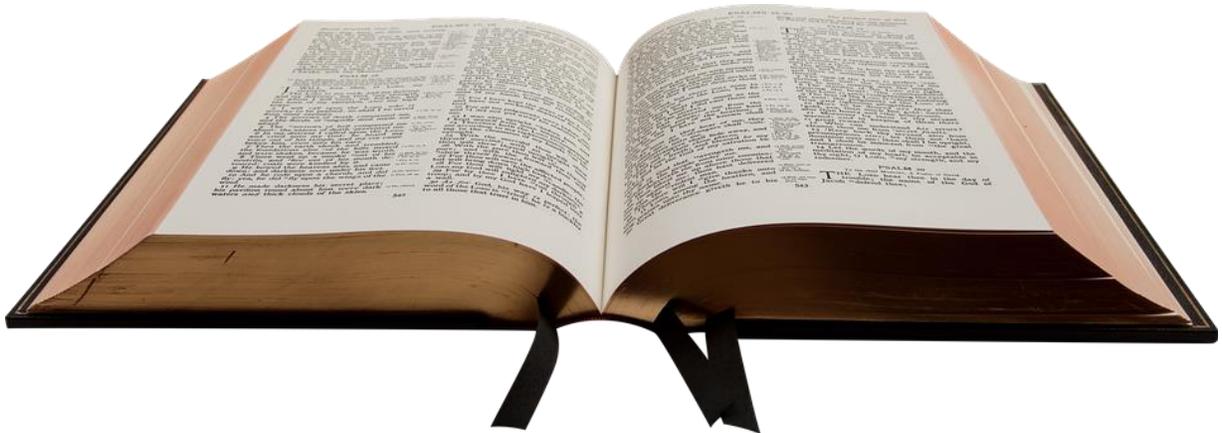


A Lamp Unto My Feet

Reading,
Understanding,
Remembering, *and*
Living by

The Bible

*Part of Hope Chapel's
Discipling Series*



A Lamp Unto My Feet

Studying the Bible

I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. ¹⁰² I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. ¹⁰³ How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! ¹⁰⁴ Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Psa 119:101-105 ^{ESV})

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The Necessity of Studying the Bible

Our Lord Jesus Christ spent over three years teaching, training, and preparing his disciples for the work of ministry. He sent them out two by two to practice what he had taught them, and to depend on God's provision along the way. Jesus equipped them with the truth. At the last supper, knowing he must leave, He told them another comforter or helper was coming. ^{Joh 14:16}

"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." ^{Joh 14:25-26}

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me." ^{Joh 15:26}

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.... ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ^{Joh 16:13-14}

All of that happened. And when Pentecost arrived, indeed, the Spirit of God came upon them, and reminded them of all that Jesus said and promised from the beginning. The Spirit of Christ taught Paul, and prepared him for his ministry to the gentiles. And the promise of the Spirit was not just to the apostles, but to everyone who believes in Christ.

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." ^{Act 2:38-39}

But Jesus is not physically here to speak to us, and teach us, and equip us. And the Spirit doesn't speak to us directly; *He speaks the word of God to us*, both teaching it and impressing it on us.

Will the Spirit ever contradict the word of God? _____ Why not? _____

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are *spirit and life*. ^{Joh 6:63}

So the disciples recorded what Jesus said and did. Paul explained in his letters how the Gospel fulfilled the Old Testament. Those two testaments comprise the Bible – the very words of God. *It is sufficient*. It's *everything* we need for life and godliness (2Pet 1.3). It's inerrant in its original manuscripts. And it's preserved by God Himself. It contains the Gospel truth, which reveals the way to eternal life by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone.

But once we come to Christ, why must we *continue* to study the Word of God? Why should it be the *habit* of our Christian life? Listen to part of Jesus' prayer at the last supper:

¹⁷ *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.* ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth... ²¹ that (1) they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, (2) that they also may be in us, (3) so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ^{Joh 17:17-21}

Sanctified means to be more and more cleansed of sin, and to be more and more made into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Look at those verses again.

By what are you sanctified? (v. 17) _____

What is the effect? (v. 18-19) _____

To what ends? (v. 21) _____

There are other necessary benefits to studying God's word. James wrote,

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. (Jam 1:22-25 ^{NIV})

What does God's word give you? What does it help you do?

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2Tim 2:15 ^{NKJ})

Who needs to be diligent in studying God's word? _____

What are you supposed to learn to do? _____

What does "rightly divide" mean? _____

If you don't learn to do that, how will you feel? _____

Studying and interpreting the Bible correctly, also produces CONSISTENCY in faith and practice.

There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4:4-6)

Why is there just one? _____

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. (Gal 1:6-8)

There's only one true gospel. What does studying the Bible help you to do?

Where do you learn the true gospel? _____

For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal 1:11-12)

Rightly dividing the word of God, rightly reading and interpreting it, is necessary to what things?

The gospel is serious business, because Christ commissioned us to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded. (Mat 28.18-20) To do that – to fulfill the purpose of our calling – we must know the Gospel, know what he commanded, and be obedient to it ourselves. And so, *we study...*

How to Read the Bible

God reveals himself generally in his creation. But he reveals himself specifically in his word, which is the Bible. The Bible is an owner's manual to the human condition. It tells us something about God, something about us, something about our world, and something about God's will in regard to both. It prescribes a proper relationship between the Creator (God) and the creature (us). In Job 38 we have a reminder of that. As believers, we're being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29). This transformation takes place by the renewing of our minds (Rom 12:2). And our minds are renewed by learning God's word and will, and proving what is good. To put it another way, we identify ourselves as Christ's disciples by applying God's word to how we live (Luk 8:21), by loving one another (Joh 13:35), and by being godly (Tit 2:12).

God's word is powerful and efficacious (2Pet. 3:5). It's a living thing that discerns our thoughts and motives (Heb 4:12). We are not to distort the word of God (2Cor 4:2). And so we need to handle it correctly (2Tim 2:15). If we do, it will transform us. It's our food and our sustenance (Joh 6:35-54). It's the wisdom of God (Pro 8, 9) and the standard of his righteousness (Psa 119). Jesus is the living word of God, the source of life to us (Joh 1:1-4).

In other words, God's Word is not to be treated lightly. It's not a source of knowledge alone, but it teaches us the wise application of that knowledge. Knowledge alone puffs up, but love, which is knowledge wisely applied, builds up (1Cor 8:1). We can't apply or exercise the love of God if we don't first know what the love of God is, and what his will entails (Rom 12:2). With that in mind, we read God's word as if it were luscious food, and we've been starving. We should come to it with a voracious hunger to know God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent (Joh 17:3).

Steps to Understanding the Bible

1. Set aside any study tools for now. We don't want anyone else's opinion or insights *until* God has given us some insights directly. So we look at commentaries, study Bible notes, handbooks, and Bible dictionaries, *after* we've wrestled with a passage ourselves. And that can take time as we mull it over in our mind, meditate on it, and consider its application and scope. If we reach a dead-end, or we think we've discovered its meaning, *then* we go to the notes of our study Bible, or perhaps a commentary on the book we're reading. Why? To gain *additional* insights. We may find that we misread or misinterpreted the passage. That's OK. But here's where we need to be wary. Commercial Bibles have commercial notes. That means they're not always consistent with the doctrine which our church teaches. Study bibles are intended to satisfy the broadest audience possible. Their interpretations often have something for everyone.

The *Geneva Bible* contained biased Protestant notes. King James required that the notes be excluded from the 1611 translation. He wanted the Bible to speak for itself. The *Scotfield Reference Bible* of 1909 was the first widely published study Bible. The editor's notes contained John Darby's theology, which conflicted with established church doctrine. But because it was so widely read, his theology became widely accepted. The *Jerusalem Bible* was an outstanding translation, but its notes contained Roman Catholic doctrine, not reformation doctrine. So, a study Bible can be very helpful, but its notes can also cause confusion or disunity. If in doubt, ask your pastor. Apply what conforms to the doctrine you were taught, and use the rest as information.

2. Treat the Bible as holy. Try washing your hands first. This may sound silly, but God's word is holy, sanctified, and precious in His sight. The Old Testament talks a lot about purifying ourselves before coming into the presence of God (Gen. 35:2; Ex. 19:10; 29:4; 30:18-21; Num. 8:7; Isa. 1:16). Having a small "ritual" of hand-washing, can remind us of the holiness of God, and of the corruption of our flesh. It's just a way to create an attitude of awe. Putting the Bible in the bathroom for reading material, like any other book, makes it harder to have that attitude.

3. Pray beforehand. Ask God for wisdom and guidance. Ask him to give you understanding of what you're about to read. Tell him you want to know more about him, so that you may properly glorify him. Ask him to fill you with his Spirit, to guide you into all truth. Ask him to reveal to you whatever is displeasing to him *in you*. Ask him to convict you of your sinfulness through the mirror of his word. Ask him to show you his ways, so that you might walk in them. Ask him to show you his great love for you, and his trustworthy promises. And then ask him for the willingness, strength, and determination to be conformed to the image of his son in both thought and deed. You're asking for all of this so that the seed of his word in you might be fruitful, having fallen on good soil, soil properly prepared to receive it (Lk. 8:11-15).

4. Select your text. A reading program can be as simple as reading the Bible from cover to cover, a book at a time. If you're a new Christian, or you haven't read the whole Bible yet, then begin with the NT. When you finish, continue into Genesis, complete the OT and then return to the NT. The NT is the fulfillment of the OT; the OT is the foundation of the NT. 'The New is in the Old *concealed*, the Old is in the New *revealed*.' One cannot be fully understood without the other. Some reading programs take you through the whole Bible in a year but not in sequence. You may be moved about topically, or chronologically; the Psalms may be interposed with the reading of the other portions of Scripture. It's a good way to read the Bible for **devotions**, but it's not a good way to **study** it. *These are two separate activities.*

In moving towards spiritual maturity, Christians should learn to study the Bible with both our hearts *and* our minds. In the practice of devotions, Christians read the Bible and seek to meditate on it in such a way as to understand its practical significance for their relationship with God and the world around them; devotions reflect the passion of our heart to know God through a message to us. But Christians are also called to meditate on the Bible with their mind and so seek to increase their overall ability to understand the language, meaning, form, genre, and structure of the Bible; this type of study reflects our passion to know God through the message as it was originally given. By applying the mind to concentrated study of the Bible, Christians inevitably support and strengthen their devotions because they improve on the intellectual skill set through which the Holy Spirit can guide their reading and understanding of the Bible. — *Kenneth A. Ristau*

5. Outline the selected text. Normally the selected text is an entire book of the Bible. This works well in the NT, but in the OT it can be a challenge. The books of Genesis, Chronicles, and Kings, are difficult to outline, and outlining may be less useful in them. The Psalms are best done individually rather than trying to follow a train of thought through all of them. And that's the point of outlining. We're trying to establish a train of thought. We want to organize the material so that we have a feel for the overall message, and where each part fits into it — the progression of ideas. I've never found an outline that I agreed with 100%. So don't be concerned with getting it right.

In interpreting the bible, we have an author, an audience, a setting, and a message for that audience. And so our outline begins with identifying each of those elements. Again, try doing it without using a study bible or commentary. Let the text itself reveal these things to you. Are there historical figures or events mentioned that can help you place the text in a historical setting? Does the author reveal his identity or his background? Who is he talking to? Does he mention them by name, location, or activity? Write down any people or events so you can look them up later.

- *What are the main points he makes?* These don't always break in the same place as the chapter endings, so feel free to ignore chapter breaks.
- *Are there any repeated phrases or words?* List them in the outline.
- *Is there an overall theme?* Do those points all address the same issue? What is it? There may be multiple themes. What's the primary theme, and which are the secondary themes? Describe the theme(s) in your own words.
- *What are the key verses in the passage?* Usually, there's a one-liner that drives home the main point that the author is trying to make. Which verse is it? Mark it as the "Key Verse."

If you don't have a study bible that already includes these things, or if you disagree with what you find in your study bible, then you may want to include what you discovered. Put it at the beginning of the book. It's OK to write directly in your bible; then you have it next time you read it. You might want to mark the outline topics in the margins of your bible, so you know where the break in the train of thought begins. Your bible may have topical headers for you. If it doesn't, or if you disagree with them, enter your own. Keep in mind that what God says to you today regarding this passage, may change over time. So, date your insights. If you gain insights from teachers and pastors, mark down in your bible who said it and when. You'll appreciate having done that in a few years. It's a way to give them credit, and to thank God for them.

6. Make a Topical List. You might have some topics that you want to study. These are themes, ideas, or doctrines that go across multiple books. It will be your personal "topical concordance." Write the topics in the back of your bible so you have them handy. Some study bibles already have a topical list or subject list. But they may not include verses that you've found helpful. Doing this lets you *own* God's word, in a sense. Here are a few examples of topics to consider: –

Your calling; the End Times; the kingdom of heaven; total depravity; predestination; election; particular atonement; perseverance; sanctification vs. salvation; irresistible grace; prayer; the Trinity; trials and adversity; God's sovereignty, knowledge, power, and wisdom; God's word; God's love; grace vs. works; atonement; missing books (mentioned but not found in the Bible).

As you come across verses related to each topic, mark its reference beside the topic. Leave room for multiple lines of verse references. For some topics, you may want to mark the *definitive* verse, or the "big gun", with an asterisk (*).

7. Read it with Purpose. There's a *purpose* to reading God's word. That purpose can include the things you prayed for before you opened the bible. And so, as you read, constantly ask yourself questions regarding those purposes. *What does it tell me about,*

- God: his attributes, his holiness, and his love for me?
- God's word: what is its importance and value to me?
- Jesus Christ: what example, faithfulness, devotion, and love does he reveal to me?
- the Holy Spirit: what is his role in sanctification, and what help does he offer me?
- my sinfulness: how would I be seen in God's sight without Christ as my Savior?
- my value: how does God treasure and provide for me? What price did Christ pay for me?
- my relationship to **God**: what does he expect of me? What is my debt to Christ? What comfort does he give me through his Spirit?
- my relationship to the **world**: what is my attitude toward and response to the world?
- my relationship to the **church**: what table do I share, burdens do I bear, gifts do I bring?

8. Cross-Reference. As with outlines and topical concordances, you can cross-reference verses yourself. They can be useful as you read the Synoptic Gospels (Matt, Mark, Luke). Reference both forward and back so you can find the links regardless of the book you're reading. Some of the commercial bibles only reference forward; so you have to know where "the chain" begins. A **concordance** for your particular version of the bible is invaluable to help you find particular verses. Digital bibles, like e-Sword, have done all that work for you, but that can make you lazy. Like other tools, use them *after* you've done the work yourself. The work helps you learn.

9. Confess your sins to God. What we read tends to convict us of our sin. It's like chewing those red pills that identify the plaque on our teeth so we can brush better. Sin can be failing to honor or glorify God correctly or completely (that's a sin of omission), and not just breaking his law (a sin of commission). Having our sin revealed to us by God's word, we can confess it openly. And we not only confess it, but we repent of it, and ask for God's forgiveness. Because of Christ, we can be confident that it will be removed as far as the east is from the west (Psa 103:12).

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.” NIV (1John 1:9).

Then tell God how grateful you are that He has forgiven your sins, and washed them away. They won't be held against you on the Day of Judgment. Our corrupt nature remains with us, distorting our understanding of God's word and coloring our behavior. But this constant reminder of just how sinful we are is a *blessing* nonetheless. It makes the covering of Christ more precious, the love of God more wonderful, and the fellowship of the Spirit more desirable to us.

10. Meditate. Now we're ready to meditate on what we've read. We need to thank God for what He has shown us in his word. Then we need to pray for illumination – this is more than just the ability to understand the text, as we prayed before we began. It is not simply admiring the wisdom of God abstractly. It's asking God to light the path before us, to show us *the way*. It's an assessment of, and a correction to, our current walk with Christ. We're intentionally conforming who we are, to the person God intends us to be, using God's word as our pattern. This isn't a passive process. We won't go to the next passage of Scripture until we have illumination on the passage we've just read, and we've begun *to act* on it. Otherwise there's no point in studying God's word.

“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” James 1:23-25 NKJ

11. Commit to obedience. What makes us grow over time is not our successes, but our failures. We will sin, overcome sin, and then sin again, our entire life. Sanctification is the process in which our sin is mortified in us more and more. The sinless perfection of Christ is an ideal that we establish in our heart, mind, and soul. We commit to grow towards it. But we are not Christ. We are *followers* of Christ.

“No student is above his teacher. It is enough that one who is fully trained is like his teacher.” (Lk. 6:40).

Don't get depressed and frustrated by your seeming inability to completely or even adequately mirror Christ, especially to others. We aren't leading people to ourselves, but to the Lord Jesus (Joh 1:41,42). It's not *our* perfection but *his* that they must be confronted with. Our sin reminds us of our continuing need for grace, producing contrition and humiliation in us; and so God's strength is perfected in our weakness (2Cor. 12:9).

12. Record your thoughts. The final step is to write down your thoughts in a journal. An excellent description of journaling may be found in chapter eleven of *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, by Donald S. Whitney. What you're doing is making a record of the “works and ways of God in your life.” There's no right or wrong way to do it. It's a record of the progress we're making toward Christ-likeness. By writing it down, just as we do when memorizing verses, we are forced to focus our thoughts and express them. It's a very practical way to renew our minds. Treat it as a letter that you're writing to God. He has spoken to you through his written word, and now you are responding to him. Tell him about your day, what you learned or experienced, and how you feel about it. It's your spiritual diary.

A Note on Obedience

We're not obedient to gain God's favor, but to please and glorify Him. We're holy because we're God's children, and God is holy. We obey, because we want to demonstrate that it's our *new nature* to be obedient. We've put off our old self, and we're putting on the new self (Eph 4.20-24). The Spirit lives in us to will and to work for God's pleasure (Phil. 2:13). We're in training for heaven. Our goal here on earth is to be built up until we're all fully mature in Christ (Eph. 4:13).

That's a *corporate* goal as much as it is an individual goal. It's a *mutual* endeavor. The church is God's means to build us up, to fill us with gratitude and thanksgiving (Col. 2:7).

Keep this in mind: **there are no Lone Rangers in the church.** Therefore, feel free to ask for help and encouragement from others. It's part of our fellowship. We're each gifted for the common good (1Cor 12.7). But don't let others become a crutch for you, to avoid doing the hard work yourself, or to avoid learning self-control. God's *word* is what sanctifies you (Joh 17:17).

Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life. (Joh 6:63^{NKJ})

Therefore, let God *speak* to you by his word; learn to *listen* attentively, and obediently.

How to Memorize Scripture

Surprisingly, we have a number of separate but linked memories in us: visual, auditory, muscle tissue, cognitive (understanding), emotional (responsive), imaginative, and associative. We want to trigger as many of these "memory banks" as possible so that they reinforce each other, and turn our short-term memory into long-term memory, quickly and efficiently.

1. **Get excited.** You *cannot* learn something unless you *want* to learn it. Consider how you will use it, and what you'll get out of it. Get pumped; be determined! Adrenalin is a key chemical to make our memory strong and lasting. Make it *fun* and *enjoyable!* That's part of *wanting* it.
2. **Warm up.** As if warming up before exercising, begin with a recitation of something that you have already memorized. This triggers the memory portions of the brain, preparing them to receive new information. *Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow...*
3. **Stand up.** Don't try to memorize while sitting down or lying down. There's something about being up and moving that helps us to memorize. At the very least, it keeps us awake. You may want silence, or you may want quiet instrumental music in the background – your choice.
4. **Read it.** Take the time to read it, over and over again, until the general content becomes *familiar* to you, and the words are *available* for recall, even if not in the right order.
5. **Restate it.** Summarize it in your own words – it's easier to learn things *you* have said than to remember what someone else has said. So make it your own, and demonstrate that you understand it. If you can't restate it, then you don't really understand it.
6. **Analyze it.** Find and fix in your mind *no more than 7 key words* or ideas in the text that you can use to recall the rest of the text.
7. **Visualize it.** Use your imagination to create a vivid picture of the content of it. The more vivid the picture, the more likely you will remember it. Diagram it if you can.
8. **Recite it aloud.** By saying it aloud, you're actually *hearing* it. And by hearing it, you are creating another memory of what you want to learn. Now you've not only read it, and seen it, but you've heard it, and reinforced it in your mind.
9. **Write it down.**
 - First, *copy* it. This is helpful in itself. It triggers the muscle memory. But more importantly, it associates and reinforces what you have seen and read, with what you have heard, with what you have imagined, with your assessment of it, with what you are physically writing.
 - Then try to *write it entirely from memory*. Get as much down as you can without looking at the original text, even if you have to leave blanks.
 - Then go back to the original and use it to *fill in only the blanks*.
 - Now put away the original and *read aloud what you have written*.
 - Finally, try to *recite it from memory* again, just once. Don't worry if you can't recite it all.
10. **Repetition.** Repeat these steps, and keep repeating them, until you can write the whole thing down from memory without referring back to the original. Now it's yours for the asking. **Review** what you have memorized once a week. Otherwise, you will recall only 25% of it within one month.

The Source. It is crucial that we remember where we got the text we are memorizing. That would be *author, book, chapter, and verse*. Repeat the source **3 times** for every time you recite the text. For example, John 11:5, "Jesus wept." John 11:5; John 11:5. Why? Because the source is harder to visualize and remember than the text. And we want to be able to tell others where to find it for themselves. This adds **credibility** to what we recounted to them.

The next page has a list of 60 key verses to memorize, by topic, developed by the @Navigators.

Topical Memory System

LIVE THE NEW LIFE

| | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Christ the Center | 2 Corinthians 5:17 | Galatians 2:20 |
| Obedience to Christ | Romans 12:1 | John 14:21 |
| The Word | 2 Timothy 3:16 | Joshua 1:8 |
| Prayer | John 15:7 | Philippians 4:6,7 |
| Fellowship | Matthew 18:20 | Hebrews 10:24,25 |
| Witnessing | Matthew 4:19 | Romans 1:16 |

PROCLAIM CHRIST

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| All Have Sinned | Romans 3:23 | Isaiah 53:6 |
| Sin's Penalty | Romans 6:23 | Hebrews 9:27 |
| Christ Paid the Penalty | Romans 5:8 | 1 Peter 3:18 |
| Salvation is not by Works | Ephesians 2:8,9 | Titus 3:5 |
| Must Receive Christ | John 1:12 | Revelation 3:20 |
| Assurance of Salvation | 1 John 5:13 | John 5:24 |

RELY ON GOD'S RESOURCES

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| His Spirit | 1 Corinthians 3:16 | 1 Corinthians 2:12 |
| His Strength | Isaiah 41:10 | Philippians 4:13 |
| His Faithfulness | Lamentations 3:22,23 | Numbers 23:19 |
| His Peace | Isaiah 26:3 | 1 Peter 5:7 |
| His Provision | Romans 8:32 | Philippians 4:19 |
| His Help in Temptation | Hebrews 2:18 | Psalms 119:9,11 |

BE CHRIST'S DISCIPLE

| | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Put Christ First | Matthew 6:33 | Luke 9:23 |
| Separate From the World | 1 John 2:15,16 | Romans 12:2 |
| Be Steadfast | 1 Corinthians 15:58 | Hebrews 12:3 |
| Serve Others | Mark 10:45 | 2 Corinthians 4:5 |
| Give Generously | Proverbs 3:9,10 | 2 Corinthians 9:6,7 |
| Develop World Vision | Acts 1:8 | Matthew 28:19,20 |

GROW IN CHRISTLIKENESS

| | | |
|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Love | John 13:34,35 | 1 John 3:18 |
| Humility | Philippians 2:3,4 | 1 Peter 5:5,6 |
| Purity | Ephesians 5:3 | 1 Peter 2:11 |
| Honesty | Leviticus 19:11 | Acts 24:16 |
| Faith | Hebrews 11:6 | Romans 4:20,21 |
| Good Works | Galatians 6:9,10 | Matthew 5:16 |

TEN RULES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Background

From the 1300s to the 1500s, many believers risked and sometimes gave their lives to provide you with the Word of God in your own language. These included John Wycliffe and William Tyndale in the English Language. But the Bible was very expensive, and out of reach for most people. One of the most extraordinary inventions in history, provided a reasonably priced Bible that many more could afford. It was the Guttenberg printing press, developed in 1440. These presses had found their way into 200 cities in multiple countries by 1500. The first book printed was a German translation of the Bible. Tyndale's English translation was outlawed in England; so it was printed in Germany, and smuggled into England, hidden in sacks of corn. The Word of God having been widely distributed during the Reformation, the truth *proclaimed* could then be *affirmed* with the printed word. Believers could privately read and interpret the Bible for themselves.

Martin Luther said it was the right and duty of every believer to read God's Word for themselves, and to interpret it for themselves — to no longer rely only on what a priest told them it said, which was hearsay. The Word of God was to be the sole authority for faith and practice, instead of the word of men. However, it wasn't long before Luther became frustrated by a false claim that every man's interpretation was equally valid. Each believer claimed the right to *personal* interpretation, which was very different from the right to *private* interpretation. *Personal* interpretation is mere opinion. "I think it says..." or "To me it means..." But private interpretation, by contrast, is grounded in **principles** of interpretation which all believers should agree to.

That means there are generally accepted rules that govern the correct interpretation of God's word. Any given passage of the Bible has only one *right* interpretation — there is only one *truth* — even though that truth may have many applications. And help is available. God gave teachers to the Church, who are gifted to instruct, and gifted to teach what God's word says. They are not themselves the authority; rather, they help believers to understand the authority of Scripture. Nonetheless, the instruction provided by a teacher of the Church, is not to be taken lightly.

"It was [God] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Eph 4:11-12 ^{NIV})

Unfortunately, theologians disagree about some of the principles to be used in interpreting the Bible. For example, the fundamentalist movement of the 1920s used rules that created confusion, even though they wanted to bring clarity. They taught that the Bible should be interpreted literally unless that produced absurdity. This is more than taking the "plain meaning" of a text. It's letting the words control the meaning, instead of the larger context. Taking a literal meaning when it's not appropriate, can create an inconsistency between passages.

Sound seminaries teach a method of interpretation known as the "grammatical-historical" method. But textbooks, like those by Milton S. Terry or Bernard Ramm, are too complex and technical for the average believer. There's an outline of Terry's text in the Appendix, to let you see what's involved. These often focus on original languages, like Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin. For the average believer, however, the rules of interpretation should be easy to remember, and easy to apply. They're the same rules we use to interpret books, letters, and even the Constitution of the United States. The primary question is, **What was the author's intended meaning?** That meaning is not what the reader *thinks* was meant, but what the writer *actually* meant.

We've assembled ten simple rules to help you determine the right meaning of a passage of the Bible. If you understand it rightly, so you may obey it rightly, which is pleasing to God. We'll list TEN RULES of interpretation (or *hermeneutics*), and then explain them one by one. We'll also give a few additional guidelines, to show how the rules apply in special circumstances.

For a more exhaustive and exacting exploration of how to interpret your Bible, we've provided the *Chicago Statements on Bible Inerrancy, Hermeneutics, and Application* (see the Appendixes).

TEN RULES

Rule 1. Scripture is the very word of God, and is inerrant in its original autographs.

Rule 2. Scripture is best interpreted by Scripture itself, and not by external events or writings.

Rule 3. The majority of passages on a specific topic will outweigh any exceptional passages on the same topic.

Rule 4. A specific passage outweighs a general passage *on the same topic*. Consequently, a specific passage would also outweigh a majority of passages that are only general in nature.

Rule 5. The *truth* of any given verse will be consistent with the whole truth of Scripture.

Rule 6. Therefore, the *context* of any given verse is also the whole of Scripture.

Rule 7. The *meaning* of any given verse is determined by its author, audience, circumstance, and intent (i.e., considering the purpose for writing it, and its historical setting).

Rule 8. The author, audience, circumstance, and intent, are determined in large part by the language used (vocabulary, grammar, etc.).

Rule 9. We rely on the original language, and not a translation of it, to determine the actual meaning of a Scriptural passage.

Rule 10. To understand the things of God, we depend on the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and not on our own knowledge, logic, or intellect alone; and certainly never on our feelings.

Now that you have the list, let's see how the rules apply – what they mean, and do not mean.

Rule 1. Scripture is the very word of God, and is inerrant in its original autographs. This means we don't believe that the NIV, NASB, KJV or any other translation is inerrant. There may be printing errors in them, or words may have been mistranslated. However, we do believe that the original writings by the prophets of the OT and the writers of the NT were inerrant in all they affirm. These original manuscripts have been copied and re-copied for thousands of years. We assume, and are very confident, that they have been accurately copied. But we also expect that, from time to time, we will find missing paragraphs or better manuscripts than we currently have. As long as they do not conflict with what we have in our hands as far as doctrine is concerned, we may use them to derive better translations.

Rule 2. Scripture is best interpreted by Scripture itself, and not by external events or writings. We assume that the Bible has a single voice, and that voice is God's. He spoke through men as the Spirit moved them (2Pet. 1:21). Each writer had a personality, a culture, and a point in time, that affected the *style* of what was written (rules 7 and 8), but not the *content*. Because there is a single voice, we further assume that there is a single story that runs from cover to cover. It is a single message of God's sovereignty, and his plan to redeem us. If we want to understand a particular passage, we may rightly assume that the Bible itself has the information we need to understand it. We say that the NT is the fulfillment and explanation of the OT; the OT is the promise and foundation of the NT. It is a package deal. Trying to use external documents that are *not* inspired, to understand that which *is* inspired, would be a fruitless task. Using external events in our time to explain a message written to someone in another time likewise produces strange conclusions (rule 7). Using a commentary, confession, or systematic theology, is helpful, but these external writings are not conclusive. Only God's word is conclusive.

Rule 3. The majority of passages on a specific topic will outweigh any exceptional passages on the same topic. The main point here is that we cannot mix apples and oranges when interpreting. We must first determine whether two passages are in fact speaking to the same issue. A passage that at first glance seems to be an exception to a particular teaching, or seems to create a conflict, may not be exceptional or conflicting at all. It may be addressing a different topic or circumstance altogether. We assume, because of rules 1 and 2, that there are no irreconcilable conflicts in the Bible. They may be mysteries, but they not contradictory. When we encounter such passages, there are very good tools available to help us resolve apparent conflicts. For example, try Gleason Archer's, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*.

The most glaring passage, as far as a seeming contradiction goes, is Heb. 6:4. We are apparently told that we can lose our salvation. Yet the overwhelming majority of NT passages say that we are completely and finally saved when we believe in Christ. We are not made salvable for the moment; we don't receive eternal life for the moment. We are eternally saved by God's grace and sovereignty, the continuing mediation of Christ, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:14). The majority of passages on this topic must therefore over-rule this apparent exception. Now we are left to explain it. Maybe we misunderstand the context, or maybe it's a bad translation, or maybe the person was never saved in the first place. That makes good material for an ongoing debate.

Another example would be the apparent conflict between Romans and James with regard to works. But it is only apparent. In point of fact, we are looking at two very different processes between these two books. When James talks about the necessity of works, he is talking about what arises from our salvation, as a natural and inevitable consequence of it. When Paul talks about the inadequacy of our works, he is talking about the cause of our salvation, which is the atoning sacrifice and works of Christ alone. Thus, our works are the necessary result, not the procuring cause, of our salvation. Our works are necessary, but inadequate: no conflict.

Rule 4. A specific passage outweighs a general passage on the same topic. Consequently, a specific passage would also outweigh a majority of passages that are only general in nature. There are passages that state a proposition in very general terms. And then there are very specific passages concerning that same proposition. The specific passage is the controlling one. For example, John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." This is a *general* passage. We have questions about the word "world" and whether it means the whole world: every man, woman, and child. We have questions about the word "whoever" and whether it means that everyone is capable of choosing Christ. We need something more specific to help us determine how these two words are being used. Are there specific passages, on the same topic, that have more detail? If so, they can help us answer these questions.

In John 6:37, 44, for example, we have the same book, the same author, and the same topic. We read, "All that the Father gives to me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out... None can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." In John 15:16 Jesus says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you..." So we know that "whoever" does not mean everyone, but only those who were drawn to Christ by the Father. These are referred to as "the elect."

We can look at the word "world" in the Greek to see if it has a specific meaning. It is "kosmos," and it refers to the orb of the earth, or to its inhabitants in general: the masses. And so the world here is the world of men, with no indication of the scope of those who are the object of God's love. There was a promise in Isaiah 49:6 that Israel would be a light to the Gentiles. Paul tells us that the "mystery" revealed in Christ is that the promise was not only to the Jews but to the world beyond them: the Gentiles or non-Jews (Rom. 11:25; Eph. 3:3-6). We could say that this promise

was made to the world at large, and not just to the Jews. But we could not say that it was made to everyone in the world. Are there specific passages to confirm this conclusion?

Look at John 8:42-47. Jesus tells his audience that they cannot hear the promise, that their father is not his Father, that there are two families: one condemned by their sin, whose father is the devil, and one saved by grace, whose father is God. This is confirmed in Mal. 1:3 and Rom. 9:6-13 where we learn that God hated Esau before he was born, before he had yet done right or wrong. Paul explains that some are created for common purposes, and some for noble purposes (Rom. 9:16-24). And so these specific passages clarify and limit the general passage in John 3:16. You may have heard that “all means all;” but it seldom does.

Rule 5. The truth of any given verse will be consistent with the whole truth of Scripture. Because the Bible is a single, consistent story told many times over by a single mind, there is a coherent body of truth contained in it. That body of truth reveals who God is, who we are, our relationship to him, his plan for us, etc. When we come across a passage that seems inconsistent with that body of truth, we can be sure that we misunderstand what is being said. God says that he alone is God, there are no others (Isa. 46:9-10). And yet we read in John 10:34-35 that we are called “gods.” Mormon theology picks up on this. The passage quoted in the NT is Psalm 82:6. The word is “elohim” which is the word for God. But it also means “judges” or “mighty ones” – the verse goes on to explain that this title is ours because we are children of the Most High. We are possessed of God (Eph. 1:14), not independent gods.

Rule 6. Therefore, the context of any given verse is also the whole of Scripture. Some folks think that if they read the paragraph before and the paragraph after, that they are reading a verse “in context.” Rules 4, 5, 7 and 8 show why the context is far larger than the surrounding text of a verse, and yet why it must be limited to passages that are topically related. The Bible is a unity as well as a collection of books. It tells a single story of God’s redemptive plan in Jesus Christ. We call that a meta-narrative, an over-arching and unifying story. If we don’t read each passage with that broad view in mind, then we can easily misinterpret or misapply a single passage. We can take extraordinary measures to ensure all our pieces are authentic and accurate, and yet still go wrong if we don’t know how each fits into the whole. Irenaeus wrote that biblical interpretation requires knowing what the pattern is supposed to be before we begin assembling the pieces. He said to think of an image of a king made from a pile of mosaic tiles. By rearranging them we can turn the image of that king into a fox with the very same “authentic” tiles.

Rule 7. The meaning of any given verse is determined by its author, audience, circumstance, and intent. In other words, it was written by a particular author (even if we don’t know his name), to a particular audience (even if we don’t know their names), at a particular point in time (even if we can’t specify the year), with a message intended for *them*, not for *us*, using language that was clear and meaningful to *them*, not necessarily to *us*. From this message, as it was understood by its original audience, we may extract an ageless *principle* that may be applied to similar circumstances in our own time. It is tempting to think that a passage speaks directly to us, as if there was no original audience. God does speak directly to us through his word, but only *after* we have determined what is being said. The principles are what speak to us, indirectly. The text does not speak to us directly. Let me explain what I mean by that. The words of the text are place-holders and containers for principles, or teachings. Indeed, the word “logos” which means “word” as in the “Word of God,” refers to the doctrines of Scripture, the teachings that it contains. If we take the message to be the text itself, without putting it in context, the meaning will become distorted. “Pluck out your eye if it offends you” has a context that suggests we ought to keep our eye, but clean up our attitude. We must derive its meaning before we can determine its application.

Rule 8. The author, audience, circumstance, and intent, are determined in large part by the language that is used. This rule refers to vocabulary, grammar, style, syntax,

idioms, allusions, symbols, types, etc. Style refers to whether the specific verse we are reading is literal, metaphorical, poetic, prophetic, etc. You may have heard a rule of interpretation which says that we should take a passage literally unless there is a good reason not to. Well, that rule is a little too broad to be useful. In prophetic literature, we actually take it *figuratively* unless there is good reason not to. So the style of the verse we are reading determines how we are to take it, not the other way around. Psalm 61:4 says that we are protected under God’s wings. Our first inclination should not be to take it literally, as if God were a large chicken. In other words, we don’t take it literally and then find a reason not to take it that way. We first recognize what kind of style we are dealing with, and then we proceed to interpret it accordingly.

Rule 9. We rely on the original language, and not a translation of it, to determine the actual meaning of a Scriptural passage (*that’s why altering the original language text of Scripture using questionable manuscripts from apostate churches is so dangerous*). As in English, the Greek and Hebrew words of Scripture can have a number of meanings, and a number of English words could be used to render the meaning of the original. Some of those words have connotations (implied meanings) in addition to their denotations (direct meanings). In large part, we rely on the translators to work out those details. However, there are often biases in theology and doctrine that sway the choices they make. We want to use a number of translations to get a better feel for what is being said. Some translations are word-for-word (NASB, NKJV, KJV, ASV, ESV). Others are idea-for-idea (NIV, NLT). Some are paraphrases (LB, ECV). Some are restatements (e.g. The Message, The Book of God). Some ideas in Greek or Hebrew don’t exist in English, and so word-for-word substitutions cannot be made. Idea-for-idea substitutions are only approximations by necessity. In other words, language itself is a problem.

Here’s an example: In John 13:23, the usual translation goes something like this, “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom [or against his breast] one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.” Others say that this disciple was “at table” with Jesus, or reclining next to him. If the disciple is leaning against Jesus, it seems overly affectionate for the setting. And it makes us wonder why that same disciple had to “lean over toward Jesus” when Peter asked him to find out who the betrayer would be (v. 25). If he was already lying against him there, why would he need to lean over? The issue is the word “bosom.” This same word is used to describe a bay for boats (Acts 27:39). It means an enclosed, private area, like a breast-pocket, or something u-shaped, like a bay. In the verse in John, it could be describing something like a booth in a restaurant. That fits with Acts. As it turns out, it is a figure of speech in Greek that means you are sitting in a position of honor at the table (near the host). So the translations affect our understanding of the verse. Having seen several translations, we realize there is a point of contention about the phrase. Looking at the Greek (or an explanation of the Greek) may clear it up for us.

Rule 10. To understand the things of God, we depend on the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and not on our own knowledge, logic, or intellect alone; and certainly never on our feelings. Some of us think that because we have the Spirit of God to guide us, our personal impressions about a passage will be correct. “Well I feel like it says...” Being guided by the Holy Spirit does not mean we have our own personal guru who gives us independent insights – insights that conflict with what he has told the church as a whole. Others are convinced that God’s word is propositional. They believe it is logical and understandable through reason. “Well logically it must mean....” Although God is knowable, logical, and consistent, our intellect alone will fail us. We are corrupt creatures. Intellect will not and cannot help non-believers. That’s where the Holy Spirit comes in. He renews our mind (Rom. 12:2), not our emotions, so that we can understand the word of God (1Cor. 2:12). The problem is that our fallen nature continues to influence our renewed mind. As a result, we cannot know *everything* with complete confidence and accuracy, but we can know *many* things confidently and accurately. We grow more and more in our knowledge as we practice the truth of Scripture in the way we live.

Well, if reason and emotions are always suspect, does this mean we are incapable of determining the meaning of God's word? Not at all! That's one reason God has given us the Church. It is God's school for believers. It is the corporate and historic understanding of God's word, the give and take between believers over time, which establishes the truth of God's word. And yet, the word of God always supersedes the teaching of any individual elder, church, or denomination. This lack of clarity shouldn't cause us to *doubt*. Instead, it should cause us to study God's Word with *diligence and humility*. We should never think that we have arrived and know all things (Phil. 3:12). We learn from one another and we teach one another with respect, deference, and submission. We always seek to edify, encourage, and comfort one another from God's word. It is not a tool of manipulation and control. It is not a means to gain glory and a following for ourselves. It is for the glory of God alone. *Soli Deo Gloria*.

Augustine wrote, "*If you chance upon anything (in Scripture) that does not seem to be true, you must not conclude that the sacred writer made a mistake; rather your attitude should be that the manuscript is faulty, or the version is not accurate, or you yourself do not understand the matter.*" (DePotent., IV, 1,8)

THE INTERPRETIVE PROCESS

When we're interpreting the Bible, we have a purpose in mind. That purpose is to know God, and to obey His will. Here's a simple THREE-STEP APPROACH to help you do that. Ask yourself,

(1) What does it say?– This is about word definitions, grammar, syntax, structure, and images. Use a dictionary, compare various translations of the passage, etc., but don't use a commentary. That's someone else's interpretation. Work this out on your own using some basic tools. *Until you're sure that you know what it's saying, you must not proceed to step 2.*

(2) What does it mean? – This step is more challenging because we need a broader context than what's in front of us. Is this an isolated verse, or are there other verses on this topic? Use a concordance and cross-references. Does this verse refer to another verse or event? Is similar phrasing found elsewhere? Who is the audience? What is the circumstance? Is this the same as other verses on the topic, or different? Its meaning (its *truth*) is fixed (it means only one thing); it's not relative ("I feel like it means..."). Ask yourself, "Is this **descriptive** or **prescriptive**?" Is it merely describing what happened, or is it prescribing what to do? *Judges* is mostly descriptive, so be cautious (Jdg 17.6). Try this: were the Israelites correct to put away their wives in Ezra 10.7? If God hates divorce (Mal 2.16; Mat 5.32; 1Cor 7.13), then why would this divorce be acceptable? If you can't determine that confidently, now use a reliable commentary (Matt. Henry, John Gill, John Calvin, etc.). *Until you're sure you know what it means, you must not proceed to step 3.*

(3) What does it mean to me? This is the application of God's Word to you, *personally*. The Bible is not for information only, but to grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the step that **sanctifies** your soul (Joh 17.17). What is it in your heart, or in your life, or in your current circumstances – *whether in your relationship to God or to your neighbor* – that is addressed or exposed by this passage? What is the evil to be avoided, or the good to be done? And now, what are you personally going to *do* about it, *today*?

It may be that its meaning for you is a new understanding of one of God's attributes, like His love, mercy, or sovereignty. Even so, it's not just *informational*; it's *transformational*. Because of this new understanding, how will you now respond to God, or to your circumstances or relationships?

ANCILLARY PRINCIPLES

The "Big Ten" only create a general framework from which to work out the content and meaning of a passage, with the goal of applying God's truth to our life. But it's not always clear when they apply, or how far to go with them – otherwise we'd all agree. So what other principles might be useful in special situations, to help our understanding and practical application?

LISTS — A list may either be exclusive (complete) or exemplary (partial). In Galatians 5.19-23, we have two well-known lists: one lists the *works of the flesh*, and the other the *fruit of the Spirit*. Are they *exclusive* (there are no others), or are they *exemplary* (just examples)? In each list, the word “such” indicates they are exemplary: *such as these*. So they are clearly examples, and not an exhaustive or exclusive list that *excludes* all others. That’s simple enough. But what about the list of gifts in 1Cor 14?

An entire industry has sprung up to help believers “identify” their gifts; but the premise is that the list is exclusive and not exemplary. They include other passages like Romans 12 to help “complete” their list, but in the end, it’s a *fixed* list. They ignore passages like Exo 28:3, 4

“So you shall speak to all *who are **gifted artisans***, whom I have *filled with the spirit of wisdom*, that they may make Aaron's garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest. ⁴ And these *are* the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a skillfully woven tunic, a turban, and a sash.”

Or Exo 35:30-35:

“And Moses said to the children of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; ³¹ "and He has *filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship*, ³² "to design artistic works, to work in gold and silver and bronze, ³³ "in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of artistic workmanship. ³⁴ "And He has put in his heart the ability to teach, *in him and Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan.* ³⁵ "He has *filled them with skill to do all manner of work* of the engraver and the designer and the tapestry maker, in blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine linen, and of the weaver-- those who do every work and those who design artistic works.”

Have you ever seen those listed as gifts? Probably not. They are distinguished as skills, or talents – “ordinary” gifts. Is the gift of teaching *spiritual*, or *ordinary*? Notice that teaching is described as a gift in Exo 35.34. Is it spiritual because God “fills” us with it by His Spirit? Or is it spiritual only when it is used for spiritual ends? See? Interpretation is rarely cut and dried.

COMPARISONS

Whether we see the word “like” (which indicates a simile), or we have an image of something like a mother hen (which indicates a metaphor), it is a sign to help us better understand the thing that it signifies. This is ancillary to whether a verse is literal or figurative (Rule 8). In a simile, there are only some aspects that are the same, while others are not. In a metaphor, the more you explore the image, the more you learn about what it signifies. Parables are similes and not metaphors. So only some things are important – there is one main point to be drawn from it. Other things in the parable are “window dressing” to help drive the story.

Luke 19:22 He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man [*variously translated austere, tough, hard*], taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow?

Is Christ hard, harsh, and tough? Or is he rather tender-hearted and merciful? Is he harsh towards his enemies and loving towards his own? Is He always so? Is the master in this parable to be taken as the emblem of Christ in all respects, or only in some respects? You need to determine that before you can interpret the parable correctly. Is the emphasis the sin of the servant, or the personality of the master? Begin there. Many mistakes are made by treating parables like metaphors, where everything in it reflects some spiritual truth that we are to assign to God or to ourselves. It is likewise a mistake to treat a simile as comprehensive, rather than suggestive.

Other Principles

(from A.W. Pink - modernized)

Plain Sense – God’s commandment “is exceedingly broad” (Psa. 119.96). Human language becomes invested with a fuller and richer meaning when it is used by God, than when we use it. Spiritualizing Old Testament prophecies doesn’t invest them a meaning that wasn’t meant to be there; and it doesn’t depart from their plain sense without any reason. For example, the Hebrew word “almah” can mean either “virgin” or “maiden,” as in this prophecy:

Isa 7:14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the **virgin** shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

The prophet's wife was indeed a young woman, and she gave birth to a son by him (Isa 8.3) – it was not a “virgin birth” *per se*. But neither was that child named “Immanuel.” Instead the Lord commanded that this child be named Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. Nonetheless, in Mat 1.23 we have Isa 7.14 quoted as a prophecy of Mary’s virgin birth; and the text (vv. 20, 25) makes it clear that Mary had never been with a man. And so grammar is not the controlling rule in such cases; rather, it is the interpretation of Scripture, *by Scripture*: that’s **Rule 2**. What seems plain to us, grammatically, and even contextually, may not be so plain in God’s use of His Word.

Literalism – (**Rule 8**) Where the *literal* sense of a verse violates any of the commandments of the Law, its words must be regarded *figuratively*. This is because one part of the Word will never contradict another part. For example, the 7th commandment not only prohibits the physical act of adultery, but it also prohibits all mental impurity (Mat 5.28). So too, the 6th commandment not only forbids taking a life, but it also forbids any deliberate maiming of our body, or a neighbor’s body. Therefore, no man can, without sin, pluck out his eye or cut off his hand – even though Jesus says to pluck out an eye or cut off a hand that causes you to sin (Mat 5.29-30). The literal meaning *cannot* be taken literally, without violating a commandment of the Law.

Exceptions – An exception always affirms the *contrary* to what is denied in the rule, or else it denies what is affirmed in the rule. The commandment, "You shall not steal," affirms that property rights are to be respected, boundary markers are not to be moved, what is borrowed must be returned. If that were not true, it would deny property rights, the need for truth-telling, and the value of hard work. We would labor in vain (1Cor 15.58). "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." (Eph 4:28 ^{NKJ})

Inclusions –

FIRST, when God forbids one sin, He prohibits all sins of the same kind at the same time, with all its causes and any occasions for committing it. Therefore, adultery being forbidden, so are all opportunities that might undermine the sanctity of marriage, or give an appearance of impropriety.

SECOND, a curse is attached to the breach of any commandment, whether it is specifically expressed or not.

"If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit?" (Jam 2:15 ^{NKJ})

There is no curse here, only a lament. And yet Jesus said,

"Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting 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 take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me." (Mat 25:41-43 ^{NKJ})

THIRD, where any vice is condemned, the opposite virtue is required. And so, where murder is prohibited, protecting and aiding life is required of us.

Universal language – Universal affirmations and negations ("all" and "none") should not always be understood universally (**Rule 4**). They are limited by their occasions, circumstances, and the matter being addressed. The apostle said, "I have been *all* things to *all* men, so that I might by *any* means save *some*" (1Cor. 9.22). If his language was taken without any limitation, it would signify that he became a blasphemer to blasphemers, a murderer to murders, etc. His statement must be restricted to things that are inconsequential and innocent, things in which Paul yielded to the weakness of others. In the same way, when Christ said, "Do not swear at all," His obvious meaning (according to what follows) is not to swear blasphemously, needlessly, or by any mere created thing. It does not apply to oaths in a court of law, for example.

Prohibitions – When anything is prohibited in one passage, but allowed in another, obviously it is not that particular thing in itself that's at issue, but some particular mode, cause, end, or reason that is intended. So in Matthew 5.34, swearing is forbidden; but in other passages it is allowed, and examples are given. Therefore, it can't be swearing in itself that is prohibited; but evil and needless swearing is condemned in the one, and swearing in righteous causes or for just ends is approved in the other.

CONCLUSION

Books on biblical interpretation abound, and rules of interpretation continue to proliferate, and to conflict with each other. We provided ten basic rules at the beginning to keep it simple for you, and those should suffice for most of your needs. We hope the examples were helpful. We added some additional "principles" because they come up a lot. They're used more in applying Scripture, than interpreting it ("what should I desire, what should I stay away from"). But they actually fall under one or another of those ten rules, as we indicated for a couple of them.

As you continue to study God's Word, these rules will become increasingly useful and familiar. We pray they will help you be *fruitful*, as you take up your cross to follow our Lord Jesus Christ.

Biblical Styles of Literature

The Bible is a collection of books with a one central character: Jesus Christ. The "reason" for Christ, the preparation for his coming, the response to his arrival, the effect of his life, death, and resurrection, and the preparation for his return, are what make the Bible unique in literature. As we learn about Christ, we learn about God. The Bible tells who He is, and what He has done. The Bible describes how God has made a people for Himself, through Jesus Christ. The story is both simple and complex. Its theme is simple, and yet it is rich and exquisite in its unfolding.

God tells the tale *coherently* through 66 books, written by various authors, over a period of 1500 years. Each book has a character to it, a **style** to it, and a specific focus. Although Moses authored the first five books of the Bible, each of those books is distinctive. As we discovered, that must be taken into account when we interpret passages of the Bible. So must the grammar. But for our purposes, we'll leave the grammar and original languages to the grammarians and linguists. Our check against disagreements they may have, is to use multiple translations when we study the Bible. Where translations differ substantially, we'll use word studies and commentaries to help us understand the reasons for those differences, so that we exercise caution in our interpretation.

Here are the major styles to be aware of, with a brief description for each.

Historical

Most of the Bible is historical. Liberal commentators tend to favor an allegorical interpretation of a passage for which they lack "hard evidence" of its historical content. Conservative commentators will take a more literal approach – they'll accept it as historical (literal) until it's proven otherwise. Are Adam and Eve historical figures, or only representative? Is the description of creation more metaphorical than literal? The reformed tradition takes a conservative approach.

Complicating it, is the ambiguity of names, and the ambiguous reference to events. If we have a number of John Smith's, which one are we talking about? If we have a Bill Jones and a William Jones, are they the same person? Nicknames are found in a number of places, and a number of men have the same name. Take Jude or Judas for example, or references to secular kings, where archeology reveals more and more about the dates, events, and personalities of history. We may need recent commentaries, handbooks, dictionaries, and other resources, to inform our study. We don't use them in place of personal study; we use them to *supplement* our study.

Poetic Scripture

Poetic passages are idealistic. They tend to take things to an extreme in an attempt to give us a sense of an experience that may be physically impossible. They are suggestive, not explicit. They are intensely imaginative. Just when you think you have a grasp of what they describe, the image slips through your fingers like a vapor. They attempt to express a truth that is inexpressible. It is the only language available to us to describe the love, justice, grace, sovereignty, wisdom, and eternal nature of God. We can know something about these things, but we cannot know everything. We are finite. He is infinite.

The Proper Use of Parables

Then there are *parables*, which have their own set of rules. If we use the wrong set of rules to interpret a particular passage, or if we misperceive which style or category a passage belongs to, then the outcome can become nonsensical or even outlandish. Because prophecy differs from parable, parables should not be used as a means to interpret prophetic passages. Therefore, although the parables of the talents and the minas include the return of a master, they cannot help to determine the meaning of passages in Revelation, nor do they describe the physical return of Christ. They have a different purpose. Let me explain why this is true by showing you how these various styles and tools are used (types, figures of speech, symbols, and metaphors).

Types in Scripture

Many of the settings and figures in prophecy are *typical*. That means they foretell of something or someone coming in the future that will be similar to what is described, but not exactly. What is described is only a *type*, a kind of what is to come. Joseph was a type for the Christ who was to come. He was a type in the sense that he was the Provider for the tribes of Israel (his brothers). He saved them from certain destruction, just as Christ did. Yet Joseph was not completely Christ-like. He was not sinless, because he didn't need to be. He was not going to be a holy offering. Christ, by comparison, had to be sinless, or his sacrifice would be ineffectual. Joseph was a type and so he was only similar, not an exact representation. Following this train of thought, Christ is *not* just a type for the Father. He is an exact representation. From a literary point of view, his function is metaphorical, but that would fall far short of the truth. And so we describe him as the Incarnation of God. He is God made flesh.

Figurative Language

Very close to *typical* language is *figurative* language. It can be an embellishment in the style of poetry. So, for example, in Ps. 91:4 it says, "He shall cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will trust..." This is a figure of speech. God is not a large chicken. It is not metaphorical, because I don't gain any insights about God by studying a chicken, or an eagle. The only intent in this passage is to suggest the image of a mother hen protecting her chicks. But God is not the potential prey of a wolf as a mother hen might be. If it had gone on to say that the hen would sacrifice herself for her chicks, then it would turn into a metaphor: it would perhaps tell us something about the nature of Christ's sacrifice. But it doesn't. Figurative language tends to convey an emotion rather than a fact.

Symbol and Metaphor

A symbol is not a type. A *symbol* always follows in time what it represents, because it serves as a *reminder* of what already is. A *type* always precedes what it represents in time, because it is a *premonition* of what is yet to be. A symbol is meant to represent something in particular. That's also true of a metaphor or an allegory. What makes a metaphor useful, and what distinguishes it from a symbol, is that the closer you examine the metaphor, the more you understand what the metaphor represents. In other words, one thing not only stands for another (as a symbol does), it helps to *explain* the other. A cross is a symbol of Christ's sacrifice, but by examining the wood or the shape, we learn nothing more about his sacrifice. What we know about his sacrifice is external to the symbol itself; the symbol is just a shorthand for that knowledge.

Compare this to a butterfly, which could be a metaphor for the new life we have in Christ: it is a new creation with a new appearance. Its very nature reveals something about ourselves. An **allegory** would take the butterfly metaphor and expand on it. It might describe the journey from caterpillar to butterfly, or how a butterfly feeds. As we learn more about the life of a butterfly, we learn more about our life in Christ. We could say that a caterpillar can destroy the very plant it feeds upon, while a butterfly actually benefits the flower it feeds from by cross-pollinating it. What we learn about ourselves from this allegory is that, as non-Christians, much of our behavior was at the expense of others; it was destructive to those around us. But now that we are in Christ, we benefit those around us. We bring the message of life to them, and we may be blessed to reproduce in them the life we have in Christ.

Parables as Moral Tales

Now, returning to parables, a parable explains a moral or religious truth. That's all we're after when we interpret it. We are asking, "What is the *primary* truth here?" Thus, in a parable many things about the setting and characters help us to *understand* it, but not everything is needed to *interpret* it. Part of the fun is figuring out which things are essential, and which are only window dressing. The setting and characters in a parable don't necessarily represent someone or

someplace in particular. Even when they do, their description is seldom completely accurate. So in the parable of the minas (Lk. 19:12 ff), it would be incorrect to think that Christ is hated, or that he is a hard task master; but it would be correct to think that he has expectations of us.

Prophetic

Prophecy, however, is different. Its purpose is not the same as a metaphor or an allegory. It does not explain the nature of something by alluding to something akin to it. Instead, it lifts its audience out of their present circumstances and places them into the stream of eternity. It gives them an eternal perspective on their present circumstances. *Prophecy uses setting and characters to prepare and encourage the target audience for what is to come.* This is an essential rule of prophetic interpretation.

Prophecy is a style or category of literature with a particular purpose. It differs from historical and poetic literature, and it has distinct rules of interpretation. These rules follow what might be called the *Levitical* or *priestly* tradition. What this means is that prophetic literature contains words and phrases that have a specific and recognized meaning. A prophetic year, for example, is 360 days. The prophetic calendar is based on lunar movement rather than solar. Numbers are sometimes symbolic; they could be used in a non-mathematical sense. The number 1000, when used prophetically, indicates infinity, or a really long time. That means overall, it's *not* literal.

Apocalyptic

The word "apocalypse" means a cosmic cataclysm in which God destroys the ruling powers of evil. This type of literature is a special form of prophecy, focused on the end of time. Although future events may be involved in a specific prophecy, or in an apocalyptic passage, its main purpose is *not* to predict the future. It is to prepare God's people for what lies ahead.

CONCLUSION

Here's where it gets complicated: prophetic books may contain historical and poetic passages; historical and poetic books may contain prophetic ones. Along the way, we may encounter symbols, figures, types, metaphors, and allegories. Parts of John's *Apocalypse*, for example, are historic; others are poetic, figurative, and predictive. So are parts of Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah. So we want to be careful as we determine what type of literature applies to a ***passage***, and not think it applies to the ***book*** as a whole.

The Canon of Scripture

What do we mean by "canon"? How do we know which books are God's Word, and which books are not? The Canon is the group of books that the Church recognizes as genuine, and as inspired by God. The question still remains, "How do we know that?"

The Canon of Old Testament Scripture was first formalized by Council in the late 4th century; it included several Apocryphal works. The addition of these works was likely caused by the Council's reliance on the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) rather than the Hebrew. The Hebrew Bible used by the Jews was well-established in the first century and it was limited to the 39 books we now have. The 5th c. Jerome Bible included many of the Apocrypha and Talmudic writings, but Jerome himself was opposed to their inclusion. No writings outside the 39 books of the Hebrew Bible were ever referred to by the phrase, 'as the Scripture says.'

As for the New Testament, Paul's epistles circulated as a unit from as early as AD 80. While we find evidence from the late second century of the other New Testament books, including the Four Gospels, we also find Christian writers citing other works, such as Clement's letters and those of Hermas. We do the same today in quoting from Spurgeon and Whitefield.

The criteria used to establish which books would be used to instruct the church were really very much the same as those used during the Reformation:

1) *Self-authentication*: They are unique on their face, having a profound effect on the people who read them. Justin Martyr, Tatian, Theophilus, Hilary, Victorinus, and Augustine are some of those early Christians who were drawn by hearing or reading God's Word itself.

2) *Early use in worship*: The Books or letters were used in worship in Apostolic Times. Paul told the churches to use his letters to instruct (Col 4:16). Justin Martyr described early church services and how they made use of Apostolic writings.

3) *Apostolic Ties*: The fundamental test of authenticity was a text's connection with an Apostle. Was the text written by an Apostle or by someone with very close ties to an Apostle? Early worshippers recognized that the Apostles had a unique relationship with the Lord. Clement of Rome wrote, "Christ is from God and the Apostles from Christ... The Church is built on them as a foundation" (1 Clement 42).¹

Eusebius, famed Christian historian and Bishop of Caesarea from 314 until his death, tells us that when Mark and Luke had published their gospels, John finally took to writing his own. He had relied entirely on the spoken word prior to that time. The three gospels already written were in general circulation and copies had come into John's hands. He welcomed them and confirmed their accuracy, but remarked that the narrative only lacked the story of what Christ had done first of all at the beginning of his mission.² Eusebius also attests to the veracity of John's 1st Epistle as being that of the Apostle John, and he accepts 1st Peter as also valid. These he calls 'Recognized' works. There is a class of disputed but familiar works which includes James, Jude, 2nd Peter, and 2nd and 3rd John. Among the 'spurious' books he places Acts, the Shepherd, Revelation of Peter, Epistle of Barnabas, Teachings of the Apostles, and the Revelation of John, although he says many include Revelation in the Recognized books, as well as Hebrews.³ All other writings are tossed out as written by heretics. Recognizing his own deficiencies, however, Eusebius defers to future

¹ Shelley, Bruce *Church History in Plain Language* (Word, Inc., Waco, 1982), p. 77.

² Eusebius *The History of the Church* (Penguin, N.Y., 1981), p. 132. note: This source includes quotations from other original sources such as Tertullian and Josephus.

³ Eusebius, p. 134.

historians who may stumble across earlier writers than he was able to find and so lay to rest the doubts he expresses.

What caused the church to specifically enumerate the writings which were to be regarded as true Scripture was a series of heretical attacks on church teachings and authority in the late 2nd century, especially by Marcion. This son of a Bishop was anti-Semitic and a preacher of strict asceticism. To cut away any hint of Jewish roots in the Gospel, Marcion taught that the harsh God of the Old Testament was different than the God of Love in the New Testament. He produced his own Bible in which no Old Testament writings were included, and those of the New Testament were “re-interpreted” for clarity’s sake. The church’s response in selecting the NT Canon is surprising because the books chosen were from very early times the same 27 books that we now hold.⁴ They were first listed in an Easter letter written by Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria in 367. This list became accepted definitively as Scripture in the East that year. And then in the West, at Councils held in Hippo in 393 and Carthage in 397, the same list was published and accepted.⁵

Is this then conclusive? Not absolutely, but neither should the choices be casually disregarded. “By no means do all men seek God, and the certainty of the divine origin of Scripture is given only to those who do. This situation guarantees that debate about Scripture will go on.”⁶ We can see, however, that the question of divine origin leads to an assumption that anyone who claims to take God seriously but the Bible lightly is engaged in a deception.⁷ The preaching of the Gospel cannot be long effective if God’s Law, revealed in Scripture, is in any way toyed with or made secondary to human ends.

⁴ Jackson, Jeremy C. *No Other Foundation* (Cornerstone, Westchester, Ill., 1981), p. 61.

⁵ Shelley, p. 83.

⁶ Jackson, p. 59.

⁷ Ibid.

Appendix 1

Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy with Exposition

Background

The "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" was produced at an international Summit Conference of evangelical leaders, held at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Chicago in the fall of 1978. This congress was sponsored by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. The Chicago Statement was signed by nearly 300 noted evangelical scholars, including James Boice, Norman L. Geisler, John Gerstner, Carl F. H. Henry, Kenneth Kantzer, Harold Lindell, John Warwick Montgomery, Roger Nicole, J. I. Packer, Robert Preus, Earl Radmacher, Francis Schaeffer, R. C. Sproul, and John Wenham.

The ICBI disbanded in 1988 after producing three major statements: one on biblical inerrancy in 1978, one on biblical hermeneutics in 1982, and one on biblical application in 1986. The following text, containing the "Preface" by the ICBI draft committee, plus the "Short Statement," "Articles of Affirmation and Denial," and an accompanying "Exposition," was published in toto by Carl F. H. Henry in *God, Revelation And Authority*, vol. 4 (Waco, Tx.: Word Books, 1979), on pp. 211-219. The nineteen Articles of Affirmation and Denial, with a brief introduction, also appear in *A General Introduction to the Bible*, by Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix (Chicago: Moody Press, rev. 1986), at pp. 181-185. An official commentary on these articles was written by R. C. Sproul in *Explaining Inerrancy: A Commentary* (Oakland, Calif.: ICBI, 1980), and Norman Geisler edited the major addresses from the 1978 conference, in *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

Clarification of some of the language used in this Statement may be found in the 1982 Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics.

Preface

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstandings of this doctrine in the world at large.

This Statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, Articles of Affirmation and Denial, and an accompanying Exposition. It has been prepared in the course of a three-day consultation in Chicago. Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to affirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that this Statement be given creedal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may

be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life, and mission.

We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we purpose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

We invite response to this statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.

-- The Draft Committee

A Short Statement

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
 2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms: obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
 3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
 4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
 5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.
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Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article I.

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

WE DENY that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

Article II.

WE AFFIRM that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

WE DENY that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

Article III.

WE AFFIRM that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

WE DENY that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

Article IV.

WE AFFIRM that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.

WE DENY that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

Article V.

WE AFFIRM that God's revelation within the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

WE DENY that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article VI.

WE AFFIRM that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

WE DENY that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article VII.

WE AFFIRM that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

WE DENY that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

Article VIII.

WE AFFIRM that God in His work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

WE DENY that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

Article IX.

WE AFFIRM that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

WE DENY that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article X.

WE AFFIRM that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

WE DENY that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article XI.

WE AFFIRM that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

WE DENY that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XII.

WE AFFIRM that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

WE DENY that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article XIII.

WE AFFIRM the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

WE DENY that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the

topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article XIV.

WE AFFIRM the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

WE DENY that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article XV.

WE AFFIRM that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

WE DENY that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article XVI.

WE AFFIRM that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

WE DENY that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article XVII.

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

WE DENY that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article XVIII.

WE AFFIRM that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

WE DENY the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article XIX.

WE AFFIRM that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

WE DENY that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the Church.

Exposition

Our understanding of the doctrine of inerrancy must be set in the context of the broader teachings of the Scripture concerning itself. This exposition gives an account of the outline of doctrine from which our summary statement and articles are drawn.

Creation, Revelation and Inspiration

The Triune God, who formed all things by his creative utterances and governs all things by His Word of decree, made mankind in His own image for a life of communion with Himself, on the model of the eternal fellowship of loving communication within the Godhead. As God's image-bearer, man was to hear God's Word addressed to him and to respond in the joy of adoring obedience. Over and above God's self-disclosure in the created order and the sequence of events within it, human beings from Adam on have received verbal messages from Him, either directly, as stated in Scripture, or indirectly in the form of part or all of Scripture itself.

When Adam fell, the Creator did not abandon mankind to final judgment but promised salvation and began to reveal Himself as Redeemer in a sequence of historical events centering on Abraham's family and culminating in the life, death, resurrection, present heavenly ministry, and promised return of Jesus Christ. Within this frame God has from time to time spoken specific words of judgment and mercy, promise and command, to sinful human beings so drawing them into a covenant relation of mutual commitment between Him and them in which He blesses them with gifts of grace and they bless Him in responsive adoration. Moses, whom God used as mediator to carry His words to His people at the time of the Exodus, stands at the head of a long line of prophets in whose mouths and writings God put His words for delivery to Israel. God's purpose in this succession of messages was to maintain His covenant by causing His people to know His Name--that is, His nature--and His will both of precept and purpose in the present and for the future. This line of prophetic spokesmen from God came to completion in Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Word, who was Himself a prophet--more than a prophet, but not less--and in the apostles and prophets of the first Christian generation. When God's final and climactic message, His word to the world concerning Jesus Christ, had been spoken and elucidated by those in the apostolic circle, the sequence of revealed messages ceased. Henceforth the Church was to live and know God by what He had already said, and said for all time.

At Sinai God wrote the terms of His covenant on tables of stone, as His enduring witness and for lasting accessibility, and throughout the period of prophetic and apostolic revelation He prompted men to write the messages given to and through them, along with celebratory records of His dealings with His people, plus moral reflections on covenant life and forms of praise and prayer for covenant mercy. The theological reality of inspiration in the producing of Biblical documents corresponds to that of spoken prophecies: although the human writers' personalities were expressed in what they wrote, the words were divinely constituted. Thus, what Scripture says, God says; its authority is His authority, for He is its ultimate Author, having given it through the minds and words of chosen and prepared men who in freedom and faithfulness "spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (1 Pet. 1:21). Holy Scripture must be acknowledged as the Word of God by virtue of its divine origin.

Authority: Christ and the Bible

Jesus Christ, the Son of God who is the Word made flesh, our Prophet, Priest, and King, is the ultimate Mediator of God's communication to man, as He is of all God's gifts of grace. The revelation He gave was more than verbal; He revealed the Father by His presence and His deeds as well. Yet His words were crucially important; for He was God, He spoke from the Father, and His words will judge all men at the last day.

As the prophesied Messiah, Jesus Christ is the central theme of Scripture. The Old Testament looked ahead to Him; the New Testament looks back to His first coming and on to His second. Canonical Scripture is the divinely inspired and therefore normative witness to Christ. No hermeneutic, therefore, of which the historical Christ is not the focal point is acceptable. Holy Scripture must be treated as what it essentially is--the witness of the Father to the Incarnate Son.

It appears that the Old Testament canon had been fixed by the time of Jesus. The New Testament canon is likewise now closed inasmuch as no new apostolic witness to the historical Christ can now be borne. No new revelation (as distinct from Spirit-given understanding of existing revelation) will be given until Christ comes again. The canon was created in principle by divine inspiration. The Church's part was to discern the canon which God had created, not to devise one of its own.

The word *canon*, signifying a rule or standard, is a pointer to authority, which means the right to rule and control. Authority in Christianity belongs to God in His revelation, which means, on the one hand, Jesus Christ, the living Word, and, on the other hand, Holy Scripture, the written Word. But the authority of Christ and that of Scripture are one. As our Prophet, Christ testified that Scripture cannot be broken. As our Priest and King, He devoted His earthly life to fulfilling the law and the prophets, even dying in obedience to the words of Messianic prophecy. Thus, as He saw Scripture attesting Him and His authority, so by His own submission to Scripture He attested its authority. As He bowed to His Father's instruction given in His Bible (our Old Testament), so He requires His disciples to do--not, however, in isolation but in conjunction with the apostolic witness to Himself which He undertook to inspire by His gift of the Holy Spirit. So Christians show themselves faithful servants of their Lord by bowing to the divine instruction given in the prophetic and apostolic writings which together make up our Bible.

By authenticating each other's authority, Christ and Scripture coalesce into a single fount of authority. The Biblically-interpreted Christ and the Christ-centered, Christ-proclaiming Bible are from this standpoint one. As from the fact of inspiration we infer that what Scripture says, God says, so from the revealed relation between Jesus Christ and Scripture we may equally declare that what Scripture says, Christ says.

Infallibility, Inerrancy, Interpretation

Holy Scripture, as the inspired Word of God witnessing authoritatively to Jesus Christ, may properly be called *infallible* and *inerrant*. These negative terms have a special value, for they explicitly safeguard crucial positive truths.

Infallible signifies the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters.

Similarly, *inerrant* signifies the quality of being free from all falsehood or mistake and so safeguards the truth that Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions.

We affirm that canonical Scripture should always be interpreted on the basis that it is infallible and inerrant. However, in determining what the God-taught writer is asserting in each passage, we must pay the most careful attention to its claims and character as a human production. In inspiration, God utilized the culture and conventions of His penman's milieu, a milieu that God controls in His sovereign providence; it is misinterpretation to imagine otherwise.

So history must be treated as history, poetry as poetry, hyperbole and metaphor as hyperbole and metaphor, generalization and approximation as what they are, and so forth. Differences between literary conventions in Bible times and in ours must also be observed: since, for instance, non-chronological narration and imprecise citation were conventional and acceptable and violated no expectations in those days, we must not regard these things as faults when we find them in Bible writers. When total precision of a particular kind was not expected nor aimed at, it is no error not to have achieved it. Scripture is inerrant, not in the sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of making good its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors aimed.

The truthfulness of Scripture is not negated by the appearance in it of irregularities of grammar or spelling, phenomenal descriptions of nature, reports of false statements (*e.g.*, the lies of Satan), or seeming discrepancies between one passage and another. It is not right to set the so-called "phenomena" of Scripture against the teaching of Scripture about itself. Apparent inconsistencies should not be ignored. Solution of them, where this can be convincingly achieved, will encourage our faith, and where for the present no convincing solution is at hand we shall significantly honor God by trusting His assurance that His Word is true, despite these appearances, and by maintaining our confidence that one day they will be seen to have been illusions.

Inasmuch as all Scripture is the product of a single divine mind, interpretation must stay within the bounds of the analogy of Scripture and eschew hypotheses that would correct one Biblical passage by another, whether in the name of progressive revelation or of the imperfect enlightenment of the inspired writer's mind.

Although Holy Scripture is nowhere culture-bound in the sense that its teaching lacks universal validity, it is sometimes culturally conditioned by the customs and conventional views of a particular period, so that the application of its principles today calls for a different sort of action.

Skepticism and Criticism

Since the Renaissance, and more particularly since the Enlightenment, world-views have been developed which involve skepticism about basic Christian tenets. Such are the agnosticism which denies that God is knowable, the rationalism which denies that He is incomprehensible, the idealism which denies that He is transcendent, and the existentialism which denies rationality in His relationships with us. When these un- and anti-biblical principles seep into men's theologies at [a] presuppositional level, as today they frequently do, faithful interpretation of Holy Scripture becomes impossible.

Transmission and Translation

Since God has nowhere promised an inerrant transmission of Scripture, it is necessary to affirm that only the autographic text of the original documents was inspired and to maintain the need of textual criticism as a means of detecting any slips that may have crept into the text in the course of its transmission. The verdict of this science, however, is that the Hebrew and Greek text appear to be amazingly well preserved, so that we are amply justified in affirming, with the Westminster Confession, a singular providence of God in this matter and in declaring that the authority of Scripture is in no way jeopardized by the fact that the copies we possess are not entirely error-free.

Similarly, no translation is or can be perfect, and all translations are an additional step away from the *autographa*. Yet the verdict of linguistic science is that English-speaking Christians, at least, are exceedingly well served in these days with a host of excellent translations and have no cause for hesitating to conclude that the true Word of God is within their reach. Indeed, in view of the frequent repetition in Scripture of the main matters with which it deals and also of the Holy Spirit's constant witness to and through the Word, no serious translation of Holy Scripture will so destroy its meaning as to render it unable to make its reader "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

Inerrancy and Authority

In our affirmation of the authority of Scripture as involving its total truth, we are consciously standing with Christ and His apostles, indeed with the whole Bible and with the main stream of Church history from the first days until very recently. We are concerned at the casual, inadvertent, and seemingly thoughtless way in which a belief of such far-reaching importance has been given up by so many in our day.

We are conscious too that great and grave confusion results from ceasing to maintain the total truth of the Bible whose authority one professes to acknowledge. The result of taking this step is that the Bible which God gave loses its authority, and what has authority instead is a Bible reduced in content according to the demands of one's critical reasonings and in principle reducible still further once one has started. This means that at bottom independent reason now has authority, as opposed to Scriptural teaching. If this is not seen and if for the time being basic evangelical doctrines are still held, persons denying the full truth of Scripture may claim an evangelical identity while methodologically they have moved away from the evangelical principle of knowledge to an unstable subjectivism, and will find it hard not to move further.

We affirm that what Scripture says, God says. May He be glorified. Amen and Amen.

Appendix 2

Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics

With commentary by Norman L. Geisler ⁸

Preface

Summit I of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy took place in Chicago on October 26-28, 1978 for the purpose of affirming afresh the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, making clear the understanding of it and warning against its denial. In the years that have passed since Summit I, God has blessed that effort in ways surpassing most anticipations. A gratifying flow of helpful literature on the doctrine of inerrancy as well as a growing commitment to its value give cause to pour forth praise to our great God.

The work of Summit I had hardly been completed when it became evident that there was yet another major task to be tackled. While we recognize that belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is basic to maintaining its authority, the values of that commitment are only as real as one's understanding of the meaning of Scripture. Thus, the need for Summit II. For two years plans were laid and papers were written on themes relating to hermeneutical principles and practices. The culmination of this effort has been a meeting in Chicago on November 10-13, 1982 at which we, the undersigned, have participated.

In similar fashion to the Chicago Statement of 1978, we herewith present these affirmations and denials as an expression of the results of our labors to clarify hermeneutical issues and principles. We do not claim completeness or systematic treatment of the entire subject, but these affirmations and denials represent a consensus of the approximately one hundred participants and observers gathered at this conference. It has been a broadening experience to engage in dialogue, and it is our prayer that God will use the product of our diligent efforts to enable us and others to more correctly handle the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

Article I

WE AFFIRM that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself, and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.

WE DENY the legitimacy of separating the authority of Christ from the authority of Scripture, or of opposing the one to the other.

This first article affirms that the authority of Scripture cannot be separated from the authority of God. Whatever the Bible affirms, God affirms. And what the Bible affirms (or denies), it affirms (or denies) with the very authority of God. Such authority is normative for all believers; it is the canon or rule of God.

This divine authority of Old Testament Scripture was confirmed by Christ Himself on numerous occasions (cf. Matt. 5:17-18; Luke 24:44; John 10:34-35). And what our Lord confirmed as to the divine authority of the Old Testament, He promised also for the New Testament (John 14:16; 16:13).

The Denial points out that one cannot reject the divine authority of Scripture without thereby impugning the authority of Christ, who attested Scripture's divine authority. Thus it is wrong to

⁸ Norman L. Geisler, *Explaining Hermeneutics: A Commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics*. Oakland, California: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1983.

claim one can accept the full authority of Christ without acknowledging the complete authority of Scripture.

Article II

WE AFFIRM that as Christ is God and Man in One Person, so Scripture is, indivisibly, God's Word in human language.

WE DENY that the humble, human form of Scripture entails errancy any more than the humanity of Christ, even in His humiliation, entails sin.

Here an analogy is drawn between Christ and Scripture. Both Christ and Scripture have dual aspects of divinity and humanity, indivisibly united in one expression. Both Christ and Scripture were conceived by an act of the Holy Spirit. Both involve the use of fallible human agents. But both produced a theanthropic result; one a sinless person and the other an errorless book. However, like all analogies, there is a difference. Christ is one person uniting two natures whereas Scripture is one written expression uniting two authors (God and man). This difference notwithstanding, the strength of the likeness in the analogy points to the inseparable unity between divine and human dimensions of Scripture so that one aspect cannot be in error while the other is not.

The Denial is directed at a contemporary tendency to separate the human aspects of Scripture from the divine and allow for error in the former. By contrast the framers of this article believe that the human form of Scripture can no more be found in error than Christ could be found in sin. That is to say, the Word of God (i.e., the Bible) is as necessarily perfect in its human manifestation as was the Son of God in His human form.

Article III

WE AFFIRM that the Person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the entire Bible.

WE DENY that any method of interpretation which rejects or obscures the Christ-centeredness of Scripture is correct.

This Affirmation follows the teaching of Christ that He is the central theme of Scripture (Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Heb. 10:7). This is to say that focus on the person and work of Christ runs throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. To be sure there are other and tangential topics, but the person and work of Jesus Christ are central.

In view of the focus of Scripture on Christ, the Denial stresses a hermeneutical obligation to make this Christocentric message clear in the expounding of Scripture. As other articles (cf. Article XV) emphasize the "literal" interpretation of Scripture, this article is no license for allegorization and unwarranted typology which see Christ portrayed in every detail of Old Testament proclamation. The article simply points to the centrality of Christ's mission in the unfolding of God's revelation to man.

Neither is there any thought in this article of making the role of Christ more ultimate than that of the Father. What is in view here is the focus of Scripture and not the ultimate source or object of the whole plan of redemption.

Article IV

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture acts through it today to work faith in its message.

WE DENY that the Holy Spirit ever teaches to any one anything which is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

Here stress is laid on the fact that the Holy Spirit not only is the source of Scripture, but also works to produce faith in Scripture He has inspired. Without this ministry of the Holy Spirit, belief in the truth of Scripture would not occur.

The Denial is directed at those alleged "revelations" which some claim to have but which are contrary to Scripture. No matter how sincere or genuinely felt, no dream, vision, or supposed revelation which contradicts Scripture ever comes from the Holy Spirit. For the utterances of the Holy Spirit are all harmonious and noncontradictory (see Article XX).

Article V

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit enables believers to appropriate and apply Scripture to their lives.

WE DENY that the natural man is able to discern spiritually the biblical message apart from the Holy Spirit.

The design of this article is to indicate that the ministry of the Holy Spirit extends beyond the inspiration of Scripture to its very application to the lives of the believer. Just as no one calls Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:3), so no one can appropriate the message of Scripture to his life apart from the gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

The Denial stresses the truth that the natural man does not receive the spiritual message of Scripture. Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit there is no welcome for its truth in an unregenerate heart.

This does not imply that a non-Christian is unable to understand the meaning of any Scripture. It means that whatever he may perceive of the message of Scripture, that without the Holy Spirit's work he will not welcome the message in his heart.

Article VI

WE AFFIRM that the Bible expresses God's truth in propositional statements, and we declare that biblical truth is both objective and absolute. We further affirm that a statement is true if it represents matters as they actually are, but is an error if it misrepresents the facts.

WE DENY that, while Scripture is able to make us wise unto salvation, biblical truth should be defined in terms of this function. We further deny that error should be defined as that which willfully deceives.

Since hermeneutics is concerned with understanding the truth of Scripture, attention is directed here to the nature of truth. Several significant affirmations are made about the nature of truth.

First, in contrast to contemporary relativism it is declared that truth is absolute. Second, as opposed to subjectivism it is acknowledged that truth is objective. Finally, in opposition to existential and pragmatic views of truth, this article affirms that truth is what corresponds to reality. This same point was made in the "Chicago Statement on Inerrancy" (1978) in Article XIII and the commentary on it.

The Denial makes it evident that views which redefine an error to mean what "misleads," rather than what is a mistake, must be rejected. This redefinition of the word "error" is both contrary to

Scripture and to common sense. In Scripture the word error is used of unintentional acts (Lev. 4:2) as well as intentional ones. Also, in common parlance a statement is in error if it is a factual mistake, even if there was no intention to mislead anyone by it. So to suggest that the Bible contains mistakes, but that these are not errors so long as they do not mislead, is contrary to both Scripture and ordinary usage.

By this subtle redefinition of error to mean only what misleads but not what misrepresents, some have tried to maintain that the Bible is wholly true (in that it never misleads) and yet that it may have some mistakes in it. This position is emphatically rejected by the confessors of this document.

Article VII

WE AFFIRM that the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, definite and fixed.

WE DENY that the recognition of this single meaning eliminates the variety of its application.

The Affirmation here is directed at those who claim a "double" or "deeper" meaning to Scripture than that expressed by the authors. It stresses the unity and fixity of meaning as opposed to those who find multiple and pliable meanings. What a passage means is fixed by the author and is not subject to change by readers. This does not imply that further revelation on the subject cannot help one come to a fuller understanding, but simply that the meaning given in a text is not changed because additional truth is revealed subsequently.

Meaning is also definite in that there are defined limits by virtue of the author's expressed meaning in the given linguistic form and cultural context. Meaning is determined by an author; it is discovered by the readers.

The Denial adds the clarification that simply because Scripture has one meaning does not imply that its messages cannot be applied to a variety of individuals or situations. While the interpretation is one, the applications can be many.

Article VIII

WE AFFIRM that the Bible contains teachings and mandates which apply to all cultural and situational contexts and other mandates which the Bible itself shows apply only to particular situations.

WE DENY that the distinctions between the universal and particular mandates of Scripture can be determined by cultural and situational factors. We further deny that universal mandates may ever be treated as culturally or situationally relative.

In view of the tendency of many to relativize the message of the Bible by accommodating it to changing cultural situations, this Affirmation proclaims the universality of biblical teachings. There are commands which transcend all cultural barriers and are binding on all men everywhere. To be sure, some biblical injunctions are directed to specific situations, but even these are normative to the particular situation(s) to which they speak. However, there are commands in Scripture which speak universally to the human situation and are not bound to particular cultures or situations.

The Denial addresses the basis of the distinction between universal and particular situations. It denies that the grounds of this distinction are relative or purely cultural. It further denies the legitimacy of relativizing biblical absolutes by reducing them to purely cultural mandates.

The meaning of this article is that whatever the biblical text means is binding. And what is meant to be universally binding should not be relegated to particular situations any more than what is meant to apply only to particular circumstances should be promulgated as universally applicable.

There is an attempt here to strike a balance between command and culture by recognizing that a command transcends culture, even though it speaks to and is expressed in a particular culture. Thus while the situation (or circumstances) may help us to discover the right course of action, the situation never determines what is right. God's laws are not situationally determined.

Article IX

WE AFFIRM that the term hermeneutics, which historically signified the rules of exegesis, may properly be extended to cover all that is involved in the process of perceiving what the biblical revelation means and how it bears on our lives.

WE DENY that the message of Scripture derives from, or is dictated by, the interpreter's understanding. Thus we deny that the "horizons" of the biblical writer and the interpreter may rightly "fuse" in such a way that what the text communicates to the interpreter is not ultimately controlled by the expressed meaning of the Scripture.

The primary thrust of this Affirmation is definitional. It desires to clarify the meaning of the term hermeneutics by indicating that it includes not only perception of the declared meaning of a text but also an understanding of the implications that text has for one's life. Thus, hermeneutics is more than biblical exegesis. It is not only the science that leads forth the meaning of a passage but also that which enables one (by the Holy Spirit) to understand the spiritual implications the truth(s) of this passage has for Christian living.

The Denial notes that the meaning of a passage is not derived from or dictated by the interpreter. Rather, meaning comes from the author who wrote it. Thus the reader's understanding has no hermeneutically definitive role. Readers must listen to the meaning of a text and not attempt to legislate it. Of course, the meaning listened to should be applied to the reader's life. But the need or desire for specific application should not color the interpretation of a passage.

Article X

WE AFFIRM that Scripture communicates God's truth to us verbally through a wide variety of literary forms.

WE DENY that any of the limits of human language render Scripture inadequate to convey God's message.

This Affirmation is a logical literary extension of Article II which acknowledges the humanity of Scripture. The Bible is God's Word, but it is written in human words; thus, revelation is "verbal." Revelation is "propositional" (Article VI) because it expresses certain propositional truth. Some prefer to call it "sentential" because the truth is expressed in sentences. Whatever the term--verbal, propositional, or sentential--the Bible is a human book which uses normal literary forms. These include parables, satire, irony, hyperbole, metaphor, simile, poetry, and even allegory (e.g., Ezek. 16-17).

As an expression in finite, human language, the Bible has certain limitations in a similar way that Christ as a man had certain limitations. This means that God adapted Himself through human language so that His eternal truth could be understood by man in a temporal world.

Despite the obvious fact of the limitations of any finite linguistic expression, the Denial is quick to point out that these limits do not render Scripture an inadequate means of communicating God's truth. For while there is a divine adaptation (via language) to human finitude there is no accommodation to human error. Error is not essential to human nature. Christ was human and yet He did not err. Adam was human before he erred. So simply because the Bible is written in human language does not mean it must err. In fact, when God uses human language there is a supernatural guarantee that it will not be in error.

Article XI

WE AFFIRM that translations of the text of Scripture can communicate knowledge of God across all temporal and cultural boundaries.

WE DENY that the meaning of biblical texts is so tied to the culture out of which they came that understanding of the same meaning in other cultures is impossible.

Simply because the truth of Scripture was conveyed by God in the original writings does not mean that it cannot be translated into another language. This article affirms the translatability of God's truth into other cultures. It affirms that since truth is transcendent (see Article XX) it is not culture-bound. Hence the truth of God expressed in a first-century culture is not limited to that culture. For the nature of truth is not limited to any particular medium through which it is expressed.

The Denial notes that since meaning is not inextricably tied to a given culture it can be adequately expressed in another culture. Thus the message of Scripture need not be relativized by translation. What is expressed can be the same even though how it is expressed differs.

Article XII

WE AFFIRM that in the task of translating the Bible and teaching it in the context of each culture, only those functional equivalents which are faithful to the content of biblical teaching should be employed.

WE DENY the legitimacy of methods which either are insensitive to the demands of cross-cultural communication or distort biblical meaning in the process.

Whereas the previous article treated the matter of the translatability of divine truth, this article speaks to the adequacy of translations. Obviously not every expression in another language will appropriately convey the meaning of Scripture. In view of this, caution is urged that the translators remain faithful to the truth of the Scripture being translated by the proper choice of the words used to translate it.

This article treats the matter of "functional" equivalence. Often there is no actual or literal equivalence between expressions in one language and a word-for-word translation into another language. What is expressed (meaning) is the same but how it is expressed (the words) is different. Hence a different construction can be used to convey the same meaning.

The Denial urges sensitivity to cultural matters so that the same truth may be conveyed, even though different terms are being used. Without this awareness missionary activity can be severely hampered.

Article XIII

WE AFFIRM that awareness of the literary categories, formal and stylistic, of the various parts of Scripture is essential for proper exegesis, and hence we value genre criticism as one of the many disciplines of biblical study.

WE DENY that generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual.

The awareness of what kind of literature one is interpreting is essential to a correct understanding of the text. A correct genre judgment should be made to ensure correct understanding. A parable, for example, should not be treated like a chronicle, nor should poetry be interpreted as though it were a straightforward narrative. Each passage has its own genre, and the interpreter should be cognizant of the specific kind of literature it is as he attempts to interpret it. Without genre recognition an interpreter can be misled in his understanding of the passage. For example, when the prophet speaks of "trees clapping their hands" (Isa. 55:12) one could assume a kind of animism unless he recognized that this is poetry and not prose.

The Denial is directed at an illegitimate use of genre criticism by some who deny the truth of passages which are presented as factual. Some, for instance, take Adam to be a myth, whereas in Scripture he is presented as a real person. Others take Jonah to be an allegory when he is presented as a historical person and so referred to by Christ (Mat. 12:40-42). This Denial is an appropriate and timely warning not to use genre criticism as a cloak for rejecting the truth of Scripture.

Article XIV

WE AFFIRM that the biblical record of events, discourses and sayings, though presented in a variety of appropriate literary forms, corresponds to historical fact.

WE DENY that any event, discourse or saying reported in Scripture was invented by the biblical writers or by the traditions they incorporated.

This article combines the emphases of Articles VI and XIII. While acknowledging the legitimacy of literary forms, this article insists that any record of events presented in Scripture must correspond to historical fact. That is, no reported event, discourse, or saying should be considered imaginary.

The Denial is even more clear than the Affirmation. It stresses that any discourse, saying, or event reported in Scripture must actually have occurred. This means that any hermeneutic or form of biblical criticism which claims that something was invented by the author must be rejected. This does not mean that a parable must be understood to represent historical facts, since a parable does not (by its very genre) purport to report an event or saying but simply to illustrate a point.

Article XV

WE AFFIRM the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text.

WE DENY the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support.

The literal sense of Scripture is strongly affirmed here. To be sure the English word literal carries some problematic connotations with it. Hence the words normal and grammatical-historical are used to explain what is meant. The literal sense is also designated by the more descriptive title grammatical-historical sense. This means the correct interpretation is the one which discovers the meaning of the text in its grammatical forms and in the historical, cultural context in which the text is expressed.

The Denial warns against attributing to Scripture any meaning not based in a literal understanding, such as mythological or allegorical interpretations. This should not be understood as eliminating typology or designated allegory or other literary forms which include figures of speech (see Articles X, XIII, and XIV).

Article XVI

WE AFFIRM that legitimate critical techniques should be used in determining the canonical text and its meaning.

WE DENY the legitimacy of allowing any method of biblical criticism to question the truth or integrity of the writer's expressed meaning, or of any other scriptural teaching.

Implied here is an approval of legitimate techniques of "lower criticism" or "textual criticism." It is proper to use critical techniques in order to discover the true text of Scripture, that is, the one which represents the original one given by the biblical authors.

Whereas critical methodology can be used to establish which of the texts are copies of the inspired original, it is illegitimate to use critical methods to call into question whether something in the original text is true. In other words, proper "lower criticism" is valid but negative "higher criticism" which rejects truths of Scripture is invalid.

Article XVII

WE AFFIRM the unity, harmony and consistency of Scripture and declare that it is its own best interpreter.

WE DENY that Scripture may be interpreted in such a way as to suggest that one passage corrects or militates against another. We deny that later writers of Scripture misinterpreted earlier passages of Scripture when quoting from or referring to them.

Two points are made in the Affirmation, the unity of Scripture and its self-interpreting ability. Since the former is treated elsewhere (Article XXI), we will comment on the latter here. Not only is the Bible always correct in interpreting itself (see Article XVIII), but it is the "best interpreter" of itself.

Another point made here is that comparing Scripture with Scripture is an excellent help to an interpreter. For one passage sheds light on another. Hence the first commentary the interpreter should consult on a passage is what the rest of Scripture may say on that text.

The Denial warns against the assumption that an understanding of one passage can lead the interpreter to reject the teaching of another passage. One passage may help him better comprehend another but it will never contradict another.

This last part of the Denial is particularly directed to those who believe the New Testament writers misinterpret the Old Testament, or that they attribute meaning to an Old Testament text not

expressed by the author of that text. While it is acknowledged that there is sometimes a wide range of application for a text, this article affirms that the interpretation of a biblical text by another biblical writer is always within the confines of the meaning of the first text.

Article XVIII

WE AFFIRM that the Bible's own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating from, but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text. The single meaning of a prophet's words includes, but is not restricted to, the understanding of those words by the prophet and necessarily involves the intention of God evidenced in the fulfillment of those words.

WE DENY that the writers of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words.

This Affirmation was perhaps the most difficult to word. The first part of the Affirmation builds on Article VII which declared that Scripture has only one meaning, and simply adds that whenever the Bible comments on another passage of Scripture it does so correctly. That is, the Bible never misinterprets itself. It always correctly understands the meaning of the passage it comments on (see Article XVII). For example, that Paul misinterprets Moses is to say that Paul erred. This view is emphatically rejected in favor of the inerrancy of all Scripture.

The problem in the second statement of the Affirmation revolves around whether God intended more by a passage of Scripture than the human author did. Put in this way, evangelical scholars are divided on the issue, even though there is unity on the question of "single meaning." Some believe that this single meaning may be fuller than the purview of the human author, since God had far more in view than did the prophet when he wrote it. The wording here is an attempt to include reference to the fulfillment of a prophecy (of which God was obviously aware when He inspired it) as part of the single meaning which God and the prophet shared. However, the prophet may not have been conscious of the full implications of this meaning when he wrote it.

The way around the difficulty was to note that there is only one meaning to a passage which both God and the prophet affirmed, but that this meaning may not always be fully "evidenced" until the prophecy is fulfilled. Furthermore, God, and not necessarily the prophets, was fully aware of the fuller implications that would be manifested in the fulfillment of this single meaning.

It is important to preserve single meaning without denying that God had more in mind than the prophet did. A distinction needs to be made, then, between what God was conscious of concerning an affirmation (which, in view of His foreknowledge and omniscience, was far more) and what He and the prophet actually expressed in the passage. The Denial makes this point clear by noting that biblical authors were not always fully aware of the implications of their own affirmations.

Article XIX

WE AFFIRM that any preunderstandings which the interpreter brings to Scripture should be in harmony with scriptural teaching and subject to correction by it.

WE DENY that Scripture should be required to fit alien preunderstandings, inconsistent with itself, such as naturalism, evolutionism, scientism, secular humanism, and relativism.

The question of preunderstanding is a crucial one in contemporary hermeneutics. The careful wording of the Affirmation does not discuss the issue of whether one should approach Scripture with a particular preunderstanding, but simply which kinds of preunderstanding one has are legitimate. This question is answered by affirming that only those preunderstandings which are

compatible with the teaching of Scripture are legitimate. In fact, the statement goes further and demands that all preunderstanding be subject to "correction" by the teaching of Scripture.

The point of this article is to avoid interpreting Scripture through an alien grid or filter which obscures or negates its true message. For it acknowledges that one's preunderstanding will affect his understanding of a text. Hence to avoid misinterpreting Scripture one must be careful to examine his own presuppositions in the light of Scripture.

Article XX

WE AFFIRM that since God is the author of all truth, all truths, biblical and extrabiblical, are consistent and cohere, and that the Bible speaks truth when it touches on matters pertaining to nature, history, or anything else. We further affirm that in some cases extra-biblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches, and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations.

WE DENY that extrabiblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it. What is in view here is not so much the nature of truth (which is treated in Article VI), but the consistency and coherence of truth.

This is directed at those views which consider truth paradoxical or contradictory. This article declares that a proper hermeneutics avoids contradictions, since God never affirms as true two propositions, one of which is logically the opposite of the other.

Further, this Affirmation recognizes that not all truth is in the Bible (though all that is affirmed in the Bible is true). God has revealed Himself in nature and history as well as in Scripture. However, since God is the ultimate Author of all truth, there can be no contradiction between truths of Scripture and the true teachings of science and history.

Although only the Bible is the normative and infallible rule for doctrine and practice, nevertheless what one learns from sources outside Scripture can occasion a reexamination and reinterpretation of Scripture. For example, some have taught the world to be square because the Bible refers to "the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:12). But scientific knowledge of the spherical nature of the globe leads to a correction of this faulty interpretation. Other clarifications of our understanding of the biblical text are possible through the study of the social sciences.

However, whatever prompting and clarifying of Scripture that extrabiblical studies may provide, the final authority for what the Bible teaches rests in the text of Scripture itself and not in anything outside it (except in God Himself). The Denial makes clear this priority of the teaching of God's scriptural revelation over anything outside it.

Article XXI

WE AFFIRM the harmony of special with general revelation and therefore of biblical teaching with the facts of nature.

WE DENY that any genuine scientific facts are inconsistent with the true meaning of any passage of Scripture.

This article continues the discussion of the previous article by noting the harmony of God's general revelation (outside Scripture) and His special revelation in Scripture. It is acknowledged by all that certain interpretations of Scripture and some opinions of scientists will contradict each other.

However, it is insisted here that the truth of Scripture and the facts of science never contradict each other.

"Genuine" science will always be in accord with Scripture. Science, however, based on naturalistic presuppositions will inevitably come in conflict with the supernatural truths of Scripture.

Far from denying a healthy interchange between scientific theory and biblical interpretation, the framers of this statement welcome such. Indeed, it is acknowledged (in article XX) that the exegete can learn from the scientist. What is denied is that we should accept scientific views that contradict Scripture or that they should be given an authority above Scripture.

Article XXII

WE AFFIRM that Genesis 1-11 is factual, as is the rest of the book.

WE DENY that the teachings of Genesis 1-11 are mythical and that scientific hypotheses about earth history or the origin of humanity may be invoked to overthrow what Scripture teaches about creation.

Since the historicity and the scientific accuracy of the early chapters of the Bible have come under severe attack it is important to apply the "literal" hermeneutic espoused (Article XV) to this question. The result was a recognition of the factual nature of the account of the creation of the universe, all living things, the special creation of man, the Fall, and the Flood. These accounts are all factual, that is, they are about space-time events which actually happened as reported in the book of Genesis (see Article XIV).

The article left open the question of the age of the earth on which there is no unanimity among evangelicals and which was beyond the purview of this conference. There was, however, complete agreement on denying that Genesis is mythological or unhistorical. Likewise, the use of the term "creation" was meant to exclude the belief in macro-evolution, whether of the atheistic or theistic varieties.

Article XXIII

WE AFFIRM the clarity of Scripture and specifically of its message about salvation from sin.

WE DENY that all passages of Scripture are equally clear or have equal bearing on the message of redemption.

Traditionally this teaching is called the "perspicuity" of Scripture. By this is meant that the central message of Scripture is clear, especially what the Bible says about salvation from sin.

The Denial disassociates this claim from the belief that everything in Scripture is clear or that all teachings are equally clear or equally relevant to the Bible's central saving message. It is obvious to any honest interpreter that the meaning of some passages of Scripture is obscure. It is equally evident that the truth of some passages is not directly relevant to the overall plan of salvation.

Article XXIV

WE AFFIRM that a person is not dependent for understanding of Scripture on the expertise of biblical scholars.

WE DENY that a person should ignore the fruits of the technical study of Scripture by biblical scholars.

This article attempts to avoid two extremes. First, it affirms that one is not dependent on biblical "experts" for his understanding of the basic truths of Scripture. Were this not true, then a significant aspect of the priesthood of all believers would be destroyed. For if the understanding of the laity is contingent on the teaching of experts, then Protestant interpretive experts will have replaced the teaching magisterium of Catholic priests with a kind of teaching magisterium of Protestant scholars.

On the other hand, biblical scholars do play a significant role in the lay understanding of Scripture. Even the very tools (Bible dictionaries, concordances, etc.) used by laypersons to interpret Scripture were produced by scholars. And when it comes to more technical and precise understanding of specific Scripture the work of experts is more than helpful. Hence the implied exhortation in the denial to avail oneself of the fruit of scholarship is well taken.

Article XXV

WE AFFIRM that the only type of preaching which sufficiently conveys the divine revelation and its proper application to life is that which faithfully expounds the text of Scripture as the Word of God.

WE DENY that the preacher has any message from God apart from the text of Scripture.

This final article declares that good preaching should be based in good hermeneutics. The exposition of Scripture is not to be treated in isolation from the proclamation of Scripture. In preaching the preacher should faithfully expound the Word of God. Anything short of a correct exposition of God's written Word is pronounced insufficient.

Indeed, the Denial declares that there is no message from God apart from Scripture. This was understood not to contradict the fact that there is a general revelation (affirmed in Article XXI) but simply to note that the only inspired and infallible writing from which the preacher can and must preach is the Bible.

Appendix 3

Chicago Statement on Biblical Application

This statement is the third and final in a trilogy of Summits sponsored by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy.

- Summit I (October 26-28, 1978) produced the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.
- Summit II (November 10-13, 1982) resulted in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics.

This last conference, Summit III (December 10-13, 1986), drafted the Chicago Statement on Biblical Application. With this statement the proposed scholarly work of ICBI has been completed, for the doctrine of inerrancy has thus been defined, interpreted, and applied by many of the leading evangelical scholars of our day.

Note: The participants at Summit III signed the following Statement of Affirmations and Denials with the following preface: "As a participant in Summit III of ICBI, I subscribe to these articles as an expression of my agreement of their overall thrust."

Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article I: The Living God

WE AFFIRM that the one true and living God is the creator and sustainer of all things.

WE AFFIRM that this God can be known through His revelation of Himself in His inerrant written Word.

WE AFFIRM that this one God exists eternally in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each of whom is fully God.

WE AFFIRM that this living, acting, speaking God entered into history through the Son Jesus Christ to bring salvation to the human race.

WE AFFIRM that the revealed character and will of God are the foundation of all morality.

WE DENY that the human language of Scripture is inadequate to inform us who God is or what He is like.

WE DENY that the doctrine of the Trinity is a contradiction or is based upon an unacceptable ontology.

WE DENY that the notion of God should be accommodated to modern thought which has no place for the concepts of sin and salvation.

Article II: The Savior and His Work

WE AFFIRM that Jesus Christ is true God, begotten from the Father from all eternity, and also true man, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.

WE AFFIRM that the indivisible union of full deity with full humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ is essential for His saving work.

WE AFFIRM that Jesus Christ, through His vicarious suffering, death, and resurrection, is the only Savior and Redeemer of the world.

WE AFFIRM that salvation is by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.

WE AFFIRM that Jesus Christ, as revealed in Scripture, is the supreme model of the godly life that is ours in and through Him.

WE DENY that Scripture warrants any proclamation or offer of salvation except on the basis of the saving work of the crucified and risen Christ.

WE DENY that those who die without Christ can be saved in the life to come.

WE DENY that persons capable of rational choice can be saved without personal faith in the biblical Christ.

WE DENY that presenting Jesus Christ as a moral example without reference to His deity and substitutionary atonement does justice to the teaching of Scripture.

WE DENY that a proper understanding of the love and justice of God warrants the hope of universal salvation.

Article III: The Holy Spirit and His Work

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Triune Godhead and that His work is essential for the salvation of sinners.

WE AFFIRM that true and saving knowledge of God is given by the Spirit of God as He authenticates and illuminates the Word of canonical Scripture, of which He is the primary author.

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit guides the people of God, giving them wisdom to apply Scripture to modern issues and everyday life.

WE AFFIRM that the church's vitality in worship and fellowship, its faithfulness in confession, its fruitfulness in witness, and its power in mission, depend directly on the power of the Holy Spirit.

WE DENY that any view that disputes the essential tripersonality of the one God is compatible with the gospel.

WE DENY that any person can say from the heart that Jesus is Lord apart from the Holy Spirit.

WE DENY that the Holy Spirit, since the apostolic age, has ever given, or does now give, new normative revelation to the church.

WE DENY that the name of renewal should be given to any movement in the church that does not involve a deepened sense of God's judgment and mercy in Christ.

Article IV: The Church and Its Mission

WE AFFIRM that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit gives the Bible its canonical authority, and the role of the church was and is to recognize and affirm this authority.

WE AFFIRM that Christ the Lord has established His church on earth and rules it by His Word and Spirit.

WE AFFIRM that the church is apostolic as it receives and is established upon the doctrine of the apostles recorded in Scripture and continues to proclaim the apostolic gospel.

WE AFFIRM that identifying marks of local churches are faithful confession and proclamation of the Word of God, and responsible administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

WE AFFIRM that churches are subject to the Word of Christ in their order as in their doctrine.

WE AFFIRM that in addition to their commitment to a local church, Christians may properly involve themselves in parachurch organizations for specialized ministry.

WE AFFIRM that Christ calls the church to serve Him by its worship, nurture, and witness as His people in the world.

WE AFFIRM that Christ sends the church into the whole world to summon sinful humanity to faith, repentance, and righteousness.

WE AFFIRM that the unity and clarity of Scripture encourage us to seek to resolve doctrinal differences among Christians, and so to manifest the oneness of the church in Christ.

WE DENY that the church can grant canonical authority to Scripture.

WE DENY that the church is constituted by the will and traditions of men.

WE DENY that the church can bind the conscience apart from the Word of God.

WE DENY that the church can free itself from the authority of the written Word of God and still exercise valid discipline in Christ's name.

WE DENY that the church can accommodate itself to the demands of a particular culture if those demands conflict with scriptural revelation, or if they restrain the liberty of Christian conscience.

WE DENY that differing cultural situations invalidate the biblical principle of male-female equality or the biblical requirements for their roles in the church.

Article V: Sanctity of Human Life

WE AFFIRM that God the Creator is sovereign over all human life and mankind is responsible under God to preserve and protect it.

WE AFFIRM that the sanctity of human life is based on the creation of mankind in the image and likeness of God.

WE AFFIRM that the life of a human being begins at conception (fertilization) and continues until biological death; thus, abortion (except where the continuance of the pregnancy imminently threatens the mother's physical life), infanticide, suicide, and euthanasia are forms of murder.

WE AFFIRM that the penal view of social justice is compatible with the sanctity of human life.

WE AFFIRM that withholding food or water in order to cause or hasten death is a violation of the sanctity of life.

WE AFFIRM that because advancing medical technology has obscured the distinction between life and death, it is essential to evaluate each terminal case with the greatest care so as to preserve the sanctity of human life.

WE DENY that the quality of human life has priority over its sanctity.

WE DENY that the sanctity of pre-natal life negates the propriety of necessary medical procedures to preserve the life of the pregnant mother.

WE DENY that killing in self-defense, in state-administered capital punishment, or in wars justly fought, is necessarily a violation of the sanctity of human life.

WE DENY that those who reject a divine basis for moral law are exempt from the ethical and social obligation to preserve and protect innocent human life.

WE DENY that allowing death without medical intervention to prolong life is always a violation of the sanctity of human life.

Article VI: Marriage and the Family

WE AFFIRM that the purpose of marriage is to glorify God and extend His Kingdom on earth in an institution that provides for chastity, companionship, procreation and Christian upbringing of children.

WE AFFIRM that since marriage is a sacred covenant under God uniting a man and a woman as one flesh, church and state should require faithfulness to God's intention that it be a permanent bond.

WE AFFIRM that in the marriage pattern ordained by God, the husband as head is the loving servant-leader of his wife, and the wife as helper in submissive companionship is a full partner with her husband.

WE AFFIRM that loving nurture and discipline of children is a God-ordained duty of parents, and God-ordained obedience to parents is a duty of children.

WE AFFIRM that the church has the responsibility to nurture the family.

WE AFFIRM that honor to parents is a life-long duty of all persons and includes responsibility for the care of the aged.

WE AFFIRM that the family should perform many services now commonly assumed by the state.

WE DENY that pleasure and self-fulfillment are the basis of marriage and that hardships are justifiable cause for breaking the marriage covenant.

WE DENY that the biblical ideal of marriage can be fulfilled either by a couple living together without a lawful marriage covenant or by any form of same-sex or group cohabitation.

WE DENY that the state has the right to legitimize views of marriage and the family unit that contravene biblical standards.

WE DENY that changing social conditions ever make God-ordained marriage or family roles obsolete or irrelevant.

WE DENY that the state has the right to usurp biblically designated parental responsibility.

Article VII: Divorce and Remarriage

WE AFFIRM that the marriage of Adam and Eve as a lifelong monogamous relationship is the pattern for all marriages within the human race.

WE AFFIRM that God unites husband and wife in every covenanted and consummated marriage, and will hold covenant-breakers morally accountable.

WE AFFIRM that since the essence of the marriage covenant is life-long commitment to the covenant partner, action in relation to a marital breakdown should at least initially aim at the reconciliation of the partners and restoration of the marriage.

WE AFFIRM that God hates divorce, however motivated.

WE AFFIRM that although God hates divorce, in a sinful world separation is sometimes advisable and divorce is sometimes inevitable.

WE AFFIRM that God forgives repentant sinners, even those who have sinned by sundering their marriages.

WE AFFIRM that the local church has the responsibility to discipline those who violate the biblical standards for marriage, compassionately restore those who repent, and faithfully minister God's grace to those whose lives have been scarred by marital disruption.

WE DENY that any contradiction exists within Scripture on the subject of divorce and remarriage.

WE DENY that it is sinful to separate or live apart from a promiscuous or abusive spouse.

Article VIII: Sexual Deviations

WE AFFIRM that Scripture reveals God's standards for sexual relationships, deviation from which is sinful.

WE AFFIRM that sexual intercourse is legitimate only in a heterosexual marriage relationship.

WE AFFIRM that God's grace in Christ can deliver men and women from bondage to deviant sexual practice, be they heterosexual or homosexual, and the church must assume responsibility for restoring such members to a life that honors God.

WE AFFIRM that God loves homosexuals as well as other sinners, and that homosexual temptations can be resisted in the power of Christ to the glory of His grace, just as other temptations can.

WE AFFIRM that Christians must exercise a compassion, kindness, and forgiveness in the ministry of God's grace to those whose lives have been scarred by sexual deviations.

WE AFFIRM that human fulfillment does not depend on satisfying sexual drives; hedonism and related philosophies encouraging promiscuous sexuality are wrong and lead to ruin.

WE AFFIRM that pornography threatens the well-being of individuals, families, and entire societies, and that it is incumbent upon Christians to seek to check its production and distribution.

WE DENY that homosexual practice can ever please God.

WE DENY that heredity, childhood conditioning, or other environmental influences can excuse deviant sexual behavior.

WE DENY that the sexual molestation or exploitation of children in general and incestuous relationships in particular can ever be justified.

WE DENY that it is hopeless to look for deliverance from homosexual practices or other forms of sexual deviancy.

WE DENY that the healing of sexual deviancy is aided by condemnation without compassion or by compassion without the application of Scriptural truth, in confident hope.

Article IX: The State Under God

WE AFFIRM that God established civil government as an instrument of His common grace, to restrain sin, to maintain order, and to promote civil justice and general well-being.

WE AFFIRM that God gives civil governments the right to use coercive force for the defense and encouragement of those who do good and for the just punishment of those who do evil.

WE AFFIRM that it is proper and desirable that Christians take part in civil government and advocate the enactment of laws for the common good in accordance with God's moral law.

WE AFFIRM that it is the duty of Christian people to pray for civil authorities and to obey them, except when such obedience would involve the violation of God's moral law or neglect the God-ordained responsibilities of Christian witness.

WE AFFIRM that governments have a responsibility before God to establish and enforce laws that accord with God's moral law as it pertains to human relations.

WE AFFIRM that Christ's rule of the church through His Word must not be confused with the power He grants to civil governments; such confusion will compromise the purity of the gospel and will violate the conscience of individuals.

WE AFFIRM that when families or churches neglect their biblically defined duties, thus jeopardizing the wellbeing of their members, the state may rightfully intervene.

WE DENY that the state has the right to usurp authority of other God-given spheres of life, especially in the church and in the family.

WE DENY that the Kingdom of God can be established by the coercive power of civil governments.

WE DENY that the state has the right to forbid voluntary prayer and other voluntary religious exercises at an appropriate time in the public school.

WE DENY that God's providential establishment of a particular government confers special blessing, apart from the government's just and faithful execution of its duties.

WE DENY that religious belief is an essential prerequisite to service in civil government, or that its absence invalidates the legal authority of those who govern.

WE DENY the Kingdom of God can be established by the power of civil governments.

WE DENY that the government has the right to prescribe specific prayers or forms of religious exercise for its citizens.

Article X: Law and Justice

WE AFFIRM that the Scriptures are the only infallible record of unchanging moral principles basic to a sound jurisprudence and an adequate philosophy of human rights.

WE AFFIRM that God has impressed His image on the hearts of all people so that they are morally accountable to Him for their actions as individuals and as members of society.

WE AFFIRM that God's revealed law, the moral nature of mankind, and human legislation serve to restrain the fallen political order from chaos and anarchy and to point humankind to the need for redemption in Jesus Christ.

WE AFFIRM that the Gospel cannot be legislated and the Law cannot save sinners.

WE DENY that legal positivism, or any other humanistic philosophy of law, is able to satisfy the need for absolute standards of law and justice.

WE DENY that any person or any society fulfills God's standards so as to justify himself, herself, or itself before the tribunal of God's absolute justice.

WE DENY that any political, economic, or social order is free from the deadly consequences of original sin or capable of offering a Utopian solution or substitute for the perfect society which Christ alone will establish at His Second Coming.

Article XI: War

WE AFFIRM that God desires peace and righteousness among nations and condemns wars of aggression.

WE AFFIRM that lawful states have the right and duty to defend their territories and citizens against aggression and oppression by other powers, including the provision for an adequate civil defense of the population.

WE AFFIRM that in rightful defense of their territories and citizens governments should only use just means of warfare.

WE AFFIRM that warring states should strive by every means possible to minimize civilian casualties.

WE DENY that the cause of Christ can be defended with earthly weapons.

WE DENY that Christians are forbidden to use weapons in the defense of lawful states.

WE DENY that the indiscriminate slaughter of civilians can be a moral form of warfare.

WE DENY that the circumstances of modern warfare destroy the right and duty of the civil government to defend its territories and citizens.

Article XII: Discrimination and Human Rights

WE AFFIRM that God, who created man and woman in His image, has granted to all human beings fundamental rights which are to be protected, sustained, and fostered on the natural and spiritual levels.

WE AFFIRM that all human beings are ultimately accountable to God for their use of these rights.

WE AFFIRM that Christians must uphold and defend the rights of others while being willing to relinquish their own rights for the good of others.

WE AFFIRM that Christians are admonished to follow the compassionate example of Jesus by helping to bear the burdens of those whose human rights have been diminished.

WE DENY that any so-called human right which violates the teaching of Scripture is legitimate.

WE DENY that any act is acceptable that would harm or diminish another person's natural or spiritual life by violating that person's human rights.

WE DENY that age, disability, economic disadvantage, race, religion, or sex used as a basis for discrimination can ever justify denial of the exercise or enjoyment of human rights.

WE DENY that elitism or grasping for power are compatible with Christ's call to dedicate our rights to His service.

Article XIII: Economics

WE AFFIRM that valid economic principles can be found in Scripture and should form an integral part of a Christian world and life view.

WE AFFIRM that material resources are a blessing from God, to be enjoyed with thanksgiving, and are to be earned, managed, and shared as a stewardship under God.

WE AFFIRM that Christians should give sacrificially of their resources to support the work of God's church.

WE AFFIRM that the use of personal and material resources for the proclamation of the gospel is necessary both for the salvation of lost mankind and to overcome poverty where that is fostered by adherence to non-Christian religious systems.

WE AFFIRM that active compassion for the poor and oppressed is an obligation that God places upon all human beings, especially on those with resources.

WE AFFIRM that the possession of wealth imposes obligations upon its possessors.

WE AFFIRM that the love of money is a source of great evil.

WE AFFIRM that human depravity, greed, and the will to power foster economic injustice and subvert concern for the poor.

WE AFFIRM that the Bible affirms the right of private ownership as a stewardship under God.

WE DENY that Scripture directly teaches any science of economics, although there are principles of economics that can be derived from Scripture.

WE DENY that Scripture teaches that compassion for the poor must be expressed exclusively through one particular economic system.

WE DENY that the Scripture teaches that money or wealth is inherently evil.

WE DENY that Scripture endorses economic collectivism or economic individualism.

WE DENY that Scripture forbids the use of capital resources to produce income.

WE DENY that the proper focus of a Christian's hope is material prosperity.

WE DENY that Christians should use their resources primarily for self-gratification.

WE DENY that salvation from sin necessarily involves economic or political liberation.

Article XIV: Work and Leisure

WE AFFIRM that God created humankind in His image and graciously fitted them for both work and leisure.

WE AFFIRM that in all honorable work, however menial, God works with and through the worker.

WE AFFIRM that work is the divinely ordained means whereby we glorify God and supply both our own needs and the needs of others.

WE AFFIRM that Christians should work to the best of their ability so as to please God.

WE AFFIRM that people should both humbly submit to and righteously exercise whatever authority operates in their sphere of work.

WE AFFIRM that in their work people should seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, depending on Him to supply their material needs.

WE AFFIRM that compensation should be a fair return for the work done without discrimination.

WE AFFIRM that leisure, in proper balance with work, is ordained by God and should be enjoyed to His glory.

WE AFFIRM that work and its product have not only temporal but also eternal value when done and used for God's glory.

WE DENY that persons should pursue their work to fulfill and gratify themselves rather than to serve and please God.

WE DENY that the rich have more right to leisure than the poor.

WE DENY that certain types of work give persons greater value in God's eyes than other persons have.

WE DENY that the Christian should either depreciate leisure or make a goal of it.

Article XV: Wealth and Poverty

WE AFFIRM that God, who is just and loving, has a special concern for the poor in their plight.

WE AFFIRM that God calls for responsible stewardship by His people of both their lives and resources.

WE AFFIRM that sacrificial effort to relieve the poverty, oppression, and suffering of others is a hallmark of Christian discipleship.

WE AFFIRM that just as the wealthy ought not be greedy so the poor ought not to be covetous.

WE DENY that we may rightly call ourselves disciples of Christ if we lack active concern for the poor, oppressed, and suffering, especially those of the household of faith.

WE DENY that we may always regard prosperity or poverty as the measure of our faithfulness to Christ.

WE DENY that it is necessarily wrong for Christians to be wealthy or for some persons to possess more than others.

Article XVI: Stewardship of the Environment

WE AFFIRM that God created the physical environment for His own glory and for the good of His human creatures.

WE AFFIRM that God deputized humanity to govern the creation.

WE AFFIRM that mankind has more value than the rest of creation.

WE AFFIRM that mankind's dominion over the earth imposes a responsibility to protect and tend its life and resources.

WE AFFIRM that Christians should embrace responsible scientific investigation and its application in technology.

WE AFFIRM that stewardship of the Lord's earth includes the productive use of its resources which must always be replenished as far as possible.

WE AFFIRM that avoidable pollution of the earth, air, water, or space is irresponsible.

WE DENY that the cosmos is valueless apart from mankind.

WE DENY that the biblical view authorizes or encourages wasteful exploitation of nature.

WE DENY that Christians should embrace the countercultural repudiation of science or the mistaken belief that science is the hope of mankind.

WE DENY that individuals or societies should exploit the universe's resources for their own advantage at the expense of other people and societies.

WE DENY that a materialistic worldview can provide an adequate basis for recognizing environmental values.

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Appendix 4: Biblical Hermeneutics – An Outline

Excerpts from Milton S. Terry's classic text (Zondervan Pub., 1974)

Conception Of The Bible

A. Inspiration of the Bible- Word of God, wasn't sent or delivered by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. As such their writings are given divine truthfulness, and constitute an infallible and sufficient rule of faith and practice.

1. Scriptural Proof:

a. Scripture teaches that the organs of revelation were inspired.

1. Prophets knew it in state of "control":
Exo 7:1; Deu 18:18; Isa 8:11; Jer 1:9 Jer 15:17 Eze 1:3, 3:22, 37:1; 2Peter 1:21
2. Prophets speak as God (1st person):
Isa 3:4, 5:3ff, 10:5ff, 27:3 Jer 5:7, 16:21; Hos 6:4ff; Joel 2:25 Amos 5:21ff; Zec 9:7
3. Christ promised the Holy Spirit to teach and guide:
Joh 14:26; 1Thes. 2:13; 1Joh 5:9-12

b. Scripture teaches the inspiration of the written word itself.

1. Romans 9:17, Luke 24:27 – "It is written" was equivalent to "God says" (Rom 1:2, 2Tim 3:15, Rom.3:2, 2Tim.3:16).
2. Quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament identify God and Scripture as speakers:
Heb 1:5-13 (Ps 2:7; 2Sam 7:14; Deut 32:43; Ps 45:6, 7, 97:7, 102:24-27, 104:4, 110:1)
Rom 9:17, Gal 3:8 (SCRIPTURE SAYS ...) but the quotation from Ex 9:16 and Gen 22:18 actually have God as speaker (hence the equivalence of the two phrases "Scripture says" and "God says").
3. The classic statement for divine inspiration is 2Tim 3:16 where it is described in Greek as THEO PNEUSTOS or "God-breathed."
4. 2Peter 1:19-21 says the Word comes not from the will of man but as a gift of God.
5. 1Cor 2:7-13 says "[words] which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

c. Inspiration extends to the words used by the writers.

1. 2Peter 1:19-21
2. Jeremiah is told by God, "Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth."
3. John 10:33 reveals that Christ relied on only one word from Psalm 82:6 to support reference to himself as God, implying that EVERY word has divine authority.
4. Gal 3:16 indicates Paul, in referring to Gen 13:15, believed in the inspiration of individual words.

2. Relation of Divine and Human in Scriptural Authorship

a. Human authors were not mere machines used only as the pen of God.

1. Authors researched their topic (e.g. Luke).
2. Authors used their own experiences and sins.
3. Many books have their own individual character.
4. The books have different styles.

b. However, the Holy Spirit could not permit the sinful nature of the writers to express itself.

3. *Objections to Verbal Inspiration* –

Textual errors, seeming discrepancies, supposedly incorrect and misapplied quotations, dual representations, and doublets – the challenges originate from a RATIONALISTIC approach in which man wants to choose how far the Scriptures are inspired.

ANSWER: Assertions that the Scriptures are infallibly inspired refer only to the autographs and not to the manuscripts now in our possession, though of 800,000 manuscripts 795,000 are different only to the same extent that “honour” differs from “honor” and the other 5,000, while changing the sense of some passages or omitting particular words or phrases, still don’t change one doctrine or precept, alter not one important fact. The present copies are demonstrably reliable.

B. Unity and Diversity in the Bible

1. *Various books of the Bible constitute an ORGANIC UNITY.*

- a. Passages quoted for inspirational source of the writings point to one primary author.
- b. The contents of the books coming into existence over a 1600 year period reveal a unity.
- c. The progressive character of God’s revelation is effective proof of its unity.
- d. Collective quotations of Scripture within Scripture also point to its unity (Rom 3:10-18)
- e. New Testament authors in altering or reinterpreting O.T. cites show that the Holy Spirit is the author of it ALL – hence He has the right to change it.

2. *The Bible reveals diversity.*

a. O.T./N.T. distinctions:

1. Contents – O.T. is the promise, N.T. the fulfillment.
2. Form – O.T. is prophetic, N.T. is apostolical.
3. Language – O.T. is Aramaic, N.T. is Hellenistic Greek (common language, not pure classical Greek).

b. Inter-book distinctions – style, character, vocabulary, circumstance, point of view.

c. Forms of Revelation:

1. historical narrative
2. didactical writings or discourses
3. prophecy
4. poetry

C. Unity of the SENSE of Scripture

1. *Bases for this principle:*

- a. veracity of God
- b. purpose of God’s revelation: salvation
- c. congruity between general and special revelation
- d. character of human language necessitates specific meaning of a word in particular context.

2. *Safeguards against misunderstanding this principle:*

- a. Distinguish between the real sense of a passage and the sense ascribed to it by various interpreters.
- b. Distinguish between the proper sense of a passage and different ways it may be applied according to circumstances (warning or exhortation, encouragement or rebuke).
- c. Distinguish between the literal and mystical sense understanding that both are of the same sense, the mystical or deeper meaning being based on the literal.

- d. Distinguish between a double fulfillment of prophecy and a double sense – some prophecies are fulfilled in several successive facts or events.

D. The Style of Scripture : General Characteristics

1. Simplicity

a. In the Hebrew language nearly all roots have but three radicals. There are only two tenses: perfect and imperfect (past and future tense are determined by the context); there are only two genders: masculine and feminine; there are very few compound nouns and verbs and nearly all sentences are coordinate.

b. The relationship between sentences is often vague consisting only of a single connector VAV (and), hence it can be used as in the O.T. in the following ways:

1. explicative (even) Amos 3:11, 4:10
2. adversative (and yet, while yet) Judges 16:15
3. inferential (then, so then, therefore) Ezek 8:32
4. causal (for, because) Psalm 5:12
5. final (in order that)

In the N.T. *kai* is often used in about the same way.

c. There is frequent use of words connected by a conjunction with the same meaning as a single word with a qualifier (e.g. a city and a mother in Israel 2Sam 20:19). These are called “*hendiadys*.”

d. Direct discourse is often found where indirect discourse would be expected (2Sam 13:32, Isaiah 3:6, Jer 3:16, Psalm 2:3, Matt 1:20, 23, 2:3, 5).

2. Liveliness

- a. Abstract truths in concrete forms
- b. Personified nature
- c. Use “behold!” to unfold a panorama
- d. Redundancy to emphasize (opened his mouth and spoke; lifted up his eyes and saw; incline your ear and hear, etc.)

3. Figurative language

4. Parallelism of sentences

a. Synonymous parallelism – same idea is repeated in different words

1. mere similarity (Psalm 24:2, Job 6:5) or
2. identity (Prov 6:2, Ps 93:3)

b. Antithetic parallelism – second number of a line or verse gives the obverse side of the same thought

1. simple (Prov 14:34, Ps 30:6) or
2. compound (Isaiah 1:3, 19, 20)

c. Synthetic parallelism – second member adds to or explains the first

1. correspondent (1st and 3rd lines, 2nd and 4th lines) (Psalm 27:1, 35:26, 27)
2. cumulative – successive ideas leading to climax or laid out as a progression (Psalm 1:1,2; Isaiah 55:6,7; Heb 3:17)

d. Introverted or chiasmic parallelism – parallelism in reverse order (chiasmic arrangement) (Prov.23:15,16; 10:4,5; 13:24) 2 0 0 2

Grammatical Interpretation

A. Meaning of Separate Words

1. *Etymology*
2. *Current use of words*
3. *Synonymous use of words* [vs. distinctive]
 - John 21:15-17 love – agapao [NT:25] vs. phileo [NT:5368]
 - Lev 4:13 assembly – ‘edhah [OT:5712] and gahal [OT:6951]
 - Psalm 32:5 sin – chatta’th [OT:2403], ‘avon [OT:5771], and pesha’ [OT:6588]
 - Prov 14:31 poor – del [OT:1800] and ‘ebhyon [OT:34]
 - Jer 17:5 man – gebher [OT:1397] and ‘adham [OT:120]
 - 1Tim 2:1 prayers – de-esis [NT:1162], proseuche [NT:4335] vs. eucharistia [NT:2167]
 - 2 Tim 1:2 grace – charis [NT:5485] vs. eleos [NT:1656]
 - Eph 1:8 wisdom – sophia [NT:4678] vs. phronesis [NT:5428]
 - Phil 2:7 form – morphe [NT:3444] and schema [NT:4976]
 - 1Thess 2:9 labor – mochthos [NT:3449] vs. kopos [NT:2873]

B. Meaning of Words In Connection (usus loquendi)

1. *Language of Scripture should be interpreted according to its grammatical import; and the sense of any expression, proposition, or declaration, it to be determined by the words employed. Theology follows from grammatical sense and not vice versa.*
2. *A word can have but one meaning in the connection in which it occurs.* e.g. 1Cor 15:39, Acts 2:26, John 1:13, Rom 7:25: SARKS can mean either the solid part of the body except the bones, or it can mean the whole substance of the body (syn. with soma), or it can mean the animal (sensuous) nature of man, or even human nature as dominated by sin. If used in all these ways, then in John 6:53 Christ would have a sinful nature, though the Bible describes him as sinless.
3. *Several meanings of a word may be united to produce a higher unity.*
 - a. **A word may be used in a general sense so as to include its special meanings.**
 - b. **A word may have one special meaning which includes another not in conflict.**
John 1:29 uses airo meaning (1) to take up and (2) to carry away.
 - c. **A word may indicate far more than it expresses.** e.g. “Give us this day our daily BREAD ...”
4. *A word used in the same connection more than once may be assumed to have same meaning throughout.*

C. Internal Helps to interpretation

1. *Definitions or explanations given by authors.*
2. *Subject and predicate of a proposition mutually explain each other.*
3. *Parallelism may help derive the meaning.*
4. *Parallel passages:*
 - a. **VERBAL** – same word occurs in similar connection or in reference to same general subject. These establish points of linguistic usage.
 - b. **REAL** – the passages are similar not in the words or phrases used, but in the facts, subjects, sentiments, or doctrines espoused. These may help explain points of historical, ethical, or dogmatic interest.

D. Figurative Use of Words

1. *Tropes* (word used in different sense than normal)
 - a. *metaphor*
 - b. *metonymics* (founded on relation rather than resemblance) – this is mental relation: cause and effect, progenitor and progeny, subject/attribute, sign/thing signified
 - c. *synecdoche* – the relation is physical (part for whole, singular for plural, individual for a class, etc.)
2. *Determining whether figurative or literal sense is intended.*
 - a. A figurative sense may be innately impossible as in the case of a legal instrument, historical writings, philosophy discourse, or a scientific work, etc.
 - b. The meaning of a passage is literal unless manifestly contradictory or absurd (general rule).
 - c. Synecdoche- See “D.1.c” above (“Tropes”).
3. *Principles of interpreting figurative language*
 - a. Have a clear conception of the things on which the figures are based or from which they are borrowed, since the use is founded on a resemblance or relation.
 - b. Discover the principal idea without placing too much importance on the details.
 - c. Where reference is to God or the eternal order of things, bear in mind the language of necessity is a very inadequate expression of perfect reality.
 - d. One can tentatively test an interpretation by trying to express it in literal language.

E. Interpretation of Thought

Rather than separate words, this refers to words in their mutual relation and it assumes that Biblical language is a product of the human spirit under providential guidance, hence it is subject to normal logical principles used in interpreting other writings or language.

1. *Special idioms and figures of thought*–

Because it is metaphorical, allegory contains its own interpretation while the parable places itself “alongside” without giving qualifications and relations of one to the other. Hendiadys (Conceptions, D.1.C. above p.3) e.g. 1Sam 2:3 – “Thou shalt not multiply, thou shalt not speak,” is interpreted, “thou shalt not multiply words.”

a. **Figures as lively representations of the truth**

1. simile – “like”
2. allegory – extended metaphor where narrative, though supposable in itself, is manifestly fictitious (as opposed to a parable)

b. **Figures promoting brevity of expression**

1. *Ellipsis* – omitting word(s) necessary to a complete sentence but not necessary for understanding it. e.g. “Return O Jehovah – How long?” These reveal the poet’s emotion.
2. *Brachylogy* – omission or non-repetition of word(s) to complete a parallel grammatical construction (as if understood by the context). e.g. Rom 11:18 “Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root [bears] thee.”
3. *Constructio Praegnans* – preposition is joined with an expressed verb while it really belongs to an unexpressed verb which is included in the other as its consequent. e.g. 2Tim 4:18, “he will save me into his Kingdom.”
4. *The Zeugma* – two nouns construed with one verb though only one (usually the first) directly suits the verb. e.g. 1Cor 3:2 “Milk I caused thee to drink and not meat.”

c. Figures used to soften an expression

1. Euphemism (sleep for die)
2. Litotes – affirmation by double negative (not unlike)
3. Meiosis – less is said than meant; very similar to the Litotes

d. Figures that clarify or strengthen an expression

1. Irony – sometimes extends into sarcasm
2. Epizeuxis – simple repetition of a word
3. Hyperbole – rhetorical overstatement

2. Order of words in a sentence –

HEBREW: Regular order is predicate, subject, object. Variations occur to change emphasis:

- a. object, predicate, subject: emphasizes object
- b. object, subject, predicate: emphasizes object
- c. subject, object, predicate: emphasizes subject
- d. predicate, object, subject: emphasizes subject

GREEK: Subject with modifiers, predicate with adjuncts, objective follows verb, adjective follows the substantive it belongs to, and genitive follows its governing noun. Changes indicate change in emphasis.

F. Internal Helps to Interpreting The Thought

1. Scope of the author determined by:

- a. purpose – derived from context limits scope
- b. occasion – leading to argument/discourse
- c. conclusion of author – may limit scope

2. The connection between passages: CONTEXT

- purely historical (historical narrative related to another)
- historical – dogmatical (dogm. discourse is connected to historical fact)
- logical – thoughts/arguments follow a logical order
- psychological – connection depends on association of ideas (seems an apparent break in train).

- a. Watch adjuncts (may be continuative or adverbs.)
- b. General rule: look for closest connection.
- c. Don't assume a change in thought occurs where the connection isn't obvious.
- d. Watch for parentheticals, digressions and anacolutha (unexpected changes in construction) which disturb the connection but don't negate it.

3. Parallelism – guard against two mistakes:

- a. Don't assume that each of the parallels has a meaning distinct from the other.
- b. Don't suppose that there is always a tautology between the parallels.

Sometimes the one member expresses universally what the other announces particularly and vice versa:

the one may be genus.....the other species

- affirmative.....negative
- figurative.....literal
- comparative.....its application
- fact.....how it occurred

G. External Helps

Reference works

1. Grammars d. Special topical works
2. Lexicons e. Commentaries (Matthew Henry's, Calvin's, Lange's, Erdman's, Barnes')
3. Concordances

First interpret the passage independently, then use available internal helps, and then use a-d above, and lastly resort to commentary.

Historical Interpretation

A. Definition- Study of Scripture in light of those historical circumstances that put their stamp on the different books of the Bible and which refers to the material content of them. There are a number of basic assumptions:

1. God's word originated in a historical way and must be understood historically.
2. A word is understood fully only when apprehended as it originated within the author's soul.
3. Understanding and interpreting an author correctly requires seeing him against the proper historical background.
4. The place, time, circumstances and prevailing view of the world and life naturally color the writings produced under them.

B. Personal Characteristics of the Author/Speaker

1. Who is the author?
 - name
 - character
 - temperament
 - disposition
 - habitual mode of thought
 - motives controlling his life
 - profession (hence manner and language)
 - tone, familiar expressions, images, point of view
2. Speaker – Distinguish between author and speaker. General rule: regard writer as speaker unless express evidence to contrary.

C. Social Circumstances of Author – those not peculiar to the author but shared with contemporaries.

- 1. Geography** – topography, character of seasons, prevailing winds, temperature variations between valleys, highlands and mountains, trees, shrubs, flowers, grains, vegetables, fruits, animals, insects, birds, mountains/valleys, rivers, cities and villages, highways and plains. Such things are essential to understanding symbolism and metaphors, and as an explanation for events.
- 2. Political circumstances** – political organization of surrounding nations, national history, internal rebellions, political institutions/changes.
- 3. Religious circumstances** – periods of spiritual elevation versus periods of moral and religious degradation cast light on messages conveyed by prophets and writers, as do ceremonies and history of religious practices.

D. Circumstances Peculiar to the Writings

1. **Original readers and hearers:** who was the message directed at? Paul speaks to individual churches using what might otherwise seem conflicting arguments (Gal 5:2 despite fact that Paul circumcised Timothy).
2. **Purpose of author:** the interpreter may have to rely on ecclesiastical tradition; or the author may state his purpose outright; knowing the original readers' identity, plus their circumstances, plus the occasion leading to the writing may reveal its purpose; or the message conveyed may be self-revealing as to purpose.
3. **Time of life, special circumstances and frame of mind of the author.**

Theological Interpretation

A. The Bible as a Unity

1. **Relationship of O.T. to N.T.**- both are essential parts of God's special revelation. God is the author of both and has the same purpose in mind. Both have same doctrine of redemption, preach the same Christ, and impose the same moral and religious duties. The revelation is progressive: it gradually increases in definiteness, clearness and spiritual conception. THE N.T. IS IMPLICIT IN THE OLD, AND THE O.T. IS EXPLICIT IN THE NEW.

a. O.T. and N.T. are a unit

1. Doctrine of redemption was essentially the same under O.T. as it is under the N.T. Sacrifices in O.T. spoke of atoning blood of Christ and washings symbolized cleansing of the Holy Spirit. Proof that Israelites recognized spirit significant of rites and ceremonies: Lev 26:41, 20:25,26; Ps 26:6, 51:7,16,17; Isa 1:16.
2. The true Israelites of O.T. as well as N.T. are not the natural descendants of Abraham so much in flesh as in faith. They were chosen primarily out of the chosen race, but also out of surrounding nations. Proselytes were incorporated into Israel (as indicated by 1Kings 8:41ff) remembering the stranger who might worship in the Temple and the prophets looking forward to a time when Gentiles would bring their treasures to the Temple.
3. While O.T. emphasizes the law and N.T. emphasizes grace there is no absolute antithesis between them. Even in the O.T. the law was subservient to covenant of grace ("I desire mercy, not sacrifice"). They were saved the same way, needed the same mediator, the same Holy Spirit, they received the same blessings, although not so abundantly nor in the same manner as in N.T. The relation is as bud to flower.
4. Ordinances of O.T. and N.T. have only relative differences. In the O.T., passover, sacrifices, and purifications were dependent on the conscience – the faith of the worshiper/participant was required to be effective. These acts became perfected in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

b. Guides to interpreting O.T. and N.T. relationship

1. O.T. offers key to correct interpretation of N.T. N.T. presupposes creation, fall, grace and coming of redeemer.
2. N.T. is commentary on O.T. (fulfillment of O.T. prophecy) see Acts 2:29-31, Matt 11:10, 21:42; Gal 4:22-31, and all of Hebrews.

2. **Significance of individual books in the organic whole:** they are mutually complementary offering separate vantages of the same message.

B. Mystical Sense of Scripture

Guides to discovery of mystical sense.

- a. Scripture itself (N.T. contains interpretations of O.T.)

- b. Symbolical relationship exists between different spheres of life (natural is symbolically related to spiritual etc.)
- c. Analogous events often re-appear with slight modifications yet these repetitions are typically related (archetypes).
- d. Connection exists between individual and communal life reflecting bond between head and body of Church.

C. Symbolical and Typical Interpretation of Scripture

God reveals himself both in words and in facts. The words explain the facts and the facts make the words concrete. Christ is a perfect synthesis of the two: the Word made flesh. The interpreter must determine the significance of the historical facts as a part of God's revelation of redemption.

1. Facts may have symbolical significance – a symbol is not an image but a sign of something else; e.g. Jacob's wrestling with God was symbolic of his reliance on his own strength and devices. He was taught by being disabled that his self-help was futile; his strength must be broken that the power of God might become manifest in him.

2. Facts may have typical significance – they may pre-figure something yet to be, i.e. be representative of something else.

a. Type defined:

1. Mark of a blow
2. An impression, the stamp made by a die – hence a figure/image.
3. An example or pattern (distinguished from symbol which is a sign).

Symbols refer to something past, present or future. Types always prefigure some future reality. Symbols teach a moral truth. Types teach a moral truth and predict some actual realization of that truth.

Characteristics of Types:

- Must be some notable real point of resemblance between a type and its antitype.
- Must be divinely designed to bear a likeness to the antitype – mere accidental similarity without scriptural evidence that it was so designed by God isn't typical.
- A type and predictive prophecy are in substance the same, differing only in form.

b. Interpretation of types: same as for parables

1. Something evil in itself cannot be a type of what is good and pure. e.g. clothes of Esau that Jacob used as a deception aren't typical of Christ's righteousness that clothes the saints.
2. O.T. types are simultaneously types and symbols. Solve the symbolic interpretation before trying to find a N.T. realization or fulfillment of that truth. Don't start with the N.T. and go backwards. Nonetheless,
3. The N.T. gives insight into O.T. types.
4. Non-complex types have only one radical meaning so don't multiply their significations.
5. Have a due regard for the essential difference between types and antitypes. The one is truth on a lower plane; the other is the same truth on a higher plane.

E. Interpretation of Prophecy

Special Characteristics of Prophecy –

1. Prophecy as a whole has an organic character which in progressive revelation becomes more definite and particular.
2. Prophecy is closely connected with history. Therefore, it must be seen in its historical setting – prophets gave the message to their contemporaries first.

3. Prophecy has its own peculiar perspective, as regards time – it is often foreshortened compressing great events and movements into a brief space.
4. Prophecies are often conditional, i.e. their fulfillment is contingent on the actions of men, but only where reference is to the near future, and the actions are those of the prophet's contemporaries. The condition may or may not be express (see Jer 26:17-19, 1Kings 21:17-29, Jonah 3:4, 10).
5. Though prophets often speak symbolically, their language may not be symbolic throughout. Hence when Joel speaks of locusts he means locusts – context will indicate symbolic intent, otherwise assume literal meaning.
6. Prophets clothed their thoughts in forms derived from the life, constitution and history of their own people. After these forms have undergone radical changes only a realization of the essential central idea can be expected. Literal fulfillment shouldn't be expected in all cases, so prophecy may be fulfilled even without realization of outer details (e.g. Is 11:10-16, Joel 3:18-21, Micah 5:5-8, Zech 12:11-14, Acts 15:15).
7. Prophets occasionally transcended the limited forms described in E.1.f above as in Jer 31:31-34 and Mal 1:11).
8. Prophets sometimes revealed God's word through actions rather than words: e.g. Is walking barefoot through Jerusalem, Ezekiel laying 390 days on his left side and 40 days on his right side, etc.
9. Fulfillment of some of the most important prophecies is germinant, i.e. they are done in installments, each fulfillment being a pledge of that which is to follow.

F. Interpretation of Psalms – general rules apply.

G. Implied Sense of Scripture –

Not only the express statements of Scripture but its implications as well must be regarded as the Word of God. Deductions of doctrine made from a comparison of Biblical statements are as valid as the statements themselves.

H. Helps for Theological Interpretation

1. Parallels of ideas

- a. Historical Parallels
- b. Didactic parallels (same subject treated in different terms, or same thought in two passages without direct connection).
- c. Quotations from O.T. in N.T.

2. Analogy of Faith (Rom 12:6) – principles of faith or what subject faith is founded on.

a. *Evidential value* and authority of a doctrine depends on four factors:

1. Number of passages containing same doctrine.
2. Unanimity or correspondence of the different passages (value of analogy depends in proportion on agreement between passages).
3. Clearness of supporting passage.
4. Distribution of passages: if they're all from one book or a few writings, they're not as valuable as ones drawn from both O.T. and N.T., dating from various times, and conveyed by different authors.

b. *Rules to employ analogy of faith.*

1. Doctrine with clear support cannot be contradicted by a contrary but obscure passage.
2. Passages without an analogy can still be the basis for a doctrine if they are clear in their teaching, but one with an analogy has more force.
3. Where an analogy leads to two apparently contradictory doctrines, both should be accepted. They are assumed to be resolved in a higher unity which may as yet be a mystery to us.