

When the Plain Sense Makes Common Sense, Seek No Other Sense



Heritage Baptist Press

A ministry of the Heritage Baptist Church
123 Lorong 1 Toa Payoh #01-501
Singapore 310123

Pastor Yip Meng Fai, M.Div.

When the Plain Sense Makes Common Sense, Seek No Other Sense

by Pastor Yip Meng Fai, M.Div.

Heritage Baptist Press

A ministry of
Heritage Baptist Church
Singapore

2020

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the faithful members of the Heritage Baptist Church on the occasion of her Easter Service on 20 April 2020.

Appreciation

I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to Senior Pastor Rev. Ray Crocker, without whom the completion of this study would not have been made possible. His kind understanding and encouragement as well as friendly care and concern have made my learning journey very fruitful.

The One I wish to thank the most, though, is my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who has given me eternal life. I long for Him, to experience Him in a deeper way every day and to help others discover that kind of love that only He can give.

Foreword

The approach to Biblical interpretation in historical and contemporary Christian churches does not appear to be consistent with the literal approach to Biblical interpretation as presented in the New Testament Scriptures, mainly due to the negative influence of human philosophies, resulting in nonliteral approaches to Biblical interpretation in many churches, even to the point of turning them against the truth itself. This project is to expose the problems faced by the local church due to the lack of Biblically-based, literal interpretation as found in apostolic times, and it will seek to explore how local churches could return to the literal method of interpreting the Scriptures.

Yip Meng Fai, M.Div.
Associate Pastor

Table of Contents

Presentation of the Problem	Page 6
Historical Perspective	Page 11
Modern Perspective	Page 32
Solution to the Problem	Page 41
Practical Application	Page 46
Glossary	Page 57
Endnotes	Page 61
Bibliography	Page 72

All Scripture references
are taken from the *King James Version*
(Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

Presentation of the Problem

Chapter 1

Statement of Problem

Bible-believing Christians believe that the Bible is true and that all doctrines should be taken from the Scriptures in their correct and coherent context within their historical perspective. In modern and postmodern times, however, many have taken in hand to publish approaches to Biblical interpretation that are a departure from the literal approach to Biblical interpretation. The nonliteral approach to Biblical interpretation is not a recent approach, because this approach has been proclaimed from the first centuries after the apostles until our own day, although it has taken on various forms during that period of time. The progress and growth of the nonliteral approach of Biblical interpretation has shown that this approach is not a stagnant doctrine but is one that continues to go farther and farther away from Scriptural truth. Statements of unbelievable exaggeration have been made in recent years which manifest the overwhelming extent to which approach has grown. Some of these will be considered later.

A study, then, of the literal approach to Biblical interpretation and the opposing nonliteral approaches is of extreme important in our day. Here is a quote from Milton S. Terry:

A knowledge of the history of biblical interpretation is of inestimable value to the student of the Holy Scriptures. It serves to guard against errors and exhibits the activity and efforts of the human mind in its search after truth and in relation to noblest themes. It shows what influences have led to the misunderstanding of God's word, and how acute minds, carried away by a misconception of the nature of the Bible, have sought mystic and manifold meanings in its contents.¹

So basically, there is a pedagogical and a polemical use to studying the history of Biblical interpretation.

Purpose of Study

In this book, we want to probe and look at how the nonliteral approaches to Biblical interpretation are not consistent with the literal approach to Biblical interpretation as presented in the New Testament Scriptures. What we are going to do in this book is survey these nonliteral approaches by bringing

together various interpreters and bunching them into certain schools. They may have had different nuances, and yet there were different schools that evidenced themselves in the history of Christianity. We will also examine where various schools went wrong, as to learn from it.

Let us first define what is meant by the literal method. It is that view or approach to interpretation that accepts the literal sense as the only true meaning of Scripture unless the nature of the sentence or phrase or clause within the sentence compels otherwise. For example, we can still have figures of speech, parables, and things like that, and interpret them accordingly, even though we hold to literal interpretation. The apostle Paul said,

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. (Romans 12:20)

That is not to be taken literally. When you have a passage like that, he was not looking for us to start some type of literal fire upon one's head.

Bernard Ramm, in his book on hermeneutics, says,

The spirit of literal interpretation is that we should be satisfied with the literal meaning of a text unless very substantial reasons can be given for advancing beyond literal meaning, and when *canons of control* are supplied.²

The authority for this method is Scripture itself, and it was practiced in the apostles' day.

Overview

We just want to turn to Colossians 2 so as to give an overall view of what was going on in the history of Biblical interpretation. The Colossian church was in danger of being spoiled and torn away from the simplicity which they had in Christ. Notice how Paul said it:

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is

the head of all principality and power.
(Colossians 2:6-10)

So really, to give an overarching view of what had happened in the history of Biblical interpretation was this: that human thinking, human philosophies, the human's quest for wisdom, had derailed local churches time and time again in one direction or another, and taken them away from the simplicity which they had had in Christ and which rendered them complete. This is exactly what we will see confirmed in the following two chapters when we look at the historical and modern perspectives in the history of Biblical interpretation.

Historical Perspective

Chapter 2

Apostolic Times

We see the literal approach to Biblical interpretation in the apostles' day. People who have studied the New Testament authors on how they used the Old Testament were surprised with how sober their hermeneutic was. What people have noted was that really, before the second century, the New Testament used the Old Testament in the way that the Old Testament views itself. It simply continued that perspective. The New Testament writers interpreted Scripture in a real and a literal, and in a plain and simple way.¹ Examples include Acts 7:9-50, Acts 13:16-22, and Hebrews 11.

Acts 7:9-50

Acts 7 is the longest chapter in the book of Acts. Stephen had been accused of speaking against the temple, the Law, Moses, and against God—the most sacred things in the mind of any Jew. So by a mixture of apologetics and teaching application notably from the Scripture, he answered these

accusations before the Sanhedrin. In Acts 7:9-50, his sermon covered different aspects of Israel's history: the Patriarchs in Egypt (Acts 7:9-16); the life of Moses (Acts 7:17-36); Moses and Israel in the wilderness (Acts 7:37-43); and the tabernacle of testimony (Acts 7:44-50).

Acts 13:16-22

In the synagogue, when a man stands up it was a sign of his authority. This sermon is remarkably similar in style and content to that of Stephen's. In this message we see the importance of history again. Paul dealt with the Old Testament Scripture by drawing from the books of Numbers (Acts 13:18), Joshua (Acts 13:19), Judges (Acts 13:20), and 1 Samuel (Acts 13:21).

Hebrews 11

We also have Hebrews 11 which talks about the faith of the Old Testament saints. First of all, we have the faith of the antediluvian saints in Hebrews 11:4-7. Here the stories of Abel, Enoch, and Noah are based on a real and literal interpretation of Genesis 4:1-15, 5:21-24, and 6:8-9:29 respectively. Next, we have the faith of the Patriarchs in Hebrews 11:8-22. We have, among other things, the stories of Abraham and of Isaac blessing Jacob and Esau, which are based on a literal

interpretation of Genesis 12-25 and 27:1-28:5. When we come to the faith of Moses in Hebrews 11:23-29, the historical background of this reference is found in Exodus 1-2.

The “Hall of Faith” ends with the faith of the post-Mosaic saints in Hebrews 11:30-40. The faith of Joshua and the Israelites is seen in the literal and historical destruction of the walls of Jericho in Joshua 6; and the faith of Rahab has its historical records in Joshua 2:1-24, 6:22-25. The examples are so plentiful here that the author must now content himself from just mentioning a few more brief and often recorded accounts of other courageous demonstrations of faith by Old Testament saints.

Pre-Reformation

The Allegorical Schools

We will now go through the various schools and how they were a danger again and again to Christian churches. First of all, we see this operating in the allegorical schools. The allegorical approach to Bible interpretation assumes that Scripture is basically extended metaphors. The obvious meaning is one thing. Allegorical interpretation supposes that the real meaning—the real heart and meat of it all—lies far beneath the surface.²

Jewish Allegorism

Philo

The most famous Jewish allegorist was Philo.³ He actually overlapped with the apostles.⁴ He said the literal meaning was fine for what it was, but nevertheless the real meaning, the real value, was in the allegorical sense. Grammatical and stylistic peculiarities were hence of deeper spiritual truth,⁵ and words or numbers were manipulated to bring out deeper truths.⁶

For example, Abraham's journey to Palestine signifies the journey of a philosopher who leaves Chaldea (sensual understanding) and stops at Haran which means "holes" as apparently, signifying the emptiness of knowing things simply by sense.⁷

But when did this all start? You had in Greek circles scholars interpreting classic texts by means of allegory. They were concerned with the deep philosophical and ethical things that were brought to them in these mythological traditions, and they were trying to take these classics and make them relevant to their day which obviously was not thinking in the same mythological way. And so the allegorical method was convenient to that end.⁸

In Jewish circles, it was adopted as well and used with respect to the Biblical narratives of the Old Testament. Jewish scholars who intermingled with the Greeks became impressed with Greek cosmology and morality as well as the allegorical method, and they came to the supposition that Greek philosophy had borrowed actually from the Old Testament, specifically Moses. They adopted the allegorical method to find the principles of Greek philosophy in the Old Testament and the prophets.⁹

There seems to be an urge on the part of the human mind to not content itself with what is revealed in Scripture clearly and plainly and simply, but rather to probe deeper and deeper into things that are basically invented from out of the human mind. We need to be very careful with that. It does not mean that Scripture does not have deep meaning, but we have to be very careful that we do not imbue into our interpretation of Scripture this philosophy as we see here in Philo. Basically, this is Greek philosophy inculcated by way of human thinking.

Clearly at this point, the way they were taking the meaning of Scripture was not typological—which is basically going from the Old Testament and showing how Christ is prefigured in it—but it was rather imbuing events, persons, or just simply data in the Old

Testament, and imbuing them with Greek philosophy. Typology is different from allegory. Typology sees the Old Testament as containing types which prefigure Christ. They are designed to speak of Christ, to show forth something related to Christ and Christ's dealings. The apostles practiced typology.

Allegory is different. Allegory is seeing the literal as of little or no value at all and taking it to speak of philosophical realities, which may pertain to Christ but nevertheless are basically philosophical in nature.

Patristic Allegorism

Let us move on to patristic allegorism. The practice of allegory had crept into local churches already in the second century.¹⁰ Many found allegory a convenient way to transpose the offensive character of the Old Testament into a way that was far more acceptable and pleasing to the time.¹¹

Clement and Origen

The allegorical method really came to a climax in Clement and especially Origen of the school of Alexandria. Clement of Alexandria found five meanings in any passage of Scripture—the historical, the doctrinal, the prophetic, the philosophical, and the mystical.¹² Origen, his successor, reduced it

to three—a literal, a moral, and an allegorical.¹³ He defended this with the tripartite division of man in the Bible, where Paul prayed that

the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

And so Origen said that just as we were composed of three elements (three aspects) here—body, soul, and spirit—so too Scripture had three elements (three meanings)—the literal (the body), the moral (the soul), and the allegorical (the spirit);¹⁴ though in practice he usually stressed one—the allegorical.¹⁵

At the same time, the literal method flourished in Antioch. The Antiochian school was contemporaneous with the Alexandrian school.¹⁶ A representative of the Antiochian school was Theodore of Mopsuestia.¹⁷ This school staunchly defended and practiced a literal and historical exegesis.¹⁸ They resisted the Alexandrians. Essentially, the difference between the two was that the Alexandrians saw the spiritual meaning floating above the historical, whereas the Antiochians saw it inherent in the historical—there is spirit taught; the historical promotes spiritual truths. The

Alexandrians talked about spiritualizing the historical, whereas the Antiochians saw the historical as spiritual—when it is taken literally, it is taken spiritually; the literal sense *is* the spiritual sense.¹⁹

However, the Antiochian school was short-lived. Ramm notes,

It has been said that the first Protestant school of hermeneutics flourished in the city of Antioch of Syria, and had it not been crushed by the hand of orthodoxy for its supposed heretical connections with the Nestorians, the entire course of Church history might have been different.²⁰

Patristic Eclecticism

Augustine was sort of the same way as Clement and Origen. He was sympathetic to allegory to a certain point.²¹ Nevertheless, he wrote something on hermeneutics in his *De Doctrina Christiana*.²² And he dealt there with many of the principles of the literal method and he actually made quite a contribution.²³

However, we see excessive allegory in many cases in Augustine's interpretation of Scripture.²⁴ People have gone to the statement in 2 Corinthians 3:6 ("the letter

killeth, but the spirit giveth life”) to legitimate all allegory. That is a famous one. Augustine would come to that and use that to legitimate the allegorical method.²⁵

Medieval Allegorism

Augustine also institutionalized the allegorical method as it would be practiced throughout the Middle Ages.²⁶ During the Middle Ages, the commentaries of the Church Fathers were basically handed down to the various priests and given to the people in preaching.²⁷ Many priests did not even know Latin, or not enough Latin, to really interact with the Scriptures. They were simply told certain things like how to conduct Mass and for the rest, they were teaching their people things that they had learned from the Church Fathers. What was developed in the Western school, under Augustine, sort of solidified in the Middle Ages into a four-fold formulation: the *letter* teaches events, the *allegory* teaches what you must believe, *morality* teaches what you do, and *anagogy* teaches where you are heading.²⁸ So this is the four-fold sense—the literal sense, the allegorical sense, the moral sense, and the analogical sense. Those are the four senses of Scripture and every passage has these senses. It was especially the allegorical meaning of Scripture which prevailed. Ultimately, it was the allegorical method that really was paid attention to. That was

considered the meat of it all, and so that was where efforts would be focused on.²⁹

Just to give an example, when you read *Jerusalem* in the Bible, you should think of it literally as the city of the Jews; allegorically as the Church of Christ; morally as the human soul; anagogically as the heavenly city.³⁰

As mentioned earlier in this subsection, it was especially the allegorical meaning of Scripture which prevailed in the Middle Ages. Ultimately, it was the allegorical method that really was paid attention to. That was considered the meat of it all, and so that was where efforts would be focused on. But there was a movement associated with the Abbey of Saint Victor in Paris, which insisted on the historical and literal method as of great significance.³¹ They believed that whatever place allegory had, doctrine had to come from the literal meaning of the text, from the meaning that arose from syntax and the grammar of the text.³² There was this squabble between Andrew of Saint Victor and Jerome. Jerome had basically taken Jeremiah 1:5, and made that to refer to Paul in a way that had little or nothing to do with Jeremiah. And Andrew combated this and questioned the bearing this had on Paul, challenging thus this allegorical way of reading Scripture.³³

Nicholas of Lyra, during the Middle Ages, also stressed the literal sense. Though he accepted a four-fold sense, he had little regard for anything but the literal.³⁴ And his commentaries were influential upon Martin Luther.³⁵

Outside the established Catholic Church, we have the Waldensians, who

rejected the popular fanciful and allegorical interpretations of their day in favor of a more literal approach.³⁶

And so we see that the literal method had a presence in the Middle Ages in the Abbey of Saint Victor, Nicholas of Lyra, and the Waldensians. But Gerald M. Bilkes makes this interesting comment and we will close with this in terms of our subsection here on medieval allegorism. He says,

Alexandria and Antioch are the two main schools of interpretation that have come down on the Christian Church. For a long time, Alexandria won out over Antioch.³⁷

A method bequeathed by Greek philosophy made significant inroads into Christian churches. And even when it was abandoned by philosophers, it still found widespread use in the pre-Reformation period. But thankfully,

with the Reformers, Antioch won out over Alexandria, namely, the literal method won out finally in the days of the Reformation—won out over the Alexandrian school—although it was only for a brief period of about 130 years.

Reformation

The Literal Schools

The Reformers, because of their attention to Scripture, as well as the Renaissance which had played a role in shifting people's minds away from the obscurity of allegory and such things, really turned a leaf.³⁸ This Reformation was prepared for or it was at least heralded by a number of people, including people like John Reuchlin. Reuchlin had written a book on Hebrew grammar, as well as what he called "*Grammatical Interpretation of the Seven Penitential Psalms*."³⁹ One other person that should be mentioned is Desiderius Erasmus. In 1516, he had published his own edition of the Greek New Testament, which was the first ever printed edition of the Greek New Testament accompanied by a Latin translation in his own notes.⁴⁰

Martin Luther

Now Luther's interpretation of the Scriptures is well worth attending to. In his typical

extravagant fashion, he bluntly called the allegorical method “dirt,” “scum,” and “obsolete loose rags.”⁴¹ He said that the Scriptures were to be retained in their simplest meaning ever possible and to be understood in their grammatical and literal sense.⁴²

Luther also said that all of the Old and New Testament pointed to Christ. In other words, all the Scriptures tend to Christ. Christ is the scope to which all Scriptures tend.⁴³

We should also note that Luther applied a Law-Gospel hermeneutical grid to the Scriptures. He would draw a disjunction between what the Law taught and what the Gospel taught, and he would do that within the Scriptures itself. If it said something about the prophets or Moses, this was just the Law and it was there to convict and all the rest. So this was a fundamental hermeneutical grid which he applied.⁴⁴

Let us pause for a moment and just discuss briefly what it means that all the Scriptures tend to Christ. Luther said this. What does that mean practically for interpretation? Let us speak about this briefly. How do you practice that rule or how do you find that to be a helpful rule? So the question is: how is looking for Christ in the Scriptures a right and helpful rule?

Clearly, it is proper. Christ Himself said,

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (John 5:39)

And on another occasion,

he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:27)

And so certainly Christ had that view, and the apostles did as well.

But what if you are preaching expositively through a book, and you come across a passage like this?

There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadesh-barnea. (Deuteronomy 1:2)

The temptation may be, if you have that principle above firmly in your mind, that you force it to speak of Christ perhaps in an allegorical way. You do not see how Christ is set forth in a literal way, and so in a desire to bring forth Christ in all the Scriptures, you choose an allegorical path. The allegorist would probably say, "Kadesh-barnea is probably this and mount Seir is probably this and *eleven* stands for this." That would be the

allegorical method.⁴⁵ We have this principle of Christological interpretation and we have a verse like Deuteronomy 1:2. Where do we go with that?

To begin with, the Bible is not simply a string of verses independent of each other, where we can just sort of put our finger on any verse and then find a direct path to Christ so to speak. We need to interpret it at its literal level. What did it mean at this journey? Who was Israel? What region of the world were we in? What does eleven days mean? How does this relate to the calendar and other things we know about this time? What segment of human history was this about? Where was Israel at? What was God doing with Israel at this point? Why was there a journey at all? Where did they come from? Where were they going? What was happening on this journey? Who was leading them in this journey? What is the context speaking about in terms of God's aim, God's teaching, and things like that? What is the book of Deuteronomy as a whole? What is it aiming to do with respect to Christ? And so these are then the questions that need to be asked in order to find Christ in all of that.⁴⁶

And once we are dealing at that level, we will see how there is a relationship to Christ. First of all, Moses as a prophet typifies Christ. We know that clearly from both the Old and New

Testaments. Israel as a people was a people with whom God was in covenant, whom He had chosen to be a holy nation and things like that. That they were on a journey has something to say with respect to God's purposes, and ultimately Christ fulfills that for the new Israel. Matthew 1:21 makes that clear.⁴⁷

A second thing that is important is to realize that when we say that Christ is everywhere in the Old Testament, it does not mean that He is always there in the same way or to the same degree. There are certain passages that set forth Christ in an immediate way. One passage says,

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. (Psalm 110:1)

Now that applies to no one else other than Christ; that is a Messianic psalm that speaks of Christ. The New Testament makes it clear that that is plainly and directly about Christ (Acts 7:56; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3, 1:13, 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). There are certain passages from the Old Testament and the New Testament that go to Christ in a straight direction: Psalm 22, Psalm 110, Isaiah 53, and other passages as well. There are other passages that go to and see Christ in a more

indirect route, through pictures or through typology.⁴⁸ So there is a variety of ways in which Christ is set forth in the Scriptures, and it does not mean that every passage sets Him forth in the same way or to the same degree.⁴⁹

John Calvin

John Calvin too like Luther had little use for allegory. These were some of the things that he had said about allegory.

This was undoubtedly the contrivance of Satan ... to take away from the reading of [Scripture] the true advantage.⁵⁰

He accused Origen and others of “torturing Scripture, in every possible manner, away from the true sense,”⁵¹ in order that the inexhaustibility of Scripture was its so-called “fertility” of meanings.⁵² Just because Scripture was inexhaustible in its content and in its message and import did not mean that we could simply attribute every meaning in the world to it.⁵³ Elsewhere he said,

For both of us thought that the chief excellence of an interpreter consisted in a perspicuous brevity. And, indeed, since almost his only duty is to unfold the mind of the writer, whom he hath

undertaken to explain, he ... certainly wanders, in some measure, from his design, in proportion as he withdraws his readers from this object. ...

... The word of God ought to be held by us in such veneration, that it should be distracted as little as possible by a variety of our interpretations. For the Scripture is thus, ... , shorn of its majesty, particularly if it is not done with much selection, and with great sobriety. And if it is considered sacrilegious to contaminate any thing dedicated to God, no defence can be made for him who handles with impure, or improperly prepared hands, one of the most sacred of all our earthly blessings. On this account, ... to wanton with [the Scriptures] as in sport, which has frequently, for a good while, been now done by many, is a degree of boldness nearly allied to sacrilege.⁵⁴

Scripture interprets Scripture was a favorite phrase of Calvin.⁵⁵ When there is a question about the single, natural, and full sense of any Scripture, we go elsewhere in the Book to find the answer.⁵⁶ Calvin staved off rationalism by emphasis on the necessity of the illumination of the Spirit.⁵⁷

So here we have what the Reformation taught in terms of the literal sense. However, it was not long after the Reformation that the local churches took a turn into a rationalist or an irrationalist method, and we want to in the next subsection briefly go over that.

Post-Reformation

The Rationalist School

Rationalism as a philosophy started off with a certain anti-authoritarianism. It did not like authority as it was projected by religion. It was known for its emphasis on an anti-authoritarian view of knowledge.⁵⁸ From that point on, many people emphasized empiricism, which is basically a form of knowledge that is based on our own intake of that which happens around us.⁵⁹

Liberalism

Liberalism built on rationalism. The liberal approach was fundamentally at its very base to reject everything in Scripture which one considered unreasonable. In liberalism, Scripture was subjected to reason,⁶⁰ and the supernatural had to give way to our own naturalistic explanations of things, of how they happened.⁶¹ Inspiration was redefined. Instead of it being that God had breathed out

certain truths through men whom He inspired, inspiration was understood as the humanly produced Bible's power to inspire religious experience.⁶²

Now along with this was paired a sense of progress. Scripture was subjected to reason, inspiration is "refined," but then also all-pervasive was the idea of evolution; not just in terms of the creation of the world, but there was always a constant progress. Everything fitted into this evolutionary scheme, and so the liberal critic was like a historian who attempted to uncover Israel's (and later the Church's) developing religious consciousness.⁶³

During the Reformation days, there had been an emphasis on the historical and on the literal and plain meaning of the text. But all of a sudden, liberalism came along and said, "The supernatural has to go. We no longer take the explanations of Scripture itself at face value. We go below, we dig deeper, and we see that this was simply a way of speaking back then. And we ourselves can get beyond what's going on here; we can evaluate it, we can explain it, and we can abandon it as we see fit."

The Irrationalist School

Later Pietism

Let us briefly deal with the irrationalist school. There had been irrationalist interpretators in history especially in later Pietist circles after the Reformation period.⁶⁴ They simply interpreted Scripture on the basis of their own “inward light.” As a result, there was a certain degree of arbitrariness in interpreting. Reasonableness of Scripture was not the criterion here. Whether Scripture was reasonable or not reasonable, it was irrelevant.

How alive and well is that today? It is pretty alive in Quaker circles.⁶⁵ The web has also given voice to whoever who wishes to dispense the Quakers’ idea of the “inward light” and their view of reality.

Modern Perspective

Chapter 3

The Last Two Centuries

The New Schools

We talked about liberalism in Chapter 2. In what follows, we shall consider the so-called “new” schools—neo-orthodoxy and the “new hermeneutic.” We shall show that neo-orthodoxy had not, at the deepest level, abandoned liberalism. And we shall show how the “new hermeneutic” built on neo-orthodoxy.

Neo-orthodoxy

Neo-orthodoxy is characterized by an abandonment of liberalism at one level, but ultimately it is not an embrace of orthodoxy.¹ They had not, at the deepest level, abandoned liberalism—they still did not hold to the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God that shed light on who God was at every level and on every page and in every word.² Rather, you have to listen in the Scriptures to the truth as opposed to listen to the truth from Scripture. Henry A. Virkler writes,

When a person reads the words of Scripture and responds to God's presence in faith, revelation occurs. Revelation is not considered to be something that happened at a historical point in time which is now transmitted to us in the biblical texts, but is a present experience that must be accompanied by a personal existential response.³

The "New Hermeneutic"

The "new hermeneutic" built on neo-orthodoxy. Like neo-orthodoxy, something happens when you interact with the text. In neo-orthodoxy, interaction with the text produces revelation. What about the new hermeneutic? The new hermeneutic is about foregrounding one's own opinion into the interpretation of Scripture. It talks about the fusing of two horizons. There was a book written by philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer which has been influential since the last century. His book is called *Truth and Method*.⁴ It talks about the whole idea of meaning—how does understanding happen? Under this view of meaning, you can come with your preunderstandings to the text, the text brings some meaning, and there is this fusing of meaning that happens. And you *should* bring preunderstandings—that is good.

You should bring meaning. That is the foregrounding that is being spoken about here. The text sort of becomes something that you interact with. What is happening in interpretation is a give and take basically.

People like A. C. Thiselton have basically drawn on Gadamer and made it palatable to evangelicalism.⁵

The Postmodern Schools

In all Scriptural texts, we encounter three things: an author, a text, and of course ourselves, the readers. How have these elements been viewed by interpreters of the literal method of Bible interpretation, and how are they viewed by postmodernists? Table 1, adapted from Jim Leffel, shows a comparison between the literal method and the postmodern method.⁶

Table 1. Comparison between the literal and postmodern methods

Element	Literal method	Postmodern method
Author	The author intended to convey a message through the text. That intent is the true meaning of the text. The author, therefore, is the authority over the text.	The author does not stand over the text as an authority.
Text	The text is to be interpreted in light of the rules of grammar at the time it was written, the historical worldview of the intended readers, and the thought development throughout the text.	The text is to be “deconstructed” and freed from “logocentrism.”
Reader	The reader is to use the tools of interpretation to discover the original intention of the author for the original audience.	The reader is the center of meaning. The focus of authority over the text shifts from the author to the reader.

In what follows, we shall consider the two schools that employ the postmodern method—radical reader response and deconstructionism. The former focuses on the *reader*, while the latter focuses on the *author* and the *text*.

Radical Reader Response

Radical reader response built on the new hermeneutic. The way the new hermeneutic has come down to us is in the form of radical reader response. And the way that has developed is that instead of the reader merely contributing to meaning, the reader is the sole producer of meaning. Instead of the reader having a partial role in producing meaning, the reader alone produces meaning.

For example, Marxist ideology is a basic way to view things around us. There is a class struggle that is going around us and guiding everything in history—rich and poor are at war and are on the brink of revolution. And so I go to the text as a member of the Marxist reading community⁷ and I see this playing out in Jacob and Esau and in Ruth and Boaz. All these things are basically things of a Marxist nature.⁸

And so we have a hermeneutic of liberation, a hermeneutic of equality, a feminist hermeneutic, and so on. As a member of a

reading community, I bring my interpretative norms to the text, and I see what I want to see in the text and I argue with what I want to argue in the text and things like that. It is simply in the mind of the interpreter to accord to it meaning, and that was certainly what the reading communities are doing. They are not working with the meaning of Scripture. To them it basically means nothing but what they decide to import.⁹ This is all sometimes called “radical reader response.”

Radical reader response has left man with nothing more than his own experience, and the discipline of hermeneutics takes pride in the imposition of one’s own interpretative norms upon Scripture and hearing nothing but one’s own voice in Scripture. And what is so interesting is this: it is remarkable that radical reader response now shows more affinity with allegorism than with the literal method. Interpreters now go to the text and basically see it as something that they just manipulate in order to call forth their own preconceived notions that they have already arrived at.¹⁰

For example, a feminist believes that patriarchy has been the cause of all the problems that are in the world. They go to the Scripture and they see this over and over again. The first evidence of patriarchy is where Eve was blamed for the Fall. They will even see it earlier in Genesis 2 where Adam

was created first. So they take their own thoughts that they have arrived at independently from the Scriptures, and they basically use the Scriptures as an echo chamber for their own thoughts.¹¹

Deconstructionism

We talked about a certain degree of arbitrariness in interpreting in later Pietism in Chapter 2. Deconstructionism espouses the same degree of arbitrariness in interpreting Scripture. Now according to radical reader response, “I have as much validity in saying. I don’t believe the feminist method. You happen to believe it. That’s nice for you. That’s fine. That’s great. Keep it up. Give your contribution. But you know, I need not be persuaded of that. I might be more of a liberation theologian. And there’s nothing you can say about that either.” You validate diversity when you say it is okay for others to have that.

Deconstructionism is a reaction to radical reader response: if Scripture means multiple things, then it does not have a united meaning and so it has no essential meaning at all. There is no one single sense of Scripture to be made in all of this, and to posit a single sense of Scripture is arbitrary and random. So it feels like deconstructionism is in a sense

promoting an irrationalist view of the Scriptures.

The multiple meanings of Scripture are due to it being freed from “logocentrism.” Deconstruction is the analytical technique used for identifying logocentrism in a text. Leffel explains,

Jacques Derrida, father of literary deconstruction, argues that when a text asserts a *thesis*, it implicitly gives validity to its *antithesis*. When we talk about “good,” we must accept the meaningfulness of “bad,” because good can only be understood when set in opposition to bad. When an author discusses “culture,” he tacitly affirms “nature,” (meaning the absence of culture) and so on for any assertion.

Derrida argues that all literature is based on these oppositions. But he also argues that authors set one opposition “above” the other. ... For example, Western writers have tended to see culture over, or superior to, nature. When authors choose to picture one side of such an opposition as superior to the other, they become, according to Derrida, “logocentric” (“word-” or “reason-” centered).¹²

Applying this technique to Scripture, we can free it from logocentrism, and Scripture is opened up to explore an endless array of possible meanings. Its authors do not stand over their texts as authorities.

Solution to the Problem

Chapter 4

Proposal of Solution

The solution to the problem is really to show what is wrong with the nonliteral methods of Biblical interpretation.

The Allegorical Schools

How do we sum up the allegorical schools? It was a recurring pattern in the history of local churches when people did not want to work with the clear meaning of Scriptures. They found greater significance in so-called “hidden things.” It allowed them to go down certain paths which might seem appealing because most people did not know about this. But a lot of times it was found out of the mind of the interpreter. Interpreters basically used the text as a wax nose to mold in whatever way they saw fit. It was the false teaching that Paul spoke about when he said of people that they wrested the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:15-16). They twisted them and they twisted your own thinking. They guided you in a certain path which was not the true path.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Augustine would use the statement in 2 Corinthians 3:6 (“the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life”) to legitimate the allegorical method. But that is a misinterpretation of the verse. Paul was saying that Paul’s ministry is a ministry of power because it is of the Gospel and not of the Law. The words *letter* and *spirit* as here used mean the Law and the Gospel.

The Rationalist School

Basically, the rationalist school of liberalism questioned the Word of God. But we need people who do not question the Word, but preach the Word! Jesus did not question but preached the Word of God. Almost everything Jesus preached was related to the Old Testament Scriptures. He quoted the writings of the prophets and explained their statements. For example, when Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, He referred to the time when Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Having drawn attention to the famous incident, the Lord explained how He would be the fulfilment of the ancient type. Jesus taught concerning the bread, or manna, which fell during the years of Israel’s pilgrimage and then claimed He was the *True* Bread which had been sent from heaven. People could eat and live forever. He said,

I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. (John 6:48-50).

Paul's injunction to Timothy remains one of the most important commands in Scripture. The young minister was told in 2 Timothy 4:2 to *preach the Word*. A sermon without the Bible, is only an eloquent essay. The Old Testament says,

And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose ... And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people ... Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, *and gave the sense* [emphasis added], and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:4-5, 7-8)

The Irrationalist and New Schools

When we come to the irrationalist school of later Pietism and the new schools, we have come full circle to basically what the allegorists were doing—using Scripture as a wax nose to bend any which way as they saw fit. In fact, when you make the “inward light,” personal experience, or personal preunderstandings the determinant and the driving force of interpretation, then it is actually even worse than the allegorical method where you had only three to five senses. Now you have a diversity of senses that are as multiple as, for example, the personal experiences or the preunderstandings.¹

And there is a Babel really. No one can speak together. So we are actually even further gone than in allegory, where Clement of Alexandria and Origen could at least debate whether one or the other thing was the moral meaning. But here, we have reached the point where we are no longer able to talk to each other because we are simply bringing our own experiences and our own prejudgments to the text, and Scripture itself becomes a sounding board for whatever we want to hear.²

The Postmodern Schools

The postmodern schools stand as examples of the persistent ignorance and folly of men when relying on their own imagination. If anything, this writer would like to inspire within the reader a holy zeal and passion to get Biblical interpretation straight and to get it right. Because if we do not get it right, we are liable to go down the path of the postmodern schools, which will render local churches completely unable to have any message whatsoever and completely unable to stand against the times whatsoever. Why is it that many mainline churches are promoting the ordination of homosexuals, the worst of lifestyles, and all this? Why is it that there are local churches that are at the forefront of this, blessing these weddings and becoming venues to promote this? Why are local churches at the forefront of that? Is it not because that they have basically imbibed the spirit that has abandoned truth, set aside true interpretation, and exchanged the wisdom of God for the foolishness of man, seeing the latter as true wisdom and the former as folly?³ So this should be a beacon to us, a warning of how things go when we do not get it right, and when we are not concerned to have a hermeneutic that is based on the Scriptures.

Practical Application

Chapter 5

The Need to Turn Back

This foray into the history of Biblical interpretation is like looking over a precipice and seeing where you go when you embrace the allegorical method, and when you embrace rationalism and so on. Graeme Goldsworthy writes,

That which began as the hermeneutical suicide pact of our first parents [what he means there is Genesis 3 in the Garden, when they went along with the devil and his hermeneutic] is now shown to be a universal phenomenon.¹

And that was what basically had happened in the history of Biblical interpretation. We saw the abuse of hermeneutics in the allegorical direction, and after the Reformation, the local churches basically strayed into a rationalistic/irrationalistic direction and then into a postmodern direction.

What do we learn from all this? We learn that local churches must return to the literal method of interpreting the Scriptures. Only then will they have the proper hermeneutic, which makes the Gospel shine so brilliantly in all the Scriptures. Only then will they have the proper hermeneutic to interpret this great Book that they can then work with practically speaking—in a way that is worthy of its content, worthy of its Author, and helpful to them.

It is hoped that this critical survey of history has not only impressed the reader with the need for where local churches are going to go next (i.e., back to the literal method of interpreting the Scriptures), but also with the need to disseminate the information in the survey to the relevant target audiences. It is proposed that the dissemination take the form of direct instruction, not only of the content, but also on how to address the root problem.

Direct Instruction

Teaching the Content

Teaching the Seminary Students

Given the philosophical and highly abstract nature of the subject of Biblical interpretation, seminary students should be the ones who are taught, as they may be better able to

handle the subject. In teaching the seminary students, the superiority of the literal approach over the nonliteral approaches should be emphasized.

Teaching the Local Churches

The seminary students should in turn teach the local churches to which they are called, as they go about serving in those churches as new pastors. The importance of teaching the local churches cannot be overemphasized. Peter spoke tersely concerning feeding the flock.

First, the Lord had spoken to him concerning his own duty of feeding the sheep—teaching them the things of God. The Bible says,

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. (John 21:17)

In John 21:15-17, the Lord asked Peter three times whether he loved Him, and Peter said that “thou knowest that I love thee.” Christ had confronted Peter and said, “Peter, do you love me?” He asked that question three

times, and Peter said, "You know I love you."
And Christ said, "Feed my sheep."

Then Peter instructed others to feed the flock of God. Here he speaks of the local churches in which the truth of God is taught, and that truth must continue to be preached throughout the generations until Jesus comes again. The Bible says,

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. (1 Peter 5:2)

But the question is: how do we teach such a highly abstract subject as Biblical interpretation to the local churches?

In the case of the allegorical method of Bible interpretation, the seminary students, in their new role as pastors, could teach and warn the local churches of a modern-day example of the allegorical method, in order to make the teaching of this method more palatable to them. This modern-day example of the allegorical method is the school of amillennialism.

Amillennialism literally means "no Millennium." The amillennial school of prophetic interpretation does not believe in a literal

actual future Kingdom of peace and prosperity on earth that will last a literal thousand years. They teach that there is no future one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. They believe that the Old Testament and the New Testament predictions of the Kingdom are fulfilled in a nonliteral way, either in the present Church Age or in the future experience of the Church in heaven. As a result, they tend to interpret prophetic Scriptures more figuratively or allegorically than literally. They say that these prophecies are not to be taken literally but allegorically.

Most amillennial Bible students do not recognize a distinction between Israel and the Church, but rather argue that Israel was the Church of the Old Testament, and the Church is the Israel of the New Testament. Regarding the latter, they say that God has cast away Israel because of her sin of rejecting her Messiah. Now forsaken by God, it is replaced by a new Israel—the Church. All the promises made to Israel are now transferred to the Church.

For example, concerning the Old Testament predictions of the Millennial Kingdom being fulfilled in a nonliteral way, Zechariah 8:20-23 is a prophecy that will be fulfilled in the Millennium; but the amillennialists say, “No, it is fulfilled by Christians and by the Church.” This passage reads,

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem [read "Church"], and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew [read "Christian"], saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you. (Zechariah 8:20-23)

So the amillennialists say *Jerusalem* means "Church," and *Jew* means "Christian." Then how about this verse?

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. (Zechariah 9:9)

This prophecy was fulfilled literally by the Lord Jesus Christ in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (cf. Luke 19:38). The local churches should be taught this fallacy of the amillennial interpretation of prophecy. If Zechariah 9 is literal, why should Zechariah 8 be allegorical?

Here is another example, this time concerning *New Testament* predictions of the Millennial Kingdom being fulfilled in a nonliteral way:

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6)

According to the amillennialists, the reign of Christ is not an earthly but heavenly one. Some of them say that the Millennium is right here and now. Christ is presently ruling over the whole world from heaven through the Church.

The local churches should be taught the presence of the future tense of *shall be* and *shall reign* in Revelation 20:6. The apostle John was talking about a future and not a present reign. The local churches should also be taught the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture, applying it to Revelation 5:10 where

we are told very clearly that Christ and His saints will reign on earth.

In summary, the seminary students, in their new role as pastors, could teach and warn the local churches of a modern-day example of the allegorical method, namely, the school of amillennialism, in order to make the teaching of the allegorical method more palatable to them.

That leaves us with the other nonliteral methods of Biblical interpretation. What do we do with them? This brings us to the next form of direct instruction—addressing the root problem.

Addressing the Root Problem

Instead of teaching and warning the local churches of the other nonliteral methods of Biblical interpretation, the new pastors could take the straightforward route of directly addressing the root problem. What exactly is the root problem?

Human philosophies had a negative influence in the history of Biblical interpretation, especially in its influence to cloud and eclipse the Gospel. We read Colossians 2 at the beginning of the book. The Colossians were tempted to go beyond the simplicity that they had in Christ—this completeness that they

had in Him—to mix it with philosophies, which probably was a form of gnosticism already at that point. Paul was alarmed and he said to them, “Don’t be led astray from the simplicity. You are complete in Christ. You have everything you need in Christ.”² And it concerns doctrine, practice, and even hermeneutics we can say by implication. Human philosophies had a way to take hold of our systems and to turn us against the truth itself, to cloud our minds and to eclipse the Gospel. You wonder what that was in philosophy.

This writer is not saying the exercise of philosophy per se is wrong. There is a Biblical philosophy, there have been Biblical philosophers, and there are things that can be learned from philosophy. But we need to be very careful and to beware of vain philosophy.³

The root problem ultimately is of course not philosophy as a discipline, but rather the human mind which shows itself in philosophy.⁴ Goldsworthy says,

Long before Descartes and the Enlightenment, humanity began its search for reality starting from within rather than from without.⁵

So the root problem is the human mind, the human mind that is at enmity against God and cannot know God. The root problem is with the human mind.

To address the root problem (i.e., the human mind), the newly appointed pastors could stress to their congregations the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, which brings a man's mind under God and then to captivity to the obedience of Christ. When they come to the latter, they could cite the example of Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:3 and 10:5. Paul's normal life did exist in the flesh, but his warfare was spiritual,

casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Paul took authority over his thought life.

Conclusion

The morass that the local churches are in today is because they have failed to see the Scriptures for what it is and have failed to interpret it as it will be interpreted. Instead, they have thought to be wiser than God, they have started out many inventions, they have

interpreted Scripture as it is acceptable to philosophy. Let us suffice ourselves with and content ourselves with being men of the Book, interpreting the Book as the Book tells us to interpret it.

— The End —

Glossary

Allegorical method

It is that view or approach to interpretation that assumes that Scripture is basically extended metaphors. The obvious meaning is one thing. Allegorical interpretation supposes that the real meaning—the real heart and meat of it all—lies far beneath the surface.

Allegory

Seeing the literal as of little or no value at all and taking it to speak of philosophical realities, which may pertain to Christ but nevertheless are basically philosophical in nature.

Amillennialism

Literally means “no Millennium.”

Anagogy

The sense in the four-fold formulation of medieval allegorism that teaches where you are heading.

Antiochian school

Staunchly defended and practiced a literal and historical exegesis.

Deconstructionism

The analytical technique used for identifying logocentrism in a text.

Empiricism

A form of knowledge that is based on our own intake of that which happens around us.

Gnosticism

A syncretistic religion of rites and myths from a variety of religious traditions, a hodgepodge of occultism, oriental mysticism, astrology, magic, esoteric Judaism, pseudo-Christianity, and Plato's doctrine that man is not at home in the bodily realm.

Law-Gospel hermeneutical grid

A disjunction drawn between what the Law taught and what the Gospel taught.

Liberalism

The liberal approach was fundamentally at its very base to reject everything in Scripture which one considered unreasonable.

Liberation theologian

Practitioner of a new Socialist interpretation of the Gospel advanced by a Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutierrez in 1971. The liberation theologian has a duty to rouse the working class to join in the class struggle and overthrow all existing capitalistic regimes.

Literal method

It is that view or approach to interpretation that accepts the literal sense as the only true meaning of Scripture unless the nature of the sentence or phrase or clause within the sentence compels otherwise.

Logocentrism

The setting of one opposition “above” the other in a text.

Magisterial use of reason

The use of human reason to stand in judgment *over* God’s Word.

Ministerial use of reason

The use of human reason to help us understand and obey God’s Word more fully.

Nestorians

Followers of Nestorius, who taught that Jesus is two distinct persons.

Radical reader response

The reader is the sole producer of meaning. The reader alone produces meaning.

Rationalism

The philosophical position of accepting reason as the only authority for determining one’s opinions or course of action.

Reading community

One whose members share historically conditioned expectations on the basis of common race, class, gender, religion, age, sexuality, and so on.

Scripture interprets Scripture

When there is a question about the single, natural, and full sense of any Scripture, we go elsewhere in the Book to find the answer.

Typology

Seeing the Old Testament as containing types which prefigure Christ.

Waldensians

The movement that takes its name from Peter Waldo, a wealthy merchant of Lyons. Waldo is often regarded as the founder of the Waldensian movement. This is not entirely certain. A number of historians argue that the movement named after Waldo really predated him.

Endnotes

Chapter 1

- 1 Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1890), 31.
- 2 Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), 45.

Chapter 2

- 1 Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 54-56.
- 2 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 51. Now something needs to be clarified at this point: there *are* allegories in Scripture, not a lot, but there are sections of Scripture that were intended by the author to be allegories. There are times when the text forces us to go in an allegorical direction. Jotham's fable with respect to Abimelech in Judges 9:7-15, for example, has allegorical elements. He told this fable which is allegorical in nature. Isaiah 5 is clearly an

allegory: “Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard” (Isaiah 5:1). The Parable of the Sower and the Seed has profound allegorical elements. But in each of those cases, it is clear from the text or from the context that those were intended to be allegories. Certain things within the text itself as well as in the context urge us to take them as an allegory. But now what the allegorical school or allegorism says is that basically the way you would treat those parables and fables is how you would treat all the Scriptures—they are really parables of grander and greater eternal things that were just signified by a way that the sense could understand.

3 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 52.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 52-53. When a patriarch or Moses would call something by a certain name (e.g., calling the place “Meribah,” where the people tempted God), clearly that has significance. But Haran was already the name of that place. Does that mean that Abraham was delving

here into the emptiness of knowing things by senses? Clearly, there is no way to test that. There is no way to prove or disprove that. It is myopic even to go in that direction, unless Scripture clearly confirms that. We need to put our hands on our mouth and stick with the clear and the literal meaning, and be aware of speculating in ways that Scripture does not bear out or cannot be proven, or where there is no explicit comment—“Now this place was called such-and-such because this happened there” or something like that. But simply because there is a name, we need to be very careful. The plain reading of the text is what we need to stick with. That is always where we need to start. See Gerald M. Bilkes, “Hermeneutics” (lecture, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, September 10, 2011).

⁸ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 51-52.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁰ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 58.

¹¹ Cf. Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 59.

¹² Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 59.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 60.

- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 The Antiochian school was also known as “the Syrian School of Antioch.” See Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 62.
- 17 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 62.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 48. Cf. Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 62.
- 21 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 61.
- 22 Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, trans. and ed. R. P. H. Green (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Cf. Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 60.
- 23 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 61.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.

- 27 Ibid., 63.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid., 64.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Bilkes, “Hermeneutics.” Jerome was very learned and certainly a first-ranked scholar. He was very much acquainted with the text of Scripture, and was instrumental in the translation of the Scriptures into the Latin and the Vulgate which would dominate the Middle Ages. Nevertheless he engaged in the allegorical method, though later on he retreated somewhat from it under the influence of the Antiochian school. See Bilkes, “Hermeneutics”; S. M. Houghton, *Sketches from Church History: An Illustrated Account of 20 Centuries of Christ’s Power* (1980; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), 27.
- 34 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 64.
- 35 Ibid.

- 36 Ernest Pickering, *Biblical Separation: The Struggle for a Pure Church* (Schaumburg: Regular Baptist Press, 1979), 40.
- 37 Bilkes, "Hermeneutics."
- 38 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 65.
- 39 Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 46; Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 65.
- 40 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 65; Houghton, *Sketches from Church History*, 78.
- 41 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 65.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid., 66.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Bilkes, "Hermeneutics."
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 For example, we have the coverings which God had provided for Adam and Eve there in the Garden. That is certainly a picture of the innocent being sacrificed to provide a covering for the guilty, and so that is a

type of the Lord Jesus—how that we were sinners and we had sin upon us, but God provided in the Lord Jesus Christ the innocent sacrifice. So those animal skins are a type of Him. The ark of Noah is a type of Jesus Christ. The sacrifice of Isaac, or at least when Abraham offered Isaac to be a sacrifice—that is a type. When the angel stopped the hand of Abraham and said, “Now touch not your son,” Abraham lifted up his eyes and there caught in the thicket was a ram that God had provided in the place of his son. What a wonderful picture that is of God’s Sacrificial Lamb for us. We also have all of those Levitical sacrifices. For example, we have the sin offering and the trespass offering.

49 Bilkes, “Hermeneutics.”

50 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1841), 115.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid., 116.

53 Ibid.

- 54 John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Francis Sibson (London: L. B. Seeley and Sons, 1834), 81, 86-87.
- 55 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 67.
- 56 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 65. Westminster Confession of Faith 1:9 states, “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, (which is not manifold, but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”
- 57 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 66.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 68.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 69.
- 60 Luther would call this the “magisterial use of reason” as opposed to the “ministerial use of reason.” Virkler explains, “By ministerial use of reason [Luther] referred to the use of human reason to help us understand and obey God’s Word more fully. By magisterial use of reason he referred to the use of human reason to stand in judgment *over* God’s Word.” See Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 69.

61 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 69.

62 Ibid., 70.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., 68.

65 Bilkes, "Hermeneutics."

Chapter 3

1 Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 70.

2 Ibid., 71

3 Ibid.

4 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. and ed. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (1975; repr., London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006). Cf. Virkler and Ayayo, *Hermeneutics*, 63.

5 A. C. Thiselton, "The New Hermeneutic," in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 308-33.

- 6 Jim Leffel, "Postmodern Impact: Literature," in *The Death of Truth*, ed. Dennis McCallum (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996), 87.
- 7 A reading community is defined as one whose members share historically conditioned expectations on the basis of common race, class, gender, religion, age, sexuality, and so on. Leffel calls this an "interpretive community." See Leffel, *The Death of Truth*, 93.
- 8 Bilkes, "Hermeneutics."
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Leffel, *The Death of Truth*, 91.

Chapter 4

- 1 Bilkes, "Hermeneutics."
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.

Chapter 5

- 1 Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 73.
- 2 This was not an argument against study; this was not an argument for no education or no training. But rather it was an argument for retaining a simplicity of spirit and of heart that did not think to attain to all things. It is like what Psalm 131 says—a contentment to be humble and meek, like a child. See Bilkes, “Hermeneutics.”
- 3 Colossians 2:8 says, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and *vain* [emphasis added] deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
- 4 Bilkes, “Hermeneutics.”
- 5 Goldsworthy, *Gospel-centered Hermeneutics*, 73.

Bibliography

Augustine. *De Doctrina Christiana*. Translated and edited by R. P. H. Green. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Bilkes, Gerald M. "Hermeneutics." Lecture, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, September 10, 2011.

Calvin, John. *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*. Translated by William Pringle. Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1841.

Calvin, John. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Translated by Francis Sibson. London: L. B. Seeley and Sons, 1834.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Translated and edited by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. 1975. Reprint, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006.

Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Gospel-centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007.

Houghton, S. M. *Sketches from Church History: An Illustrated Account of 20 Centuries of Christ's Power*. 1980. Reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2006.

Leffel, Jim. "Postmodern Impact: Literature." In *The Death of Truth*, edited by Dennis McCallum, 85-94. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996.

Pickering, Ernest. *Biblical Separation: The Struggle for a Pure Church*. Schaumburg: Regular Baptist Press, 1979.

Ramm, Bernard. *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970.

Terry, Milton S. *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments*. New York: Eaton and Mains, 1890.

Thiselton, A. C. "The New Hermeneutic." In *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, edited by I. Howard Marshall, 308-33. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977.

Virkler, Henry A. *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981.