geneva, this bible was very Calvinist (as evidenced in the substantial marginal notes) and was the popular translation during the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

viii. The Bishop's Bible

The Bishop's Bible was authorized by the Church of England and published in 1568. It was the result of a rejection of the Geneva Bible by the Bishops in England.

ix. The King James Version

In 1604, King James I ordered a new official translation without footnotes; to be assembled by England's top scholars. The KJV was published in 1611 and became one of the greatest translations in the English language, superseding all previous translations. Interesting note: almost 90% of this translation had Tyndale roots.

x. The Douay-Rheims Version

This version was a direct result of the Council of Trent. In an effort to satisfy English speaking Roman Catholics, it was derived from the Latin Vulgate rather than the original Hebrew/Greek texts. According to the Council of Trent, the Latin Vulgate was deemed to be the final authority. This is no longer the position of Roman Catholic scholars.

c. Modern Versions

Over the years, the number of new translations have increased dramatically. Existing translations are constantly being revised with minor updates, usually resulting in gradual and less dramatic changes.

3. Hermeneutical Issues Involved in Translation

II. Hermeneutical Issues Involved in Translation

- a. There is no one to one correspondence between languages.

According to C.H. Dodd, the 1st axiom of translation: There is no such thing as an exact word equivalent when going from one language to another.

Different languages as well as different cultures pose problems for translators.

E.g. in Mat 1:18 Mary is said to be betrothed to Joseph. Later in verse 24, Mary is referred to as his wife. In that culture, an engagement was legally binding and required a divorce to break. Our culture has an entirely different understanding of an engagement.

- b. A good translation should:

- i. be based on the best manuscripts.

Generally speaking, manuscripts dating closer to the original writing are preferred simply with respect to the likelihood of copy errors. Tyndale, and later translators for the Geneva and King James Bible, used a Greek New Testament published by Erasmus of Rotterdam in the 16th century. Erasmus used the best Greek manuscripts available at the time.

Subsequently, thousands of Greek NT manuscripts, dating centuries earlier, have been discovered. Thus, modern translations have the advantage of using these.

- ii. be based on the latest knowledge of language and culture.

E.g. biblical poetry wasn't recognized or understood until the 17th century.

- iii. be accurate.

Liberties taken by translators can lead to inaccuracies. There are also examples where translations were carefully made but errors were introduced inadvertently in the printing.

- iv. be understandable.

Some translations can be accurate in their formal equivalence of words, but the resulting sentences can be difficult to understand.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

- v. be contemporary.
Language/ word meanings tend to evolve over time. This is especially true in modern times where word meanings can change over a relatively short time frame. This will result in the need of new or revised translations on a more frequent basis.

- vi. be universal.
Some translations have targeted specific groups. This becomes problematic and lead to misinterpretations when other groups are exposed to it. Translation committees should be diversified to help minimize this issue.

- vii. be dignified.
A translation should be accurate but avoid being unnecessarily harsh or crude.

- viii. avoid a theological bias.
This is hard to do but, nevertheless, should be a goal in translation. Some translations are blatantly biased. E.g. The New World Translation is the official Bible for the Jehovah Witnesses. This translation goes to great lengths to rewrite or avoid references to the Deity of Christ.

4. Various Issues Involved with Translation

III. Various Issues Involved with Translation

a. Need for new translations

No translation can ever be the final one, due to the evolving nature of language. Changes in word meaning occur even more frequently today than ever before.

b. What does it mean to be "without error?"

Inerrancy pertains to what the original authors meant by their words. A translation is error-free to the extent that the translators faithfully reproduced what the original authors intended.

c. Translation Philosophy

i. Word-for-word

A word-for-word translation seeks to find the nearest English equivalent, on a word by word basis. The Tyndale Great Bible, the KJV, the RSV, and the NAS would all be considered word-for-word translations.

ii. Thought-for-thought

In a thought-for-thought translation, the goal is to reproduce what the author was expressing rather than merely finding the closest word equivalent. Examples of thought-for-thought translations include the NIV and the Revised English Bible.

d. Translation Preference

Thought-for-thought translations are preferable for reading through larger portions of Scripture, simply based on readability and understanding. However, for more detailed study (e.g. literary analysis and comparisons of the Gospels) a word-for word version is required.

e. Comparison of RSV and NRSV

The NRSV has done a good job re-phrasing verses that are no longer contemporary or simply structured poorly.

E.g.: Zec. 3:3

“Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments.” (RSV)

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

“Now Joshua was dressed with filthy clothes as he stood before the angel.”
(NRSV)

“Thou” and “thines” were changed to “you” and “yours” in the NRSV.

However, the NRSV has perhaps gone too far in its effort to avoid sexist language. Luke’s Gospel intentionally places male and female examples side by side in stories and parables. This effect has been lost in the NRSV.

f. Individual vs. Committee Translations

Committee translations are more reliable just by the fact that a group can resist the preferences or mistakes of one individual.

g. The use of footnotes

Caution should be taken concerning footnotes, particularly in a study bible. Too much credence can be given to a comment simply because “it’s in my Bible”. It is good to remember that it is Scripture that is infallible and not someone’s opinion on the meaning that happens to be included as a note at the bottom of the page.

h. Comparison of Galatians 3:23-29

A careful comparison of this passage between the KJV, the NRSV, the NASB, the NIV, The REB, and the Living Bible; will reveal some theological differences.

While none of these are severe enough to lead to heresy, the differences exist, nonetheless.

5. An Introduction to Hermeneutics- Part 1

I. An Introduction to Hermeneutics (part 1)

a. Origin of the word "hermeneutics"

Hermeneutics is a transliteration of a Greek verb, *hermeneu*, which means "to interpret".

b. Three Components Involved in Communication

i. The author (encoder)

ii. A text (code)

iii. A reader (decoder)

c. What determines meaning?

Three theories:

i. The text gives meaning.

1. Semantic autonomy

In this viewpoint, the text itself is autonomous. The text has meaning apart from the author's intentions. In fact, the author is totally irrelevant.

2. Problem

The problem with this view is it fails to acknowledge that texts are inanimate objects. The abilities to think and reason are necessary to give meaning. Paper and ink certainly don't have that capacity. It is inaccurate to say, "The text means this", because the text itself can't mean anything.

ii. The reader gives the meaning.

1. Dominant view of today

The more current view today is to say that the reader is the determiner of meaning. This is not to say that the reader

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

deciphers or discovers the meaning; the reader actually *gives* meaning. With this viewpoint, it follows that there can be multiple meanings for the same text. The text functions much like an inkblot, with each person seeing something different.

2. Problem

If the Bible really has all these meanings, it really doesn't mean anything.

iii. The author gives the meaning

The traditional approach to hermeneutics is to recognize that it is the original author who is the determiner of meaning. If there is a debate on meaning in one of Paul's letters, and Paul walked in the room; the debate would be settled. If you were trying to determine what Paul meant in a particular passage in Romans, you might look at what he has said on the same subject in Galatians. This is the common sense approach. The Bible should not be treated as some autonomous piece of art but rather, a form of communication.

1. Bible translation

In evaluating a translation, you should not consider how much you like the language of the text; rather you should ask how accurately the translators reflect the intended meaning of the author.

2. Law

A current debate today involves the Constitution. Should the Justices be free to determine meaning (reader approach) or should their jobs be restricted to interpreting what the original Founders of the Constitution meant by their words.

3. Art

The same debate has occurred with art, e.g. in the restoration of Michelangelo's paintings in the Sistine Chapel

4. Music

5. Literature

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

Whether art, music, law, or literature; the impetus on making the receptor the determiner of meaning is really a rebellion against the authority of the originator.

iv. Objections to authorial meaning

1. "Intentional fallacy"

This expression was coined by William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Monroe Beardsley in 1954.

a. Cannot experience the life of the author

The first objection to authorial meaning is to say we can't go back and experience what the author was experiencing when he wrote the text. This is true, but we aren't trying to relive his inner feelings/emotions. The goal is simply to understand what he was seeking to communicate.

b. Author may not be competent

This may be hypothetically true but as Christians, we believe that the biblical authors were inspired. This means that God, through His Spirit, enabled them to adequately express what He intended to communicate through them.

2. "Radical Historicism"

This recognizes the vast amount of time and culture differences between today and ancient times. This is a real problem that should not be minimized. However, there are certain aspects to humanity which do not change, based on the fact that we have all been created in the image of God. This commonality is a critical asset in interpreting the meaning of ancient writers.

6. An Introduction to Hermeneutics- Part 2

I. An Introduction to Hermeneutics (part 2)

d. The Roles of the Three Components

i. Author

1. Meaning is history and therefore unchangeable.

The author may change his view or even recant what he wrote previously. However, the author cannot go back and change his original intended meaning. This is locked in history.

2. The author wills a meaning.

The existence of a text means that there was an intentional effort on the part of an author to communicate something.

3. Meaning has implications.

An author is not going to communicate a principle by listing every hypothetical situation. We need to ask the question, "What is the 'pattern of meaning' or principle that is being conveyed?" These implications may extend even to unconscious meanings. E.g. Paul said, "Do not get drunk with wine..." Obviously, the implication is not to take substances into your body that would cause you to lose control of your faculties. This would have implications for bourbon, marijuana, etc.; substances that Paul would not have been aware of in his day.

Note: The literal meaning of a text is what the author (writer) of the text meant by the words. Literal interpretation does not mean we interpret everything literally because, in many cases, imagery or hyperbole is used that was not intended by the author to be taken literally.

ii. Text

1. Share-ability of symbols

a. Norms of language – words

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

No one seeks to write a book which cannot be understood. Instead they abide by the norms of language, using words in accordance to how they will be understood by the intended audience. If a word is used outside the norms of language, a note of explanation should be added. (E.g. John 2: 19-21. John adds a note to explain that Jesus was referring to his body when he used the word “temple”).

b. Norms of utterance – context

How words are constructed (rules of grammar) as well as context are essential in communicating in a way that will be understood.

2. Subject matter

The subject matter can be studied strictly for information. This is a perfectly legitimate reason for studying a text. However, if your goal is to learn about meaning, you have to ask more than “*What was written?*” You begin to ask, “*Why was it written?*”

iii. Reader

1. Must decipher literary form

Determining the literary form is the 1st step because different forms have different ways of conveying meaning. E.g. a parable would not be interpreted in the same manner as narrative.

2. Ascertain authorial meanings of symbols

There are symbols, etc. that were used by the original author and understood by the original audience but are now foreign to us (2-3,000 years later). It is important to seek to learn the meaning of these symbols in order to arrive at the correct interpretation.

3. Seek significance

We can discover implications but we don’t create them. The author retains control of meaning and thus the **implications** of what was written. This extends even to the “unconscious” implications.

On the other hand, the reader has control over the **significance** of what was written. Significance is how the reader gives credence or credibility to what the author said.

7. A Vocabulary for Interpretation- Part 1

II. A Vocabulary for Interpretation (part 1)

a. Meaning

Definition of meaning:

The pattern of meaning the author consciously willed to convey by the words or shareable symbols he/she used

All three entities are present in this definition. The author wills to communicate.

The text is represented by the words/symbols. The reader is present by the shareable nature of the symbols.

b. Implications

Definition of implications:

Those meanings in a text of which the author was unaware but nevertheless legitimately fall within the pattern of meaning he/she willed.

i. Galatians 5:2

Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.

Paul was speaking to people who were being persuaded that faith in Christ alone was not sufficient. The Judaizers were convincing them that they must also be circumcised in order to be saved. Paul refutes this specifically in the conscious meaning of his words.

In Martin Luther's day, the church was selling indulgences in exchange for grace (the promise of being saved). Paul would have had no knowledge of indulgences; they didn't exist in his day. However, if they could be explained to Paul, he would say that is exactly the sort of thing I was talking about. The implications of Paul's pattern of meaning would include anything that adds a stipulation to being saved by grace through faith in Christ alone.

ii. Deuteronomy 22:8

When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

In biblical times, the roof was a common place to go to experience an evening breeze. Most people today don't have roofs that are accessible. This doesn't mean that this passage is irrelevant to the modern reader with a steep pitched roof. There are all sorts of implications of which the biblical author may not have been aware but, nevertheless, fall within the pattern of meaning in regards to concern for the safety of others. E.g. a fence around a swimming pool should be the responsibility of an owner for the protection of children.

iii. 1 Corinthians 16:20

All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

How a greeting is expressed will vary from culture to culture but the warmness of the greeting does not.

iv. Psalm 150

Let Everything Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!

Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!

Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!

Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!

Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!

Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!

Should worship be limited to only include the instruments specifically listed by the writer? The implication seems to be praising God with the totality of what we have available.

v. Deuteronomy 6:6-9

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The use of phylacteries and mezuzahs may still be present in Jewish tradition but not in Christian tradition. However, the principle here is for God's people to keep His word before them.

vi. Mark 7:5-7

And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

This is interesting because Jesus pulls an implication out of the words of Isaiah and applies it to the Pharisees. These were not the hypocrites that Isaiah had in mind but it fits his pattern of meaning.

vii. Mark 7:20ff

And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

This is another example of implications found within the text. If you compare the parallel passage in Matthew (Mat. 15:10-20), you will see that some of the sins listed in Mark are omitted in Matthew while other sins are added in Matthew's version. There is not a problem with these two Evangelists failing to record exactly which sins Jesus specifically mentioned. It would be perfectly acceptable for each of these inspired writers to include their own implications based on specific issues that were present in their respective audiences.

viii. Exodus 21:28ff

When an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten, but the owner of the ox shall not be liable. But if the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has been warned but has not kept it in, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death. If a ransom is

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

imposed on him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is imposed on him.

This may not seem relevant, especially in our culture, but whether or not you have an ox; the passage has implications. An owner's responsibility for an animal in regards to the safety of others is different, depending on whether or not the animal is known to be dangerous.

Note: It is important to remember that the author is in control of the implications. It is not the text itself but the author who worded the text (and what that author meant) that determines the legitimate implications that flow out of it.

ix. Exodus 22

x. Narrative

The stories found in the Bible have implications as well. Care should be taken to determine the main point of the narrative before pulling out implications. E.g. the story of Jesus calming the storm is about His supreme authority and power, even over something as unpredictable and untamed as the weather. The main point of this story is not about giving nautical facts surrounding the Sea of Galilee.

xi. Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

The implications of this commission are that God's people will witness for Him throughout the world. This has specific implications for each believer in regards to their personal circumstance in life.

8. A Vocabulary for Interpretation- Part 2

II. A Vocabulary for Interpretation- Part 2

c. Significance

How a reader responds to the meaning of a text, an act of the will.

While meaning and implications are determined by the author, significance is determined by the reader. It pertains to the volitional aspect of how we, as readers, are to respond to the text.

d. Subject matter

The content (or "stuff") talked about in a text.

This pertains to the descriptive data/facts found in the text; not necessarily concerned with meaning.

e. Understanding

The correct mental grasp of the author's meaning

If two people have the correct understanding it would mean they have the same understanding.

f. Interpretation

The verbal or written expression of a reader's understanding of the author's meaning.

Understanding between people can be the same but their interpretation can be different. In fact, the same person can express their understanding using a different example. Therefore, interpretations may vary even when understanding is consistent/correct. Once an understanding is expressed, it becomes an interpretation.

g. Mental acts

The experiences the author went through when writing the text. (C.S. Lewis, "Fernseed and Elephants")

Attempts at reconstructing the experience of an author as he wrote, is seldom possible to do with accuracy, even with a contemporary writer. To think one can accomplish this with a biblical author that wrote 2000 years ago, in an entirely different culture, is beyond optimistic. Our job as interpreters is not to try and guess what was going through Paul's mind as he wrote the letter. Our job is understand what he meant by what he wrote.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

h. Norms of language

The range of meanings allowed by the words or the verbal symbols of a text.

The norms of language permit multiple meanings for the same expression. A dictionary is helpful in determining this range of meaning.

i. Norms of utterance

The specific meaning that the author has given to a word, phrase, sentence and the like in a text.

We are able to move from norms of language to norms of utterance by considering context. This is the sentence, paragraph, story; in which the word is used. The most helpful tool to determine specific meaning is a concordance. Here you can find where the author used the same word elsewhere which can be very helpful in understanding his specific use of the word.

j. Literary genre

The literary form used by the author and the rules that govern that form.

Determining the form of literature and applying the appropriate rules are essential for correct interpretation.

k. Context

The willed meaning that an author gives to the literary materials surrounding the text.

Context is more than just the words surrounding an expression. Context involves the meaning that is being communicated by the author.

9. A Vocabulary for Interpretation- Part 3

II. A Vocabulary for Interpretation (part 3)

I. Discussion of Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard on Meaning

- i. "Our goal remains to hear the message of the Bible as the original audiences would [should] have heard it or as the first readers would [should] have understood it." (pg. 11)

This is different than the definition of meaning given in this class.

However, the reference to "shareable symbols" brings in the reader. In general, if we understand how the original audience would have understood what was communicated, then you will understand what the author meant. It should be pointed out that there are times when the original author is misunderstood by the original audience. E.g. 2nd Thessalonians was needed to clarify the 1st letter. Therefore, the "should have heard" is preferable to "would have heard".

- ii. "We are convinced that the goal of hermeneutics is to enable interpreters to arrive at the meaning of the text that the biblical writers or editors intended their reader to understand." (pg. 97)

This is much closer to the definition used by this class.

- iii. "We presuppose the goal of hermeneutics to be the meaning the biblical writers 'meant' to communicate at the time of the communication, at least to the extent that those intentions are recoverable in the texts they produced." (pg. 98)

Again, this is fairly close to the wording for this class.

- iv. "Though a given passage may be capable of being understood in several ways, our goal is to determine what (of those various possible meanings) the text most likely would have meant to its original readers because that is why people communicate: they intend for what they communicate to be understood as they communicated it." (pg. 133)

The biblical writers intended to communicate a specific meaning and therefore used language that would be understood. The original audience is the people most likely to understand because they were the writers

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

intended audience. Once again, we should say “should understand” rather than “would understand”.

- v. "The meaning of a text is: that which the words and grammatical structures of that text disclose about the probable intention of its author/editor and the probable understanding of that text by its intended readers." (pg. 133)

This brings the ideas together but, in this class, we will stay with the one definition of meaning.

10. The Role of the Holy Spirit

III. The Role of the Holy Spirit

a. Quotes

i. J. Robertson McQuilken, *Understanding and Applying the Bible*

“Although God desires to communicate to all people, not just anyone can understand Scripture. The Bible is very clear on that point. Faith is the prerequisite for truly understanding God’s Word. A person who reads without faith may understand some revealed truth, but he cannot expect to fully understand any truth revealed in Scripture. There are several aspects of faith, all of which are essential for the student who would interpret the meaning of Scripture.”

See 1 Cor. 2:6-16; 2 Cor. 2:15-18

ii. Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*

Erickson writes:

“The objective word, the written Scripture, together with the subjective word, the inner illumination and conviction of the Holy Spirit, constitutes authority for the Christian. The Reformers from the Reformation on speak very much about the illumination and conviction of the Holy Spirit in the process of biblical interpretation. It is a combination of these two factors that constitutes authority”

“Both are needed. The written word, correctly interpreted, is the objective basis of authority. The inward illuminating and persuading work of the Holy Spirit is the subjective dimension.”

“This dual dimension prevents sterile, cold, dry truth on the one hand and over-excitability and ill-advised fervor on the other. Together the two yield a maturity that is necessary in the Christian life. A cool head and a warm heart. Not a cold heart and a hot head. As one pastor has put it rather crudely, ‘If you have the Bible without the Spirit, it will dry up. If you have

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

the Spirit without the Bible, you will blow up. If you have both, the Bible and the Spirit together you will grow up.”

Again, reading from Erickson,

“Human nature including reason has been adversely affected by the Fall. Man in the natural state has been unable to recognize and respond to divine truth. When regeneration takes place however, the spectacles of faith vastly improve one’s spiritual eyesight. Even after regeneration however, there is need for continual progressive growth, which we call sanctification. In addition, the Holy Spirit works internally in the life of a believer witnessing to the truth and countering the effects of sin so that the inherent meaning of the Bible can be understood.”

iii. *Westminster Confession of Faith*

“The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word”

iv. James DeYoung and Sarah Hurty, *Beyond the Obvious: The Deeper Meaning of Scripture*

“Since the Holy Spirit, not the human author is the ultimate author of the Scripture, meanings of the text unknown and unintended by the human authors are possible to discover through the continuing direct revelatory work of the Holy Spirit to believers both in their reading of the Bible and apart from the Scripture.”

The “intentioned meanings” in this quote should be of great concern. The Holy Spirit is necessary; but we have to be careful to remember it is the inspired author’s willed meaning that is the goal. The convicting, persuading word of the Spirit fits more in the area of significance.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

b. Can an unbeliever understand the meaning of Scripture?

Folly (foolishness) refers to value judgment rather than understanding. God sees the wisdom of this world as folly (see 1 Cor. 3:14). This doesn't mean that God doesn't comprehend the wisdom of the world; he simply assesses it as folly. Likewise, when 1 Cor. 2:14 says that an unspiritual man cannot understand; it is referring to his lack of acceptance rather than his mental grasp of the words.

c. Scripture Texts

i. 1 Corinthians 2:14

The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God for they are folly to him. And he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. 2:14

Folly (foolishness) refers to value judgment rather than understanding. God sees the wisdom of this world as folly (see 1 Cor. 3:14). This doesn't mean that God doesn't comprehend the wisdom of the world; he simply assesses it as folly.

ii. 1 Corinthians 1:20

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world? 1 Cor. 1:20

iii. 1 Corinthians 3:19

For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written "He knows the thoughts of the wise are futile". 1 Cor. 3:19

iv. Mark 9:32

But they did not understand the saying and were afraid to ask him.

Mark 9:32

d. Correct mental grasp vs. a value judgment

In the verse above from Mark, Jesus speaks of the Son of Man being delivered into the hands of men and they would kill him. After three days he would rise. They understood the words but didn't accept the truth of what he said.

e. Fact of sin

Believers and unbelievers alike can be prejudiced or closed to a certain teaching because of sin.

f. Implications

v. General

vi. Personal

Personal implications are those that are specific to the individual. E.g. Act 1:8 implications can be different at an individual level. Personal implications and significance result in application. This is an area where the Holy Spirit's guidance comes into play.

g. Definition of *Understanding*

If understanding is defined as a correct mental grasp, then understanding of a believer must be qualified in some way- authentic understanding, saving understanding, real understanding, deeper understanding, etc.

h. Effects of sin

There are times when sin begins to affect a person so much that what is evident and clear, they refuse to see and, in a sense, refuse to understand.

i. Luther to Erasmus - Two kinds of clarity

"There are two kinds of clarity in Scripture, just there are also two kinds of obscurity: one external and pertaining to the ministry of the Word, the other located in the understanding of the heart. If you speak of internal clarity, no man perceives one iota of what is in the Scriptures unless he has the Spirit of God.

j. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*

Some statements in this book tend to seem to be on contradiction concerning understanding. However, they point out a difference in understanding of a believer with a qualifier:

"... through their careful work, both may come to the same understanding of a text's meaning. But due to their different faith commitments, on the believer can perceive the text's true significance and be willing to obey the truth conveyed."

k. Illustration - Interpreting "Mammon" in Matthew 6:24

It is possible to have the technical definition of mammon and not grasp the significance of this passage. It is also possible not to know the definition of mammon and yet read this passage and begin to reflect on things that would prevent you from fully serving God. The former represents a mental grasp; while the latter indicates a personal implication and conviction of significance that is part of the role of the Holy Spirit.

11. The Miraculous in Scripture

IV. The Miraculous in Scripture

a. Three Approaches

i. The Supernatural Approach (Traditional)

1. The events really took place.
2. The events happened as recorded.
3. The text proclaims a divine event.
4. Since God performed this event, search for a natural cause is irrelevant.
God is not limited by our ability to understand or explain an event.
5. A closed cause-effect continuum is denied. Openness in history is maintained.
There is a cause for the event that lies outside of creation.
6. The intention of the text (author's meaning) is maintained.
The author intends to say that a miraculous event has taken place.

ii. The Rationalist Approach

1. The events could not have taken place.
This approach begins with the presupposition that miracles do not happen.
2. The events happened differently than recorded.
3. The text contains a natural event behind it.
A real event has occurred but it cannot be a supernatural event.
4. The natural cause of this event can and should be learned.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

5. A closed cause-effect continuum affirmed. Openness in history is denied.
6. The intention of the text (authorial meaning) is not maintained. The meaning of the author is not accepted.

iii. The Mythical Approach

1. The events could not have taken place.
This is similar to the rationalist approach in its presupposition that miracles do not happen.
2. The text proclaims a divine event.
The text is talking about a supernatural event, similar to the traditional approach.
3. The search for natural cause is irrelevant.
4. There is neither a divine nor natural cause, since the text proclaims a myth.
This aspect is unique among the three approaches.
5. A closed cause-effect continuum affirmed. Openness in history denied.
6. The "deeper" intention of the text (authorial meaning) is maintained.
This approach seeks to understand the sub-conscious meaning of the author which gave birth to the myth in his soul.

b. Presuppositions

i. Eugene B. Borowitz

Borowitz (of a liberal persuasion) wrote about contemporary Christologies in terms of liberal versus conservative approaches. He recognized that the fundamental divide between the two camps was a differing epistemology rather than simply a difference in how Scripture is interpreted. The real difference has to do with the source of

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

knowledge/truth. Conservatives hold that religion is God given. Truth comes from heaven, divinely revealed. Liberals hold that truth comes from the human experience, human wisdom, etc.

An honest discussion is more likely between a conservative Christian and an Orthodox Jew; rather than a conservative Christian and a liberal Christian.

ii. Rudolph Bultmann

Bultmann argues that it is possible to approach exegesis without presuppositions if you are referring to presuming the outcome. However, it is not possible to start exegesis free of presuppositions.

He would agree with Reformers in a historical/grammatical method of interpretation. However, he diverges with his presupposition that history is a closed continuum of cause and effect events that preclude any interruption of history by a divine, miraculous event.

This is the basic presupposition of all liberal approaches. If you are open to the supernatural, you are in one camp. If you are closed to the supernatural, you are in another camp. This presents a radical fork that will lead to divergent conclusions.

12. G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*

I. G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*

a. Chapter 1 - Two Kinds of Language

i. Referential

1. Informative language- to talk about people, things and ideas
2. Cognitive language- expression of thought

ii. Commissive

1. Performative and causative language- to do things and to get things done
2. Expressive and evocative language- to display or elicit attitudes and feelings

b. Chapter 2 - Types of Meaning

In chapter 2, Caird talks about various ways of expressing meaning:

i. Referent = Subject matter

Meaning with respect to the referent is in regards to the “stuff”, or subject matter.

ii. Value = Significance

Meaning with respect to value has to do with what this class has defined as significance.

iii. Entailment = Implication

Going beyond the immediate meaning, one might ask, “What does this entail?” In this class we have used another word for this: implication.

iv. Sense = Meaning

This is the simple meaning of a communication.

v. Intention = Meaning (if author is competent)

Meaning with regard to intention is the same as the author’s (willed) meaning, assuming the author is competent.

Biblical Hermeneutics
Robert Stein

- vi. Public meaning = norms of language
- vii. User's meanings = norms of utterance

13. Proverbs

II. The Genre of Proverbs

a. Definition: A short, pithy saying that expresses a general truth - exceptions are allowed.

b. Examples

i. Proverbs 3:9-10

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

This is generally true but you can find examples of godly people who haven't fared that well and ungodly people who seem to make out quite nicely.

ii. Proverbs 10:3-4

The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked. A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

In general, if you work hard you will be rewarded and if you are lazy, you will suffer the consequences. However, this doesn't hold true 100% of the time.

iii. Proverbs 13:21

Disaster pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good.

In general, lifestyles will affect what happens to people, but again, there are exceptions.

iv. Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

This is good advice that will generally have good results; but not every time.

v. Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

This has created guilt among parents who misinterpret this as an absolute statement meaning that choices made by children as they mature, are entirely the responsibility of the parents.

vi. Proverbs 22:16

Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth, or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.

Some people seem to do well by oppressing the poor, at least in the short term. However, this is generally a true statement.

vii. Matthew 6:21

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus, Himself, taught using proverbs, as with this example.

viii. Matthew 26:52

For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

This is another illustration of Jesus making use of a proverb.

ix. Luke 16:10

One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

x. 1 Corinthians 15:33

Do not be deceived: Bad company ruins good morals.

Most parents would instinctively agree with this general truth from Paul.

c. Difference between biblical proverbs and other proverbs

Biblical proverbs are wise observations of life that have been filtered through the truth of Scripture; the wisdom is therefore more reliable.

d. The Problem of Job

The following verses are examples of Job's friends quoting proverbs to Job. The problem is they universalize the general truth-like nature of a proverb. Job is the exception but his friends failed to recognize it. They failed to realize that proverbs teach general truths but they cannot be applied universally.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

i. Job 4:7-9

Remember; who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off? As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same. By the breadth of God they perish; and by the blast of his anger they are consumed.

ii. Job 5:15

But he saves the needy from the sword of their mouth and from the hand of the mighty.

iii. Job 8:3-4, 5-7

Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert the right? If your children have sinned against him, he has delivered them into the hand of their transgression.

If you seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy, if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation. And though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great.

14. The Genre and Language of Prophecy

III. The Genre of Prophecy (part 1)

a. Judgment Prophecy

- i. Rule - Judgment prophecy assumes, even if not stated, that if the people repent judgment will not come.

- ii. Examples

1. Jonah 3:1-4, 10

Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" Jonah 3:1-4

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it. Jonah 3:10

This example of an unfulfilled prophecy does not make Jonah a false prophet. If the prophecy is one of judgment, and repentance takes place, the judgment is averted.

"Readers of the book of Jonah have commonly been preoccupied with problems of marine biology to pay attention to the much more important theological difficulty that Jonah is ordered to prophesy something that does not happen." C. B. Caird

2. Jeremiah 18:7-10

If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it. Jer. 18:7-10

This states explicitly that in the event of repentance, a judgment prophecy will go unfulfilled. Note: This is not a statement that denies God's foreknowledge or omniscience.

3. Micah 3:12 (cf. Jeremiah 26:16-19)

Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height. Micah 3:12

This did not happen because the people repent. See Jeremiah below:

Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, "This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God." And certain of the elders of the land arose and spoke to all the assembled people, saying, "Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah: 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "'Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.' Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear the Lord and entreat the favor of the Lord, and did not the Lord relent of the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster upon ourselves. Jer26:16-19

4. 1 Kings 21:27-29

And when Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh and fasted and lay in sackcloth and went about dejectedly. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the disaster upon his house. 1 Kings 21:27-29

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

iii. Quote from C. B. Caird, pp. 56-57

b. The Language of Prophecy - Cosmic terminology

i. Rule - Prophets tend to speak in figurative language, using cosmic terminology.

ii. Examples

1. Isaiah 13:9-11

Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.

Isa. 13:9-11

The language sounds like the end of history however, this chapter in Isaiah begins as an oracle against Babylon, an existing empire in the prophet's day. In the norms of language, Isaiah's readers would have understood this reference to the kingdom up north.

2. Jeremiah 4:23-28

I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light. I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro. I looked, and behold, there was no man, and all the birds of the air had fled. I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the Lord, before his fierce anger. For thus says the Lord, "The whole land shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full end. "For this the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above be dark; for I have spoken; I have purposed; I have not relented, nor will I turn back. Jer. 4:23-28

Again, this is an example of cosmic language used by a prophet that appears to talk about end times; yet the prophecy was delivered to Judah concerning the destruction of Jerusalem which would be experienced by the people of that day.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

3. Isaiah 24:23

Then the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and his glory will be before his elders. Isa. 24:23

4. Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15

The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

Joel 2:10

The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. Joel 2:31

The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. Joel 3:15

This is more cosmic language that seems to be describing the end times but from Peter we learn that this is a prophecy about the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. (Acts 2: 16-21)

5. Jeremiah 15:9

She who bore seven has grown feeble; she has fainted away; her sun went down while it was yet day; she has been shamed and disgraced. And the rest of them I will give to the sword before their enemies, declares the Lord. Jer. 15:9

This poetic language personifies Jerusalem.

6. Amos 8:9

And on that day," declares the Lord God, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. Amos 8:9

7. Ezekiel 32:7-8

When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord God. Ezek. 32:7-8

8. Habakkuk 3:11

The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear. Hab. 3:11

All of these examples serve to remind us that much of the language of the prophets is the language of poetry. As such, it should be interpreted symbolically and not literally. The cosmic language is a poetic way of describing the actions of the God who controls the universe.

15. Further Examples of Prophecy

III. The Genre of Prophecy (part 2)

c. Isaiah

i. Isaiah 11:1-9

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Isa. 11:6-9

ii. Isaiah 35:1-2, 8-10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Isa. 35:1-2

And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Isa. 35:8-10

iii. Isaiah 65:25

The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord. Isa. 65:25

All of these descriptions of paradise are found in Isaiah but do they conflict with each other? Will lions be there or not? They are all describing a place of bliss and tranquility using poetic language. The language is meant to stir the imagination and not describe literal circumstances, therefore there is no contradiction.

d. Revelation

i. Cosmic language - God acting in history

In Rev. 21:1 there is language about a new heaven and earth; and the old passing away. This is a picture of God acting in history just as he acted in the original creation. The cosmic language calls the attention to God.

ii. Impressionistic painting

In Rev. 21:9 ff., there is poetic language describing the New Jerusalem. The great walls are 144 cubits but the 12 gates are wide open. This makes no literal sense but in the figurative sense, both of these point to security and the absence of an outside threat. Paving the streets with gold would be foolish due its soft properties, but this is a perfectly effective way of describing the preciousness of heaven. The emotive language invites us to step back consider our impression rather than overanalyze the details; much as one would step back and engage an impressionistic painting.

e. Acts 2

And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Acts 2: 19-21

Here, Peter explains the events at Pentecost by saying “this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel. The verses above were included by Peter, demonstrating that the cosmic language used by Joel was meant to describe the democratization of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost rather than an “end of time” event.

f. Luke

i. Luke 3:4-6

As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Luke 3:4-6

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

John the Baptist is referring to the present mission of Jesus but there were no actual geographic changes taking place. This is a picturesque way of saying “make his path easy”.

ii. Luke 14:11

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Luke 14:11

Luke 18:14

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted. Luke 18:14

This is another way of saying that the norms of the world will be turned upside down when it comes to the principles of God’s kingdom.

iii. Luke 4:18ff (18-19)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Luke 4:18-19

This is a speech by Jesus at the beginning of his ministry. There were no literal prisoners who were released from jail as a result of his ministry. This refers to being released from the oppression of sin and its consequences; through forgiveness.

g. Matthew 2 and Hosea - Implications of the prophecy

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. Hosea 11:1-2

This is a fairly clear reference to the Exodus under Moses.

However, Matthew uses this passage from Hosea in reference to Joseph and Mary taking Jesus to Egypt in order to escape Herod:

And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." Mat. 2:14-15

Matthew saw in Hosea a "pattern of meaning" which had implications for Jesus being taken to Egypt. God promised his people a land, Canaan. If this was true for the wayward nation of Israel, how much more would the promise apply to his only begotten Son? Matthew was saying that God used a foreign nation as temporary sanctuary but he would never leave his people indefinitely in that position.

Some people raise the question of a *sensus plenior*- the existence of a deeper meaning of which an OT prophet was unaware but is later known and interpreted by a NT writer. This is possible for a NT writer (who was inspired) but this inspiration isn't transferred to the reader. In addition, if a primary meaning is indicated by the author, there is no real reason to search for a deeper meaning.

h. Why this kind of language?

Why speak of the sun being darkened and the moon turning to blood? This imagery could possibly be used to describe a city being destroyed during a time of war. In this case, it would be a useful way to figuratively describe judgment.

16. Prophecy and the Beginning Discussion of Mark

III. The Genre of Prophecy (part 3)

i. Discussion of Mark 13

Mark 13 begins with Jesus describing a coming destruction of the temple where the stones would be thrown down. He is asked by his disciples, “when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?” Jesus responded:

And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.

“But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. Mark 13:7-12

Normally when you hear a reference to wars and rumors of war it is considered in conjunction with the Lord’s return. Here, it seems that the opposite message is given: “don’t be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is not yet”

But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that it may not happen in winter. For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. And then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand. Mark 13: 14-23

The “abomination of desolation” is referred to in the OT in the book of Daniel where it is probably describing an event in 167 B.C when the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple. Jesus seems to be saying, when you see something like this happening again, beware. He is describing the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in 70 A.D. The instructions to flee with haste (don’t turn back for a cloak) is figurative language. In reality, the Romans typically practiced a very slow methodical siege. None of this seem to describe the end times or the 2nd Coming.

Many have read the description of the tribulation that followed (has not been from the beginning of creation...) as a reference to the end times. However, if this is understood as commissive (expressive/evocative) language, then it would easily be understood as a description of the horrific conditions that existed during the Roman siege of Jerusalem.

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. Mark 13:24-27

Now these verses present some difficulties. Does “in those days” refer to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. or to the end times? “In those days” is a technical term for the end times, therefore this sounds like a description of the 2nd Coming. However, the cosmic language that follows sounds much like the impressionistic language used in the OT to describe actual historic events.

From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. Mark 13:28-31

These verses seem to be referring to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. but in the following verses below (13:32-37), Mark is describing the 2nd Coming. Had verses

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

24-27 been placed after verse 31, it would be easier to see those as part of the 2nd Coming description as well.

But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake. Mark 13:32-37

Summary comments:

It is unlikely that the language used in the NT to describe the 2nd Coming is meant to be understood as scientific, literal descriptions of what will take place. Just as in the OT, the event will literally come true but the language used by the author to describe it is figurative in nature. In this poetic type language, the literal meaning of the author is not the same as the literal meaning of the words.

17. Prose and Poetry, and Examples from the Old Testament

IV. The Genre of Poetry (part 1)

a. Prose vs. Poetry

Prose and poetry are different. In poetry, words can be limited by rhythm or rhyme and therefore “poetic license” is employed which allows the writer to use words that may not be as precise or exact; as in the case of prose. In modern translations, translators help us identify the poetry by utilizing broken type. In the Bible, there are two instances where both forms are placed side by side, to describe the same events. This occurs in Judges and in Exodus.

b. Examples

i. Judges 4 & 5

In chapter 4 of Judges we are given a prose account of Deborah and Barak leading Israel in battle against Sisera. In chapter 5, the same account is recorded in poetic language in the form of a song (ballad).

When Sisera was told that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, Sisera called out all his chariots, 900 chariots of iron, and all the men who were with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the river Kishon. And Deborah said to Barak, “Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the Lord go out before you?” So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him. And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army before Barak by the edge of the sword. And Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot. And Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left.

But Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. And Jael came out to meet Sisera and said to him, “Turn aside, my lord; turn aside to me; do not be afraid.” So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. And he said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.” So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him. And he said to her, “Stand at the opening of the tent, and if any man comes and asks

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

you, 'Is anyone here?' say, 'No.'" But Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand. Then she went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple until it went down into the ground while he was lying fast asleep from weariness. So he died. And behold, as Barak was pursuing Sisera, Jael went out to meet him and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." So he went in to her tent, and there lay Sisera dead, with the tent peg in his temple. So on that day God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan before the people of Israel. Judg. 4:12-23

This is a very straight forward account and easy to understand. Now compare it to some excerpts from chapter 5 which record the battle in poetic form:

*Lord, when you went out from Seir,
when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled and the
heavens dropped, yes, the clouds dropped water.
The mountains quaked before the Lord,
even Sinai before the Lord, the God of Israel. Judg.5:4-5*

There was no literal earthquake, this is figurative language describing the literal fact that God led his people in battle that day.

*The kings came, they fought;
then fought the kings of Canaan,
at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo;
they got no spoils of silver.
From heaven the stars fought,
from their courses they fought against Sisera. Judg. 5:10-20*

The stars didn't literally fight; this wasn't some sort of meteor shower. This is a way of saying that God fought from his place in heaven.

ii. Exodus 14 & 15

Exodus 14 records the crossing of the Red Sea in prose:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the Lord threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Exod. 14:26-29

Now compare this to some of the poetic language in chapter 15 used to describe the same event:

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea." Exod. 15:1

*Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea,
and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea. Exod. 15:4*

*In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries;
you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.
At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up;
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. Exod. 15:7-8*

iii. Colossians 1

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him **to reconcile to himself all things**, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. Col. 1:15-20*

Even though most translations do not break these lines to indicate poetry, this is most likely a pre-Pauline Christological hymn that he recites in his letter. Understanding the poetic rhythm of the original

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

language helps explain words that would otherwise seem to be in conflict with Scripture's teaching against universalism.

iv. 1 Corinthians 15

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 Cor. 15:22

In this verse we see another example of Paul using a balanced rhythm to say something that is not intended as a statement supporting universalism.

v. Romans 5

*Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and **life for all men**.* Rom. 5:18

In Romans 5:15, 17, 18, & 19; Paul utilizes a balanced rhythm yet again. The point is to recognize these, and not let your theology be defined by instances where the words are controlled rhythm. There are plenty of places where rhythm is not utilized from which we can determine that Paul was clearly not teaching universalism.

vi. Psalm 18

Psalm 18 is a good example of poetry found used by psalmists. Here, David is singing for Joy because God heard his plea for help when facing enemies.

The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered his voice, hailstones and coals of fire.

And he sent out his arrows and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings and routed them. Psalm 18:13-14

vii. 2 Samuel 1

Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely!

In life and in death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles; they were stronger than lions. 2 Sam. 1:23

This is from a lament by David for Saul and Jonathan. A eulogy is a perfectly good place to use poetic language to honor someone.

18. Types of Poetry in the Bible

IV. The Genre of Poetry (part 2)

c. Types of Poetry in the Bible

i. Synonymous Parallelism

1. Matthew 7:7-8

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.
Matt. 7:7-8

Ask, seek, and knock are essentially all expressing the same thought. Synonymous parallelism in poetry repeats the same thought in a variety of ways using a rhythmic pattern.

2. Luke 6:27-28

But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. Luke 6:27-28

This is another example. The idea of loving your enemies is described by a repetition of actions that portray its meaning.

3. The Lord's Prayer

“Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done.”

This is followed by “On earth as it is in heaven” which goes with all three of the expressions. Knowing one of these helps us to understand the others.

ii. Antithetic Parallelism

The opposite of a synonymous parallelism is an antithetic parallelism in which the opposite thought is repeated.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

Examples of antithetic parallelisms:

1. Matthew 7:17-18

So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Matt. 7:17-18

2. Luke 16:10

One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

Luke 16:10

3. Proverbs

There is not a sharp distinction between poetry and proverbs. Many sayings (including some entire chapters) found in Proverbs are in the form of antithetic parallelisms.

E.g. The wise son is a joy to his father

But the foolish son is a sorrow to his mother.

iii. Step/Climactic Parallelism

In a step parallelism, the 1st and 2nd lines are neither synonymous or opposite; rather the 1st line is advanced by the 2nd line.

Examples:

1. Matthew 10:40

Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. Matt. 10:40

2. Matthew 5:17

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. Matt. 5:17

iv. Chiasmic Parallelism

These are parallel rhythms in which you find a pattern of parts that follow an ascending then descending order. (E.g. A, B-B, A)

Examples:

1. Matthew 23:12

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Matt. 23:12

2. Mark 8:35

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. Mark 8:35

v. Why use poetic language?

Counted together, there are over 200 examples of synonymous and antithetic parallelisms in the Gospels. This rhythmic-type language lends itself to memorization which was especially important in a non-literal society which existed in the 1st century. This is evident in the way a rhythm is helpful in remembering the words to a song.

19. Idioms

V. The Genre of Idioms

Idioms are a form of expression that if taken literally, in the context, would make little or no sense.

a. Examples

- i. "God bless you."
(In response to a sneeze)
- ii. "Break a leg."
(A saying when someone starts a new theatre play)
- iii. "How are you?"
(Actually, a simple greeting rather than a question)

b. Biblical Examples

- i. Joshua 8:17, Judges 4:16, 2 Kings 10:21 - "No one was left."
(Exaggerated terminology)
- ii. 1 John 3:17 - "Shutteth up his bowels."
It's an idiom that means "have no pity"
- iii. Genesis 22:17ff, Genesis 41:43, Joshua 11:4, Judges 7:12 - "Sands of the seashore."
- iv. Matthew 17:20, 1 Corinthians 13:2 - "Faith to move mountains"

c. How to detect idioms

- i. Found frequently
- ii. Cannot be interpreted literally in context

d. Specific example - "Love and Hate"

The love-hate language is found frequently in Scripture.

i. Malachi 1:2-3, Romans 9:13

I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have you loved us?” “Is not Esau Jacob's brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert. Mal. 1:2-3

As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” Rom. 9:13

ii. Explanation from Genesis 29:31

So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years.

When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. Gen 29:30-31

Gen. 29:31 states that Leah was hated but when compared to the preceding verse, the true meaning of this becomes clear. Jacob's affection for Rachel was greater than his affection for Leah.

iii. Deuteronomy 21:15-17

If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved have borne him children, and if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved, then on the day when he assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons, he may not treat the son of the loved as the firstborn in preference to the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn, but he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the firstfruits of his strength. The right of the firstborn is his. Deut. 21:15-17

The above verses are quoted from the ESV. The word “unloved” is translated as “disliked” in the RSV. In the original Hebrew, the literal word used is “hated”. Thus this is another example of the love/hate idiomatic imagery found both in the OT and the NT.

iv. Luke 14:26

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:16

What is evident through these examples is the fact that hate (in the love/hate idiom really means to love less. It's a relative expression rather than a literal expression of two extremes.

v. Proverbs 13:24

*Whoever spares the rod hates his son,
but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.* Prov. 13:24

e. Meaning is determined by the author

The use of idioms is a good illustration of the fact that the meaning of words is determined by the author. The text can't, in and of itself, bear meaning because it is simply a collection of words which, if taken literally, could say something quite different from the intended meaning of the author.

f. Learning a new language

All languages have idiomatic expressions. It's important to learn those in order to avoid some potentially embarrassing situations. The Bible makes frequent use of idioms and it is important to recognize those in order to make a valid interpretation.

20. The Genre of Exaggeration- Part 1

VI. The Genre of Exaggeration (part 1)

a. Recognizing Exaggeration in the Teachings of Jesus (part 1)

In his teaching, Jesus used overstatement which is simply exaggeration for effect; and hyperbole. Hyperbole is literally impossible while overstatement is literally possible but not intended to be interpreted in a literal fashion.

Exaggeration can have a negative connotation, i.e. someone stretching the truth. However, this is a perfectly acceptable and legitimate genre as long as both parties are aware that it is exaggeration. This was the case for Jesus' teaching in the NT.

i. Hyperbolic - literally impossible

Hyperbole is exaggeration that is so great it is literally impossible:

You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!
Matt. 23:24

ii. Conflicts with what Jesus says elsewhere

Another way to detect exaggerated language by Jesus is to note if it obviously conflicts with his teaching elsewhere.

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:26

We know that this is not intended to be interpreted literally because he teaches elsewhere to honor your father and your mother.

iii. Conflicts with Jesus' behavior and actions elsewhere

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matt. 6:6

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

This is an exaggerated message meant to discourage showy prayers for the purpose of calling attention to yourself. Obviously, this isn't saying you have to pray in secret. E.g. the Lord's Prayer is meant to be a corporate prayer.

In Matt. 5:33-34, Jesus seems to be teaching against taking any type of oath. However we see him placing himself under oath at his trial before the High Priest (Matt. 26:62). This was in obedience to what is stated in the Law, in Lev. 5:1 ff., which states that you must answer in placed under oath. Jesus was using exaggerated speech to teach about having the sort of character that makes an oath unnecessary.

iv. Conflicts with teachings of the Old Testament

The instructions to hate your father and mother are clearly in conflict with the 5th Commandment which tell us to honor your father and your mother.

v. Conflicts with teachings of the New Testament

Notice the universal language in Matthew concerning giving to a beggar:

Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. Matt. 5:42

This is a form of exaggeration because we see an exception to this instruction in the following verse:

For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. 2 Thess. 3:10

21. The Genre of Exaggeration- Part 2

VI. The Genre of Exaggeration (part 2)

- a. Recognizing Exaggeration in the Teachings of Jesus (continued)
 - vi. Interpreted by the evangelist in a non-literal way

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. Matt. 10:34

Taken literally, this sounds like Jesus was advocating a political revolution involving war. However, Matthew explains in the following verses that he was talking about the potentially divisive nature of aligning with Jesus, even within a family.

For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Matt. 10:35-37

- vii. Not always literally fulfilled in practice

In Mark 13, Jesus prophesied to his disciples concerning the fall of Jerusalem in which he says not one stone of the temple wall will be left upon another. The temple was definitely destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., but there are portions of the wall that remained intact down to the foundation rock, even until today.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Matt. 7:7-8

This can't be literally true with no exceptions. Rather than trying to qualify the exceptions, Jesus wanted to teach the importance of prayer.

- viii. Literal fulfillment would not achieve the desired goal

If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. This would not solve the problem of lusting with your left eye. Jesus is using overstatement to express the serious nature of sin.

- ix. The statement uses a particular literal form prone to exaggeration

Proverbs, prophecy and poetry are all literary forms that make common use of exaggeration, often through metaphoric language.

- x. The statement uses idiomatic language that no longer bears its literal meaning

E.g. the gnashing of teeth expresses horror more than what is literally going on inside the mouth.

- xi. The statement uses all-inclusive and universal language

E.g. "Give to **everyone** who begs you..." in Luke 6:30.

Or "**all** things can be done for the one who believes." Matt. 9:23

- b. Why use exaggeration?

It is not enough to simply recognize exaggerated language and say, "I don't need to interpret that literally"; then move on. The very purpose of the overstatement is to call attention to what is being taught. It indicates that this subject is very significant and requires our attention.

22. Introduction to Parables

VII. Parables (Part 1)

Parables are brief or extended comparisons.

a. Historical Interpretations

Consider the Parable of the Good Samaritan:

Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'"

Luke 10:30-35

i. Marcion- 140 A.D.

Made first reference to this parable. Marcion was a Gnostic who refuted the incarnation. He allegorized Jesus as the Good Samaritan and concluded this was Jesus' first appearance in history.

ii. Clement of Alexandria- 180 A.D. (early Church era)

Clement continued the practice of allegorizing this parable, pressing each detail for meaning.

iii. Origen- (early Church era)

Origen reasoned that humans had a tri-part nature (body, soul, and spirit) from 1 Thess. 5:23. He made the leap of saying therefore Scripture had a tri-part nature- a literal meaning, a moral meaning, and spiritual meaning. Origen continued the practice of allegorizing parables but introduced this layered approach to interpretation.

iv. St. Augustine- (early Church era)

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

Augustine probably has the most famous allegorized interpretation of the Good Samaritan.

Two basic reasons why allegory tended to be the dominant method of interpreting sacred literature.

- Jesus offered an allegorical interpretation with his parable of the soils.
- It was a common way of handling sacred writings that were difficult to interpret in a literal way.

v. John Cassian- (Middle Ages)

Cassian added a 4th level of meaning (a heavenly meaning).

vi. Thomas Aquinas

One of the great theologians of the Middle Ages, continued with the allegory interpretation and with the four levels of Cassian, (literal, moral, spiritual, & heavenly)

vii. Martin Luther- (Reformation Period)

Many of the chains of allegorical interpretation in the rest of Scripture began to be broken during the reformation. However, Luther continued to apply it to parables. The Reformers did not recognize papal authority or the tradition of the Early Church Fathers. It is not surprising that Luther disagreed strongly with some of their former interpretations.

viii. John Calvin

John Calvin is the first known theologian in all of church history to say that this parable is not a story about Jesus.

“None of this strikes me as plausible. We should have more reverence for Scripture than to allow ourselves to transfigure its sense so freely. Anyone may see that these speculations have been cooked up by meddlers quite divorced from the mind of Christ.” John Calvin

ix. R.C. Trench- 19th Century

Trench published a book, *Notes on the Parables of our Lord*, in which he offers a literal, then deeper spiritual meaning of the parables. He makes strong use of allegory in his interpretive method.

x. Adolf Jülicher-1888

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

Jülicher published a book, *Parable Talks of Jesus*, in which he pointed out the difference =between an allegory and a parable. An allegory gives meaning to details and the author invites you to discover those meanings. A classic literary example of this was *Pilgrim's Progress*. Parables, on the other hand, tend to be comparisons of one basic point. If details are present in a parable, they are there simply there to make the story interesting or memorable.

b. Principles for Interpreting Parables

- i. Parables generally teach one main point.
There are exceptions, but essentially a parable is a comparison that is teaching one primary lesson. Avoid trying to read into the text (eisogesis) by pressing the details of the story. Read out of the text (exegesis) by looking for the main point.
- ii. Seek to understand the parable as the 1st century audience.
C. H. Dodd stressed this simple, yet sometimes overlooked, point in his book *Parables of the Kingdom*. Avoid jumping to implication and significance before first considering how the original audience would have understood the message. (There and then before here and now.) Another way to state this principle is to simply ask, "What did Jesus mean by this parable?"
- iii. Consider what the Gospel writers were trying to teach from the parable.
Redaction Criticism led to the realization of special emphases that were made by the individual inspired Evangelists.
- iv. Ask how it applies to us; to our current situation.
Ask the question. "What does God want me to do in regard to this parable?"

c. Applying the Principles to The Good Samaritan

- i. Principle #1
Based on the preceding verse (Luke 10:29) and the verse that follows the parable (Luke 10:36); it is apparent that the parable is about who is a neighbor. In essence, Jesus twists the question at the end by asking (from the story) "Who proved to be a neighbor?" This is the main point- what

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

does it mean to be a good neighbor? Note that the lawyer's question was, "Who is my neighbor, i.e. who should be the recipient of my love?" Jesus answers the more prudent question, "What does it mean to be a loving neighbor?"

ii. Principle #2

Understanding the long established hatred between Jews and Samaritans that existed in Jesus' day greatly enhances the force of this parable. This would not have been received as a warm and fuzzy story of compassion, especially by the religious leaders of the day. This was a damning indictment of social, racial, and religious superiority.

iii. Principle #3

In trying to understand the particular emphases of Luke, it is helpful to note (both in his Gospel and in Acts) that he has particular concern for outcasts, women, publicans, and sinners. Of all the Gospel writers, Luke is the only one who includes this parable. Also, he is the only one who includes a story of Jesus meeting and healing a Samaritan.

iv. Principle #4

The question here has to do with our own circumstances and opportunities to as being a loving neighbor to those we encounter.

23. Interpretation of Parables

VII. Parables (Part 2)

d. Discussion of Various Parables

i. Parable of the Hidden Treasure

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Matt. 13-44

This very brief parable is an example of a similitude. The simple point here is to teach that God's Kingdom is the greatest treasure one can have. This is placed beside the Parable of Fine Pearls which has the same point. There is no need to press the details further by trying to analyze the character of the man, etc.

ii. Parable of Ten Virgins

Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. Matt 25:1-13

This is an interesting and therefore memorable parable. The point is not to make a statement on what percentage of virgins will make it to heaven; or to instruct Christians of the need to share the Gospel (even

though this is true). The simple point being made is for Christians to be ready (prepared) because we don't know the hour or the day when we will meet the Lord.

iii. Parable of the Dishonest Manager

He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.' And the manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.' So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light." Luke 16:1-8

Trying to press the details of this parable can lead to all sorts of distorted interpretations. However, the simple point to see is that the man was facing judgment and he prepared himself accordingly. He was not commended for his integrity; he was commended for his shrewdness. Are we at least as smart as this scoundrel? Are we prepared for judgment?

iv. Parable of the Lost Sheep (Compare Luke to Matthew)

So he told them this parable: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." Luke 15:3-7

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

"What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Matt. 18:12-14

Notice in Luke the sheep is described as lost while in Matthew it is described as going astray. Matthew uses a verb that means "straying". In the end, Luke refers to repentance whereas Matthew refers to "these little ones" which is a term Matthew uses earlier in the chapter to refer to young Christians.

Probably, Luke's version is closer to the actual parable as told by Jesus. This was in response to Jesus being asked why he ate with sinners. His answer is concerned with salvation for the "lost".

Matthew appears to have taken the "pattern of meaning" and applied it to a situation in which he is writing to a church which has members who have drifted away from the body. Matthew is taking the original parable and showing the implication. Matthew was inspired therefore his version of the parable is still God's Word even though it is probably not the precise words of Jesus.

v. Laborers in the Vineyard

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, saying, 'These last

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ But he replied to one of them, Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ So the last will be first, and the first last.” Matt. 20:1-16

Both Irenaeus and Origen attempted to make an allegorical interpretation in which various groups throughout redemptive history were represented by the workers hired at different hours. Others have cited God’s sovereignty as the main point. However, the master of the house wasn’t free in regards to the first hour workers. He was required to pay them what was promised. Others say the point is justification by faith since the 11th hour workers got paid. However, the 1st hour workers did work for their pay.

Sub-rules for interpreting parables:

- Determine the main characters-When there are several characters in a parable, there are usually two main characters. This would be 1st hour and 11th hour since they are the only ones mentioned in the payment.
- Rule of End Stress- What comes at the end is the most important.
- What gets the most press- The end of the parable is confrontational dialog between the 1st hour workers and the master that includes several verses.

The point of the parable is to teach against having a begrudging attitude towards God’s grace and generosity. The original story was directed at the attitude of the Pharisees and Scribes but it certainly makes a relevant point in the hearts of modern believers.

vi. The Prodigal Son

The main characters appear to be the father and the oldest son, based on how the story ends and the amount of dialog between them in the end. Luke offers some additional insight by describing the situation in which the story was told:

Biblical Hermeneutics
Robert Stein

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them. Luke 15:1-2

The scribes and Pharisees had the attitude of the older son. This appears to be the same point made as in the Parable of the Laborers found in Matthew 20.

24. Allegory and Historical Narrative

VII. Parables (Part 3)

e. Detecting allegory in a parable

- i. Would Jesus and His audience have attributed meaning to the details?
- ii. Would the Evangelist's audience have understood the details as allegorical?

f. Examples of allegorical parables

i. The Parable of the Tenants

And he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country. When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed. He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But those tenants said to one another, this is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. Have you not read this Scripture?:

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away. Mark 12:1-12

In comparing this to Isaiah 5: 1-7, it is fairly obvious that Jesus is playing off the OT passage from Isaiah. Jesus' audience would have been well versed in the OT and understood that this was a parable about the nation

of Israel (represented by the vineyard). It would also be apparent to them that the servants, sent by the owner, represented OT Prophets. Clearly, there is a distinction between the son and the servants, therefore a Christological implication would have been drawn by Jesus' audience. The parallel accounts of this parable in Matthew and Luke have an interesting twist. In both of these accounts, the son is first thrown out of vineyard *before* he was killed. Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem. They were reinforcing the Christological connection and thus demonstrated that they understood this parable allegorically.

This is a clear instance of an allegory. Both Jesus' audience and the Evangelists audience would have seen the symbolism of the details.

ii. Parable of the Great Banquet

When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. ...So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

Luke 14:15-24

Luke is fairly specific, there are two sending outs: one to the immediate area and one further out. Luke would have expected Theophilus to understand the parable allegorically. The Kingdom of God is frequently likened to a great banquet. It was not only the outcasts of Israel who were invited, but the outcasts of the Gentile world (the 2nd sending out). Theophilus would have understood this connection.

In the parable, those that you would have expected to be front and center at the dinner did not come. Jesus' audience would have caught on that he was talking about the scribes and Pharisees.

g. Final Interpretive Discussions on Parables

i. The Final Judgment

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

"Then he will say to those on his left, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. Matt. 25:31-46

The almost monotonous repetition of doing acts of love is probably an example of synonymous parallelism; but the key question to answer in understanding the meaning is, "who are 'my brothers', in the parable?"

The Greek word, *adelphos*, is translated brothers or brethren. This can sometimes refer to physical brothers (which is not plausible in the context of the parable) or it is used metaphorically to refer to Jesus' disciples. (See Matt. 23: 8; Matt. 28:10; Matt. 10:40)

The meaning of this parable would have been understood to be about how you should treat God's messengers; not a general call for social justice. I.e. the way you receive God's people indicates whether or not you are one yourself.

ii. The Rich Man and Lazarus

There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'

Luke 16: 19-31

People have questioned whether this is a parable or a true story because of the fact that Lazarus is called by name. However, the introduction is very similar to many other parables recorded by Luke. (See Luke 10:30; Luke 14:16; Luke 15:11, Luke 16:1; Luke 19:2) They are all introduced in

the same manner: a certain (unnamed) man...). This indicates this should be treated as a parable and not a true story.

VIII. Historical Narrative

a. Meaningfulness in Biblical narrative

Question- Did this really take place?

Until the 1700's, questioning the difference between the account and what really happened; was never asked. Until then, interpreters all assumed that these were historical accounts. Even those using allegorical interpretation believe the events were literally true.

In 1974, Hans Frei published the book *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* which addressed the distinctions between literal meaning, religious meaning, and significance (meaningfulness); of narrative text.

25. Clues to Interpreting Historical Narrative

VIII. Historical Narrative

From the early church and up through most of the 17th century, the facticity of Biblical narrative was not an issue. The enlightenment brought rationalism in which people began to doubt the miracles included in the historical narratives of the bible. The result was a polarization of two extremes: supernaturalists and non-supernaturalists.

b. Interpretive methods

i. Supernaturalists

This group accepted the miracles as historical events and therefore saw the literal meaning and the historical content of the text as being unified.

ii. Non-supernaturalists (naturalists)

This group did not accept the miracles as fact but sought other ways of determining meaningfulness (significance) in the narratives. In their attempts to find meaning, three groups emerged:

1. Rationalists

Interpretation should be limited to the reader's understanding of what the author's conscious intended meaning. However, the rationalists introduced an historical assessment aspect to interpretation. There was a tendency to look for meaning in what actually happened rather than finding meaning with what the author was teaching. This presented a problem because when many of the events were "demiraculized", there was nothing left of significance.

2. Accommodationists

In this view, the Biblical authors knew that the miracles didn't really take place. They wrote to people who believed in miracles so they used fabricated miracles in order to teach Christian values /principles. This view preserved the intellectual capacity of the writer but not the integrity of the writer. This approach is hard to accept because you have essentially dishonest writers teaching moral Christian values.

3. Mythical approach

The mythical approach preserved the integrity of the authors but brought into question their intellect. In this view, the authors believed the miracles but didn't consciously understand what they were really trying to communicate. It's left up to the reader to find the subconscious meaning of the narrative. Trying to find some hypothetical subconscious meaning presents obvious problems but the main problem with this approach is in genre. Biblical narratives are not written in mythical literary form. Real events are described with real persons, in real places, and at real times.

c. Clues to interpreting historical narrative

The purpose of biblical narrative is not merely to tell what took place in the past. Rather, it is to relate these past events to biblical faith. Thus, the meaning of such texts involves not simply "what happened" but rather the interpretation of what happened. Unlike legal materials or letters, however, the meaning of a narrative is taught implicitly rather than explicitly. Robert Stein

i. Context

The "hermeneutical circle"- The reader seeks to understand the particular narrative in light of the whole book. In turn, understanding the particular aids in understanding the whole.

The author assumes that his reader will be familiar with his whole book and will interpret a particular story in light of that. This is similar to the way one would use a single piece of a puzzle based on where it fits in the whole.

ii. Authorial Comments

Many times, the author will add a comment that will give the reader a clue about how to interpret the text.

E.g.:

because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. 1 Kings 15:5

He walked in all the way of Asa his father. He did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord. Yet the high places were not

taken away, and the people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places. 1 Kings 22:43

These comments are not part of the narrative per se. These are editorial comments added which aid the readers in understanding the meaning. Often, these insertions can take the form summary statements.

iii. Repetition

Another way the author shares his meaning with the reader is by repetition of key themes. Highlighting the authorial comments is a good way to identify these repeated themes. E.g. in the Book of Judges, there are two repeated themes:

- Israel's cyclical experience of rebellion, retribution, repentance³, and restoration.
- The absence of leadership (See 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25)

iv. Authoritative Speakers

When the author attributes words directly to God or Jesus, the reader knows that the author wants him, or her, to accept what is being said as true. This is also the case for words attributed to faithful servants of God; such as patriarchs, prophets, and apostles.

v. Direct discourse

Dialogues between God and his servants, or between Jesus and his disciples; can indicate the narrator's intent to focus the reader on a certain subject or principle.

26. Understanding the Letters in the New Testament

IX. Epistles- Part 1

a. How words are used

i. Finding the important words

How does a reader/student know which words are important to study?

1. Frequency- If a term occurs several times in a passage, it is a good indication that the meaning of the word is important to the meaning of the passage. E.g. the verb translated “*to reckon*” is found 11 times in Romans chapter 4. That is an important word to understand when interpreting Paul’s message in this chapter.
2. The role of a word in the sentence- Sometimes a particular word plays an essential part of a sentence. “By grace you were saved by faith...” Paul’s particular meaning of grace is important know in understanding the sentence.
3. Author definition- Important words are sometimes noted for the reader when the author provides a definition. E.g. Paul refers to the Gospel in 1 Cor. 15:1; then proceeds to define it in verses 15:3ff.

ii. Etymology Issues

Etymology refers to the study of words through their root meaning. Generally speaking, root meanings are of little value in biblical interpretation. When looking at a diachronic meaning of a word (over a long period of time) we find words can take on dramatically different meanings. In the 1600’s (time of King James translation) the word “*let*” actually meant to hinder. Today it means to give permission.

iii. Moving from norms of language to norms of utterance

Norms of language involves the range of meaning of a term. For this, a dictionary is a valuable tool. However, letters contain finely worded arguments, therefore it is important to seek the specific meaning of a word, as the author intended in a particular text (the norms of

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

utterance). The following are some tools for determining word meanings. Moving from less specific to more specific:

1. Greek classical literature

There is a massive amount of classical Greek literature that enables us to determine the meaning of Greek words. However, the classical writers did not have the same mind and purpose as the New Testament writers.

2. The Early Church Fathers

The Early Church Fathers, writing in the 2nd and 3rd century would think more like the Biblical authors and therefore be a better source for determining the meaning of Greek words used in Scripture.

3. Translators of the Hebrew Old Testament

The Septuagint (LXX) was a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament completed 2-300 B.C. These translators would have had a mind and vocabulary even closer to the NT writers than the Early Church Fathers.

4. Letters written by the same author

The best way to determine how a writer is using a particular word is to look at how he uses that word elsewhere.

E.g.

Paul speaks of “working out your salvation” in Phil. 2:12. By looking at his use of the same Greek word for work (*katergazomai*), used in Rom. 15:18 & 2 Cor. 12:12; it becomes clear that this word does not imply earning or meriting salvation as it is used in Philippians.

5. Use of the word in the same letter or passage

Often times, it is not necessary to go to a different letter. The author will use the word more than once in the same letter in a way that is helpful in arriving at his intended meaning. By comparing Paul’s use of “folly” in 1 Cor. 3:19 to his use of the same word in 1 Cor. 2:14; we can see that he uses it a value judgment rather than a way of describing incomprehension.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

6. Comparing how words are used by different authors
Both *faith* and *works* are used differently by Paul and James. Investigating the range of meaning and then each author's specific meaning, help to demonstrate they do not hold contradictory positions.
 - Faith
James speaks about a faith that has no works and is of no value. (James 2:14ff). He mentions one believes in God but points out even the demons believe. Paul, on the other hand, is clearly using a different meaning of faith when he says "by grace you have been saved through faith".
 - Works
James describes works as clothing people, feeding the hungry; i.e. acts of love. Paul uses "works" to refer to obeying the law through circumcision or keeping the Sabbath. Both of these meanings fall within the range of meaning but are very different in their specific use

27. How Sentences Are Understood

IX. Epistles- Part 2

b. How Sentences are Understood

The key tool for understanding statements is grammar, which involves syntax structures. This varies between languages. In English, the position of the words in a sentence determines the meaning of the sentence. In Greek, the order of the words are irrelevant; rather it's the ending of the words that determines meaning.

In the absence of knowing Greek, a reader is one step removed from the original language and thus relies on the English translator. While there are obvious advantages in having access to the original language, it is noted that most English translations are very reliable in their ability to accurately express what the biblical authors intended.

i. Understanding Propositions

1. Clausal relationships

Paying attention to how words and clauses within a sentence relate to each other is extremely important in understanding the meaning of the sentence. From Dr. Stein's book, the following are examples of how clauses can relate:

- Cause- (A) is because of (B); i.e. (B) is the cause of (A)
- Result- (B) is the result of (A)
- Purpose- (B) is the purpose of (A)
- Condition- (A) is the condition of (B)
- Concession- Despite (A), (B) took place
- Means- (A) is the means by which (B) is accomplished
- Manner- (A) is done in the manner of (B)

2. Distinguishing between means and cause

Recognizing the difference between means and cause can be important in correctly interpreting certain propositions. Examine the following verses:

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Eph. 2:8-9

Grace is the instrumental **cause** of salvation. We are not saved because we have faith. We are saved because Jesus died for our sins and defeated death by his resurrection. This act of grace by God is the cause of salvation.

Faith is the **means** by which grace is appropriated. An analogy to this would be a life-saving medicine given through a hypodermic needle. The needle doesn't save the life; it is the means by which the medicine is delivered.

ii. Following an Argument

Look at the following example in Romans:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. Rom. 13:1-7

1. *Let every person be subject...*

This is a **general exhortation**.

2. *For there is no authority except from God...*

Notice the "for"-the cause. This is **theological grounds** for the exhortation.

3. *whoever resists the authorities ... will incur judgment*

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

This is the **result**, the consequence of the theological grounds.

4. *For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad.*

This begins a **new argument** noted by another “for”. What follows is a positive example.

5. *do what is good, and you will receive his approval*

A **positive example** for the argument.

6. *if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.*

This is a **negative example** for the argument

7. *Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed*

The argument is completed. It began with a general exhortation and ends with a **concluding exhortation**.

Once this argument is understood, one must ask if it should be universally applied. If a Christian is under an evil government, this would not appear to fit Paul’s description of “God’s servant for your good”. However, it should be noted that in writing this letter, Paul must have had the Roman government in mind. Therefore, one could conclude that the government would not have to be ideal or perfect to qualify in this passage.

c. The Form of an Ancient Letter

- i. Greeting or salutation

A secular greeting or salutation would include the writer’s name and the recipient(s) name. If it was a Jewish letter the greeting would include *shalom* which is typically translated as *peace* in English. Christians added grace so that most of the NT letters contain both of these- “Grace to you and peace...”

- ii. Thanksgiving or prayer

E.g. “I thank God for you in Jesus Christ”; etc.

- iii. The body of the letter
The length of the body can be brief or very lengthy as with Paul's letter to the Romans.
- iv. Conclusion
There is no standard kind of conclusion. Sometimes the conclusion is a simple wish for peace. In other letters it might consist of a concluding autograph or a benediction.
- v. Insights from consideration of form
 - 1. Greetings can become lengthy and pregnant with introduction material in some Paul's letters. (E.g. Romans) The longer introductions are typical when he is writing to a church he has not founded.
 - 2. All of Paul's letters included a word of thanksgiving/praise, even his letter of admonishment to the church in Corinth. The only exception is his letter to the Galatians. He moves straight to the body of the letter which begins with a strong rebuke. The lack of thanksgiving/prayer reveals much about Paul's view of the situation there.

28. The Genre of Covenant

X. Treaties and Law

a. Two types of covenants

i. Parity Covenant

This is a covenant made between equals.

ii. Suzerain Covenant

Studies in A.N.E. (Ancient Near Eastern) literature, have revealed a form of treaty or covenant that strongly resembles the form of covenant found in the OT. Unlike a parity covenant, the Suzerain Covenant was a one way treaty from the king or noble to the people. These were typically accepted by the people due to the generally gracious nature of the covenant.

b. Abrahamic Covenant

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. Gen. 17:1-9

This is the beginning of the covenant God made with Abraham and his offspring. Notice that Abraham and God are not negotiating the terms. It is one-sided in that regard but it is gracious in nature.

c. Covenant language in Scripture

- i. In Exodus 2, God hears the groaning of Israel under the bondage of slavery in Egypt. God remembers his former covenant with Abraham
- ii. In Mark 14, Jesus took the cup at the Last Supper and said, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many”.
- iii. Peter, preaching at Pentecost in Acts 3:22ff, recalled the Abrahamic Covenant by quoting from the OT. “You are the descendants of the prophets and of the covenant that God gave to your ancestors, saying to Abraham...”
- iv. In writing to the church in Corinth, Paul speaks about the Lord’s Supper and refers to the cup as the New Covenant.

d. Parts of a Covenant

i. Mosaic Covenant at Mt Sinai (Exodus 20:2ff)

1. The Preamble

“I am the Lord your God”

In the preamble, the covenant maker identifies himself.

2. The Prologue

“who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery”

The prologue gives an historical account of how the covenant maker has acted graciously toward the people.

3. The Stipulations

The stipulations consists of a list of requirements in order for a person to remain in the covenant relationship In this case the stipulations are the Ten Commandments found in verses 3 through 17. Important note: These are not to cause one to enter the covenant. The covenant has already been entered into graciously by the covenant maker. These stipulations spell out what the recipient must do to remain faithful in it.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

4. Provision for Continual Reading

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient. Exodus 24:7

5. Witnesses

There is usually a reference to the various witnesses present and sometimes a stone or memorial erected.

Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do. And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Exodus 24:3-4

ii. Covenant with Joshua (Joshua 24:1ff)

1. Preamble

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel. And they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Josh. 24:1-2a

2. Historical Prologue (extensive in this case)

'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.

Then I took your father Abraham ...

"Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea. And the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea...

Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan. They fought with you, and I gave them into your hand...

Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel...

And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And I gave them into your hand...

I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant'. Josh. 24:2b-13

3. Stipulations

Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord... Josh24:14-21

4. Provision for Continuous Reading

And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God. Josh. 24:26-27

5. Witnesses

Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel. Josh. 24:22-23

iii. Types of law in the OT

The laws of the OT are essentially stipulations. As such, it is a mistake to view them as some sort of means of entering the covenant. Therefore legalism; the idea of keeping the law to the extent it warrants God's graciousness, is not a possibility.

Types of law found in the OT:

1. Civil laws- These had to do with civil issues of governance for the nation of Israel.

E.g. Deut. 22:1ff

You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray and ignore them. You shall take them back to your brother. And if he

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

does not live near you and you do not know who he is, you shall bring it home to your house, and it shall stay with you until your brother seeks it. Then you shall restore it to him...

2. Cultic laws
Sacrificial law and dietary laws; E.g. Lev. 2-6.
3. Moral laws
E.g. the Ten Commandments

The moral laws are still applicable as they are a reflection of God's character which does not change.

29. Psalms

XI. Psalms

a. Structure

The book of Psalms, the largest book of the bible, actually consists of 5 books. Each of these books ends with a doxology.

- i. Book 1- Psalms 1-41; closing with:
*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!
Amen and Amen.* Psalm 41:13
- ii. Book 2- Psalms 42-72; closing with:
*Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
Amen and Amen!
The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.* Psalm 72:19-20
- iii. Book 3- Psalms 73- 89; closing with:
*Blessed be the Lord forever!
Amen and Amen.* Psalm 89:52
- iv. Book 4- Psalms 90-106; closing with:
*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say, "Amen!"
Praise the Lord!* Psalm 106:48
- v. Book 5- Psalms 107- 150; closing with:
*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!* Psalm 150:6 Note: the entire Psalm is a doxology.

c. Authorship

73 Psalms are attributed to David; 12 to Asaph; and 11 to the sons of Korah. Much of the arrangements of these books, and the editing work was done by unknown editorialists. This understand this work as being divinely authorized. How the Psalms are arranged helps in their interpretation.

d. Categories of Psalms

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

- i. Psalms of Zion
Zion speaks of the city of God. When you speak of the glory of Zion, you are speaking of the glory of God.
Examples include Psalm 46, 76, 84, 87, & 122.
- ii. Royal Psalms
These are psalms about the king of Israel, God's anointed ruler over his people. Typically, what is true for this king is even truer for the ultimate King of kings, Jesus. Therefore there are Messianic implications in these Royal Psalms that the NT writers recognized.
Examples include: Psalm 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 132, & 144.
- iii. Hymns
Examples include: Psalm 19, 24, 29, 47, 95-100, & 104.
- iv. Wisdom Psalms
Psalm 1, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, & 133
- v. Penitential Psalms
These Psalms express penitence for sin and a plea for forgiveness.
Examples include: Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, & 130.
- vi. Imprecatory Psalms
These are petitions to God for judgment on enemies. The language can be difficult but we are mostly sheltered from the kind of brutality to which ancient people were exposed. It is important to remember that the Psalmist is not asking for personal vengeance; rather they are calling for God to execute his justice.
Examples include Psalm 35, 58, 69, 83, 109, & 137.
- vii. Praise Psalms
Some of these are individual in nature.
Examples include: 8, 18, 30, 32-34, 40, 66, 75, 81, 92, 103, 104, 106, 108, 111-113, 116, 118, 135, & 138, 145-150.
Other praise Psalms are clearly corporate in nature:
Psalm 65, 67, 107, 114, 117, 124, & 136

viii. Lament Psalms

Almost a third of all the Psalms are laments. These are not often taught in church services but it is a mistake to avoid them. Suffering is part of life and they are extremely beneficial in this regard.

A few examples of the many laments are: Psalm 13, 71, & 142.

Laments have a typical form consisting of 5 parts:

1. Address to God
2. Complaint (the description of the problem or source of misery)
3. Prayer for help or deliverance
4. Confession of confidence (affirmation that God will deliver)
5. Praise

30. The Books That Make Up the Bible

XII. The Canon of Scripture

a. Background information

i. Scripture in Jesus' day

In Jesus' day, the Old Testament was already fairly well established. It consisted of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. The Prophets were subdivided into former and latter Prophets (containing the Major and Minor Prophets). For the Jews in Jesus day, the 12 Minor Prophets were considered as one single book.

ii. Scripture in the early church

At Pentecost, the Bible of the church was the Old Testament. They also had the Jesus Traditions. These were the deeds and words of Jesus that were circulated with great care during the period between the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the writing of the Gospels and other books of the NT.

b. The rise of canon consideration

i. The heresy of Marcion

Marcion was a Gnostic, a Christian heretic, who denied the OT and all the Gospels except Luke. He ended up claiming a Bible that consisted of Luke and 10 letters of Paul. This was rejected by Christians but it began the discussion about what books should be considered as Scripture.

ii. Codex invention

Codex was a new form of writing material that replaced the scroll. Scrolls were typically limited to about 20 feet or less. With the advent of codex, multiple books could be assembled together. This caused the church to continue to wrestle with the problem of which books would be included in the assembled codex.

iii. Persecution

Opponents of the church sought to destroy the sacred writings during periods of persecution. This situation forced Christians to decide which books they were willing to die for.

c. Historical Development

i. New Testament references

There are numerous references in the New Testament that indicate the passing on of the Jesus traditions and the acknowledgment of authoritative Scripture beyond the Old Testament. These represent the beginning germ form of a canon of Scripture.

1. Colossians

Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. Col. 4:14-16

This indicates that during the life and ministry of Paul, his letters were being exchanged and collected among the various churches.

2. 1 Thessalonians

I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. 1 Thess. 5:27

“To all the brethren” indicates this letter was to be distributed beyond the church in Thessalonica.

3. 2 Peter

as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. 2 Pet. 3:16

This acknowledges a collection of Paul’s letters and, more important, it refers to them as Scripture.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

4. 1 Timothy

For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages". 1 Tim. 5:18

This is a reference to Deuteronomy 25. However, it is interesting to note that the last comment about a laborer deserving his wages, is not found in the Deuteronomy. It is found in Matt. 10:10 and Luke 10:14. This is evidence that Paul was either quoting the written Gospel of Luke or, both were quoting from an oral tradition. Either way, it is recognized as authoritative.

5. Acts

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
Acts 20:35

There is no quotation like this in any of the 4 Gospels. This is more evidence of the existence of an authoritative oral tradition.

ii. Early church writings

1. 1st Clement

Written in A.D. 96, Clement of Rome referred to Romans, 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, and probably Luke and Acts; as part of the scrolls they held as Scripture.

2. Didache

This early document of the church, written between A.D. 75 and 125, has several possible references to the various Gospels.

3. Writings of Papius

Papius wrote 6 volumes which were commentaries on the Gospels, suggesting they were recognized as part of the canon of Scripture.

4. Epistle of Barnabas

This was written between A.D. 70 to 150 and quotes Matt. 22:14 as Scripture.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

5. Diatesseron

The title of this work, written around A.D.170, means “through the four”; referring to the 4 Gospels. This was an early Gospel harmony which indicated that by 170, the church recognized the four Gospels as Scripture.

6. Muratorian canon

Muratorian was a cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church who, in 1740, discovered the diary of an 8th century monk which contained a fragment listing the books of the New Testament that were recognized as Scripture. The fragment itself dates to the 7th century but there are indications within the text that it was copied from a Greek original dating back as early as A.D. 170. This has become known as the Muratorian canon. This appears to show that the church had a basic New Testament, dating back to the 2nd century that contained the following books:

The 4 Gospels, Acts, the Letters of Paul, Jude to Johannine Revelation, the Wisdom of Solomon, and the Apocalypse of Peter.

7. Writings of Ireneus

Ireneus, one of the early church fathers, wrote describing the situation of canon in A.D. 200. He categorized Scripture into two groups:

- Homologoumena- those books universally confessed
- Antilegomena- those books who were confessed by most but disputed by some.

Among the books he identified as antilegomena were: James, Jude, 2 John, 3 John, 2nd Peter, Hebrews, and Revelation. By including these books, you have a New Testament that is very close to what Protestants have today.

d. Clarification of the Canon of Scripture

i. Eusebius

Eusebius was a great church historian who summarized the writings of the New Testament and who characterized the antilegomena books as being accepted by the majority. This demonstrated that, by Eusebius' day, the 27 books of our New Testament were accepted by the majority.

Biblical Hermeneutics

Robert Stein

ii. Recognition of our 27 NT books

Further recognition of the 21 NT books as canonical was made by:

- Jerome in A.D. 400
- Augustine
- The Church Council of Hippo

iii. The Protestant- Roman Catholic debate

The basic theological debate concerning canonicity was based on the question:

Is the NT an authorized collection of books or a collection of authoritative books? I.e. could the church pass authority to the collection or does the church simply have the ability to recognize books which are authoritative. The Protestants held the latter view.

e. Factors in recognizing authoritative books

i. Apostolic authorship

Was the book written by an apostle or one closely associated with an apostle? E.g. Mark's association with Peter and Luke's association with Paul?

ii. Continuous usage

Was the book used from the early years of the church or was it a "Johnny-come-lately"?

iii. Unity and agreement

Did the book contain conflicts with other books of the canon?

iv. Superintendence of the Holy Spirit

In the providence of God, He not only guided writers to record the Scriptures through inspiration; He also guided the preservation and recognition of those inspired books.

f. The arrangement of NT books

The NT books are arranged in logical order rather than chronological order. The four Gospels were grouped together, followed by Acts. Paul's letters were arranged by size. Hebrews was associated with Paul and was located at the end of his letters. This was followed by the catholic (universal epistles). Revelation takes us to the end of history and is, therefore, placed at the end of the Bible.

g. Concluding comments

i. Inerrancy

Although manuscript copies are extremely accurate, it is preferable to talk about inerrancy in the context of the original autographs.

ii. Inspiration

The writers recognized that what they were writing was inspired and therefor authoritative. (References: 1 Thess. 5:27; 2 Thess. 3:14; 1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Cor. 7:17;