

INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE¹

1. Tough Questions.

- a. Is the meaning of Scripture author-driven or audience-driven?
- b. Does the divine-human character of Scripture imply a unique hermeneutic?
- c. Does Scripture necessarily imply an ancient Jewish cosmology?
- d. Is there only one meaning of Scripture, or can there be multiple meanings?
- e. Can the intended meaning of the divine author differ from the intended meaning of the human author?
- f. Did the human authors always understand the meaning and significance of what they wrote?
- g. Can a passage of Scripture have more meaning in it than the human author intended or understood at the time?

2. Definitions.

- a. *Exegesis* is the actual interpretation of the Bible, the bringing out of its meaning.²
- b. *Hermeneutics* is the study of the principles of interpretation. It establishes the principles by which exegesis is practiced.³
- c. *Authorial intent* is “the sensible belief that a text means what its author meant.”⁴
- d. The *literal-grammatical-historical method of interpretation* is studying the biblical text in its original historical context and seeking the meaning its author(s) most likely intended for its original audience(s) based on the grammar and syntax.⁵

3. Importance.

- a. We are to rightly handle the word of truth.
 - (1) **2 Ti 2:15** 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.
 - (2) “Accuracy, as well as integrity, demands that we develop every possible skill to keep us from declaring in the name of God what the Holy Spirit never intended to convey.”⁶
- b. Our hermeneutics impacts our theology and our sanctification.

4. Assumptions.

- a. Our preunderstandings are to be in harmony with Scripture.
 - (1) “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,

¹ Or *Hermeneutics*.

² Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 125.

³ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 125.

⁴ E. D. Hirsch.

⁵ Craig L. Blomberg.

⁶ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, Kindle Locations 787-88.

inconsistent with itself, such as naturalism, evolutionism, scientism, secular humanism, and relativism.”⁷

- b. Our assumptions lead us to:
 - (1) Fragile fundamentalism: conservative/maximalist/traditional view.
 - (2) Enlightened evangelicalism: moderate view.
 - (3) Negative nihilism: liberal/minimalist/anti-traditional view.
- c. Specific assumptions.
 - (1) The perspicuity of Scripture.
 - (a) “...God is a good communicator. ...God has given us sufficient material within Scripture itself, for us to understand what we need to do and what we shouldn’t be doing. If we need to have the latest discovery from Babylon in order to understand Scripture, then Christians for the last 2000 years have not been able to do what God wants them to do or stop doing what God doesn’t want them to do. So...the basic message of Scripture comes through in Scripture, and God has given sufficient background, historical context for that.”⁸
 - (2) The coherence of the canon.
 - (3) The unity, harmony, and consistency of Scripture.
 - (4) The verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture.
- d. See *Bible Factory*.

5. Competing Methods.

- a. Introduction.
 - (1) Scripture itself does not prescribe rules of exegesis.
 - (2) However, rules of interpretation can be developed from how later biblical authors interpret earlier books of the Bible.
- b. Allegorical or semi-allegorical.
 - (1) Description.
 - (a) Words are understood in a symbolic sense instead of in their normal sense.
 - (b) Is resorted to when the literal sense is unacceptable to the interpreter.
 - (2) Justification.
 - (a) The Bible is a spiritual book that requires a spiritual hermeneutic.
 - (b) The Old Testament is preliminary and preparatory to the New Testament in which we find deeper meanings.
 - (c) Because the New Testament spiritualises the Old Testament, so can we.
 - (3) Source.
 - (a) “One thing at any rate was quite certain. The Old Testament, leastwise, the Law of Moses, was directly and wholly from God; and if so, then its form also—its letter—must be authentic and authoritative. Thus much on the surface, and for all. But the student must search deeper into it, his senses, as it were, quickened by Greek criticism; he must ‘meditate’ and penetrate into the Divine mysteries. The Palestinian also searched into them, and the result was the *Midrash*. But, whichever of his methods he had applied—the *Peshat*, or

⁷ *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982), Article XIX.

⁸ Dr. Stephen Bramer, Dallas Theological Seminary.

simple criticism of the words; the *Derush*, or search into the possible applications of the text, what might be ‘trodden out’ of it; or the *Sod*, the hidden, mystical, supernatural bearing of the words—it was still only the *letter* of the text that had been studied. There was, indeed, yet another understanding of the Scripture, to which St. Paul directed his disciples: the spiritual bearing of its spiritual truths. But that needed another qualification, and tended in another direction from those of which the Jewish student knew. On the other hand, there was the intellectual view of the Scriptures—their philosophical understanding, the application to them of the results of Grecian thought and criticism. It was this which was peculiarly Hellenistic. Apply that method, and the deeper the explorer proceeded in his search, the more would he feel himself alone, far from the outside crowd; but the brighter also would that light of criticism, which he carried, shine in the growing darkness, or, as he held it up, would the precious ore, which he laid bare, glitter and sparkle with a thousand varying hues of brilliancy. What was Jewish, Palestinian, individual, concrete in the Scriptures, was only the outside—true in itself, but not *the* truth. There were depths beneath. Strip these stories of their nationalism; idealise the individualism of the persons introduced, and you came upon abstract ideas and realities, true to all time and to all nations. But this deep symbolism was Pythagorean; this pre-existence of ideas which were the types of all outward actuality, was Platonism! Broken rays in them, but the focus of truth in the Scriptures. Yet these were rays, and could only have come from the Sun. All truth was of God; hence theirs must have been of that origin. Then were the sages of the heathen also in a sense God-taught—and God-teaching, or inspiration, was rather a question of degree than of kind!”⁹

- (b) “Allegory by no means sprang from spontaneous piety, but was the child of rationalism which owed its birth to the heathen theories of Plato. It deserved its name, for it made Scripture say something else than it really meant. . . . Origen borrows from heathen Platonists and from Jewish philosophers a method which converts the whole of Scripture, alike the New and the Old Testament, into a series of clumsy, varying, and incredible enigmas.”¹⁰
- (c) “During the Middle Ages a more systematic classification of different methods of biblical interpretation was codified. One must distinguish four levels of biblical interpretation (and different authors put them in different order): the literal sense, which teaches us what happened; the allegorical (sometimes called the tropological) sense, which teaches us what to believe; the moral sense, which tells us what to do; and the analogical (occasionally called the eschatological) sense, which tells us where we are going. Not infrequently such distinctions were tied to a mystical spirituality.³¹ Inevitably they also had the effect of making the Bible a closed book, reserved for experts, rightly

⁹ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software (1896), 1:20–22.

¹⁰ F. W. Farrar, quoted in Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 125

interpreted only by the authorities of the church, and closed to most laypeople (after all, the printing press had not yet been invented).”¹¹

(4) Result.

(a) Usually allegorical interpretation is employed in the interpretation of prophecy.

(b) Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*:

1) *Armageddon* “portrays the eschatological defeat of Antichrist...but does not require that we accept in a literal fashion the specific imagery with which the event is described.”

2) “John taught a literal *millennium*, but its essential meaning may be realized in something other than a temporal fulfillment.”

3) “The *millennium* is not, for John, the Messianic Age foretold by the prophets of the O.T.”

(c) Doctrines like the distinction of Israel and the church, the seven-year tribulation, and the millennium are discounted.

c. Theological.

(1) Description.

(a) “[T]he covenant hermeneutic is a way of reading Scripture that insist the only way to read Scripture is through a covenantal frame—and that covenantal frame teaches the there is one covenant of grace, so there can only be one people of God, and the one people of God is all the elect though all the ages. ...[A]ny promises made to Israel in the Old Testament can legitimately, by means of this hermeneutic, be fulfilled to the saints of the New Testament. If the promises don’t seem to line up very well..., then we must...find a spiritual reading that allows the fulfillment of those promises to be seen in ways that fit the spiritual blessings poured out on the New Testament church.”

(b) Our theology does not include an actual kingdom on this earth over which Jesus reigns. Therefore, certain passages cannot be interpreted literally.

(2) Response.

(a) Systematic theology is to be driven by biblical theology, developed using a literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic, not the other way around.

d. Literal.

(1) Description.

(a) “**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.”¹²

(b) “**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



¹¹ D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 44.

¹² *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* ([]), Article XVIII.

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.”¹³


- (c) Grammatical.
 - 1) Words and their relationships in sentences are the starting point of literal interpretation.
 - (d) Historical.
 - 1) We can understand a contemporary far better than a predecessor.
 - 2) “The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.”¹⁴
 - 3) “**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.”¹⁵
 - (e) Literal hermeneutics does not preclude figures of speech. Figures of speech convey literal truths more vividly. They enhance the plain meaning.
 - (f) Literal hermeneutics allows for New Testament authors to use the Old Testament: (1) illustratively; (2) analogically; (3) applicationally; (4) rhetorically; (5) directly; (6) eschatologically; or (7) typically.¹⁶
- (2) Source.
- (a) Our current exegetical methods arose since the Renaissance through three major tributaries. Most of the rules were designed for non-biblical, uninspired texts.
 - 1) Protestant polemics.
 - a) Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae* (1567): developed the Reformation principle of the perspicuity of Scripture and the coherence of the canon. That is, the clear meaning of Scripture can be obtained by comparing Scripture with Scripture and reading Scripture in light of the whole.
 - 2) Jurisprudence.
 - a) “The German jurist Johannes von Felde attempted to establish interpretive principles which would be valid for all classes of text, both literary and legal.... The jurist Thibaut... in 1806 [argued that] grammatical interpretation should be directed solely at the literal sense of a given law. It finds its limits only where the meaning of a law cannot be understood from the ordinary linguistic usage. At this point, the ‘purpose’ of the law and the intention of the lawgiver have to be considered (‘logical interpretation’).”
 - 3) Enlightenment philosophy.

¹³ *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982), Article XV.

¹⁴ L. P. Hartly.

¹⁵ *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982), Article XI.

¹⁶ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, [].

- a) Drawing on Aristotle's *On Interpretation*, Enlightenment philosophers drew interpretation into the realm of logical science rather than art: "Their contention was that like logic itself hermeneutics rested on certain generally applicable rules and principles which were valid for all those fields of knowledge which relied on interpretation."
- b) "One likes a Biblical theology...framed on the Baconian system, first gathering the teachings of the Word of God, and then seeking to induce some general law under which those facts can be classified and arranged."¹⁷
- c) "It is chiefly in hermeneutics that Ernesti has any claim to eminence as a theologian. But here his merits are distinguished, and, at the period when his *Institutio Interpretis Novi Testamenti* (*Principles of New Testament Interpretation*) was published (1761), almost peculiar to himself. In it we find the principles of a general interpretation, formed without the assistance of any particular philosophy, but consisting of observations and rules which, though already enunciated, and applied in the criticism of the profane writers, had never rigorously been employed in biblical exegesis. He was, in fact, the founder of the grammatico-historical school. He admits in the sacred writings as in the classics only one acceptance, and that the grammatical, convertible into and the same with the logical and historical. Consequently he censures the opinion of those who in the illustration of the Scriptures refer everything to the illumination of the Holy Spirit, as well as that of others who, disregarding all knowledge of the languages, would explain words by things. The 'analogy of faith,' as a rule of interpretation, he greatly limits, and teaches that it can never afford of itself the explanation, of words, but only determine the choice among their possible meanings. At the same time he seems unconscious of any inconsistency between the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible as usually received and his principles of hermeneutics."¹⁸
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- d) See also Wikipedia, "[Scottish common sense realism.](#)"

(3) Justification.

- (a) God gave man language for the purpose of being able to communicate with him.
- (b) Literal hermeneutics is the normal way human beings communicate.
- (c) Basic rules of interpretation are inherent in human communication itself.
- (d) We use rules of interpretation everyday without thinking about them.

¹⁷ A. T. Pierson.

¹⁸ Wikipedia, "Johann August Ernesti."

- (e) The rules of exegesis are generally self-evident.
 - (f) God himself uses and expects man to use language in its normal sense.
 - (g) God communicated plainly in both the Old and New Testaments.
 - (h) Scripture does not call for some special use of language, on some deeper level.
 - (i) As a general rule the New Testament interprets the Old Testament literally.
 - 1) *I.e.*, the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip discussing the referent of Isaiah 53.
 - (j) The prophecies of Jesus' first coming were fulfilled literally, implying the prophecies of his second coming will be fulfilled literally.
 - (k) Without literal hermeneutics, objectivity is lost.
 - (l) Most amillennial evangelicals are consistent literalists in all areas except prophecy. Premillennial evangelical are consistent literalists in all areas.
 - (m) All uses of the Old Testament by New Testament writers were made under divine inspiration and therefore were done authoritatively.
- (4) Result.
- (a) The consistent use of a literal hermeneutic leads to dispensationalism, a distinction between Israel and the church, and premillennial eschatology.

6. Seven Rules.

a. #1: Context rules.

- (1) Context is the environment/setting where something dwells/exists/occurs.
- (2) No one likes to be taken out of context, including God!
- (3) Context is determined by carefully observing what is repeated in the text and how it all relates.
- (4) The context of a text never changes.
- (5) Get to know the literary context (words, grammar, sentences, paragraphs) and the historical context (culture, geography, events, people, ideas).
- (6) Knowing the original languages of Scripture (Hebrew and Greek) is helpful.
- (7) Knowing ancient history is helpful.
- (8) "Words and sentences do not stand in isolation; therefore, the context must be studied in order to see the relation that each verse sustains to that which precedes and to that which follows. Involved are the immediate context and the theme and scope of the whole book." - Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 129.

b. #2: Seek the full counsel of God's word.

- (1) "It takes the entire Bible to read any part of the Bible."¹⁹
- (2) "Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture."²⁰
- (3) Read a part of Scripture in light of the whole.
- (4) Complement primary passages with passages by the same author or in parallel texts.
- (5) The same author will usually use the same terms and images to communicate the same teachings.
- (6) Pay close attention to "first mentions" in Scripture.

¹⁹ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), Introduction to Obadiah.

²⁰ Kay Arthur.

- (7) “If you would understand anything, observe its beginning and its development.”²¹
- (8) “But how did he [Francis Schaeffer] answer questions? His approach was always to look to Scripture for his answer—but not by going to individual verses to find a ‘proof-text.’ He would go to the themes of biblical theology, and these themes would beget his answers.”²²
- c. #3: Scripture never contradicts Scripture.
 - (1) “**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.”²³
 - (2) Keep in mind the principles of progressive revelation, dispensations, and covenants.
 - (a) “**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 distinction 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.”²⁴
 - (3) Harmonise your findings with other teachings of Scripture, fundamental Christian truths, and a Christological centre of divine revelation.
 - (4) When something is unclear, study its first mention in Scripture.
 - (5) “The Bible is its own best interpreter.”²⁵
 - (6) What God reveals as obligatory at one time may be rescinded later.
 - (7) It is imperative to recognise revelation was given progressively.
 - (a) Jn 1.17; 16:24; 2 Co 3:7-11
- d. #4: Don’t base your convictions on an obscure passage of Scripture.
 - (1) “**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.”²⁶
 - (2) Rely heavily on seat of doctrine (*sedes doctrinae*) passages. Prioritise your study on passages for which the express purpose of the author is to address the subject at issue. Didactic writings are especially helpful here.
 - (3) Never derive doctrine from a text that is difficult to understand or interpret. Never choose the obscure over the clear.
- e. #5: Interpret Scripture literally.

²¹ Aristotle.

²² Jerram Barrs, “Francis Schaeffer: The Man and His Message.”

²³ *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982), Article XVII.

²⁴ *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982), Article VIII.

²⁵ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, 16.

²⁶ *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982), Article XXIII.

- (1) “When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense. Therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the fact of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths indicate clearly otherwise.”²⁷
- f. #6: Look for the single meaning of the passage.
 - (1) “**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.”²⁸
 - (2) “**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.”²⁹
 - (3) Seek the original Author/author’s intended meaning to his original audience.
 - (a) Our job is to discover the agenda of the Author/author. We are not to import our own agenda!
 - (b) Our job is exegesis not eisegesis.
 - 1) Exegesis: the interpretation of a text by explaining the author’s ideas and presuppositions.
 - 2) Eisegesis: the interpretation of a text by reading into it one’s own ideas and presuppositions.
 - (4) The original author’s message to the original audience never changes. A text cannot mean today what it never meant to the original audience.³⁰
 - (5) Always read a text in the way it was meant to be read. “This is what the author wants to say. This is his message.”
 - (6) Interpretation is one but application is many.
 - (7) “It is a basic postulate of inspiration that its ultimate meanings are to be found in the intentions of its divine Author, as these are perceived from revelation as a whole.”³¹
 - (8) The authors knew the entire biblical story from start to finish, just as the Author did.³²
 - (9) The intended meaning of the divine Author is sometimes deeper than the intended meaning of the human author.
 - (a) We must allow for a *sensus plenior*, which allows for a fuller (though directly related) meaning in the mind of the divine Author of Scripture. We cannot say

²⁷ David L. Cooper.

²⁸ *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982), Article VII.

²⁹ *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982), Article XVIII.

³⁰ Jonathan Morrow.

³¹ Zane Hodges.

³² Dr. David Klingler, Dallas Theological Seminary.

that the human authors of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words. When we compare Scripture with Scripture, we can discover the fuller intention of the divine Author. Ryrie, Charles C.. *Basic Theology: A Popular, Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (pp. 129-130). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- (b) Thus the work of the biblical interpreter is not necessarily finished when he has come to the meaning intended by the original human author. ... The total context of a passage is necessary for its correct understanding and, therefore, the intention of the secondary author must be subordinated to the intention of the primary Author, God Himself. S. Lewis Johnson, quoted in Ryrie, Charles C.. *Basic Theology: A Popular, Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (p. 130). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.
- (c) **Jn 11:49-53** 49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, You know nothing at all. 50 Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish. 51 He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. 53 So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.
- (d) **1 Pe 1:10-11** 10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Messiah in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Messiah and the subsequent glories.
- (10) Distinguish between meaning and significance.
- (11) For every passage of Scripture there is an exegetical dimension, a theological dimension, and an expositional dimension. It is the job of the preacher/teacher to communicate these three dimensions to his audience today.
- (12) “In all your Bible study look for Christ in the passage under examination. ... Jesus Christ is the subject of the whole Bible and the subject pervades the book. Some of the seemingly driest portions of the Bible became instinct with a new life when we learn to see Christ in them.”³³
- (13) “What trouble many Christians find with portions of the Sermon on the Mount that would be plain enough, if we just came to Christ like a child to be taught what to believe and do, rather than coming as full grown men who already know it all, and who must find some interpretations of Christ’s words that will fit into our mature and infallible philosophy. Many a man is so full of an unbiblical theology he has been taught that it takes him a lifetime to get rid of it, and understand the clear teaching of the Bible. ‘Oh, what can this verse mean?’ many a bewildered man cries. Why, it means what it plainly says; but what you are after is not the meaning God has manifestly put into it, but the meaning you can by some ingenious trick of exegesis twist out of it, and make it fit into your scheme. Don’t come to the Bible to find out what you can make it mean, but to find out what God intended it to mean. Men often miss the real truth of a verse

³³ R. A. Torrey, *How to Study the Bible*.

by saying, ‘But that can be interpreted this way.’ Oh, yes, so it can, but is that the way God intended it to be interpreted?”³⁴

(14) The meaning of the biblical text is author-driven, not audience-driven.

(a) “**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.”³⁵

(15) “In expounding Scripture, we shall be led to adopt that interpretation, which seems most naturally to flow from Divine teaching; and which, if we belonged to no party in the Church, would appear to us to be the genuine meaning.”³⁶

g. #7: Connect every passage with the person and work of Messiah Jesus.

(1) “**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.”³⁷

(2) All Bible stories should be read messianically.

(3) By focusing on Jesus, the star of the drama, we avoid any tendency to over-emphasise a minor plot point or ancillary character.

(4) “Every history in Holy Scripture—if they are to be correctly understood—points to Christ.”³⁸

(5) Only Jesus perfectly inhabits the “the world in front of the text.” Every pericope is a facet of his image, for Scripture portrays his image (Ro 8:29; Col 1:28; 2 Ti 3:16-17). In other words, every pericope tells us how to be more Jesus-like. The Spirit’s words project Jesus’ image that we may better represent the Father’s kingdom.

(a) **Ro 8:29** 29 Those whom [God] foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

(b) **Col 1:28** 28 We proclaim [Messiah], admonishing every person and teaching every person with all wisdom, so that we may present every person complete in Messiah.

(c) **2 Ti 3:16-17** 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, 17 in order that the man of God may be proficient (ἄριτος), equipped for every good work.

(6) “Now every part of the Bible contains the Gospel substantially, but not formally. We must not therefore force unnatural interpretations on Holy Writ for the purpose of constantly introducing the name of Christ.”³⁹

³⁴ R. A. Torrey, *How to Study the Bible*.

³⁵ *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982), Article IX.

³⁶ Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, Kindle Locations 3357-3359.

³⁷ *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982), Article III.

³⁸ Martin Luther (1538).

³⁹ Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, Kindle ed.

- (7) “We believe that all the Scriptures center about the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work in His first and second coming, and hence that no portion, even of the Old Testament, is properly read, or understood, until it leads to Him.”⁴⁰
- (8) Rules from Steve Chronister.⁴¹
 - (a) “Jesus is God. Always is God. Never is not God. He is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. He is always just and good and has no sin or fear (which is sin) ever in him.”⁴²
 - (b) “When God/Christ asks a question it is never for himself. He knows the answer. The question is not for him but for us. He is teaching.”⁴³
 - (c) “When God/Christ weeps it is not for himself. It is for the lost/Israel.”⁴⁴
 - (d) “When God/Christ intervenes something extraordinary has occurred. A great truth has been protected. A great sin has been committed. Or a combination of both.”⁴⁵
 - (e) “The purpose of Israel and the Law is to teach of Christ. Portraits, types, shadows, and doctrine.”⁴⁶

7. Dangers.

- a. Proof texting.
- b. Exegetical fallacies.
- c. Faddish cultural stances.
 - (1) “Even after we make as many allowances as possible for different interpretations of the one set of texts, it is very difficult to avoid an *embarrassing* conclusion: very often current practices and interpretations of the Bible *depend rather more on faddish cultural stances quietly but effectively domesticating the Scriptures, than on close and reverent study of the Scriptures themselves.*”⁴⁷
- d. Demythologising Scripture.
 - (1) “We cannot simply cling to the first century world view—that would mean accepting a view of the world in our faith and religion which we should deny in our everyday life. So we must demythologise Scripture. We don’t eliminate the myth; we just reinterpret it.”⁴⁸
- e. Subjectivism.
 - (1) The writers of Scripture describe nature from the perspective of appearance. There is no pretense of an exact worldview. The authors were concerned with

⁴⁰ Dallas Theological Seminary.

⁴¹ Cliffside Community Chapel, <https://www.cliffside.org>.

⁴² Stephen A. Chronister, Cliffside Community Chapel, <https://www.cliffside.org>.

⁴³ Stephen A. Chronister, Cliffside Community Chapel, <https://www.cliffside.org>.

⁴⁴ Stephen A. Chronister, Cliffside Community Chapel, <https://www.cliffside.org>.

⁴⁵ Stephen A. Chronister, Cliffside Community Chapel, <https://www.cliffside.org>.

⁴⁶ Stephen A. Chronister, Cliffside Community Chapel, <https://www.cliffside.org>.

⁴⁷ D. A. Carson.

⁴⁸ Rudolph Bultmann.

only what many believed subjectively in their time rather than to what happened objectively.⁴⁹

f. Ignoring biblical scholarship.

- (1) “**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.”⁵⁰

8. Degrees of Certainty.

- a. Beyond any doubt.
- b. Beyond a reasonable doubt.
- c. Clear and convincing evidence.
- d. Preponderance of the evidence.
- e. Just a hypothesis.



9. Accountability.

- a. Submit your tentative conclusions to the believing community for insight and accountability.
- b. Admit your exegetical conclusions are not the final answer. Every stage of the process (including the questions asked!) includes perspectival biases, cultural norms, philosophical presuppositions, theological preunderstandings, and personal prejudices. Only in community can these rough edges be blunted.⁵¹
- c. Our interpretations should never conflict with the rule of faith (*regula fidei*), what has been believed by all....
- d. “By reducing biblical exegesis to what’s current, we rob ourselves of the insights and questions of those who have gone before us. When we read our forebears in faith, we engage ideas that otherwise might never occur to us.”⁵²
- e. “**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 extrabiblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches,

⁴⁹ G. C. Berkouwer.

⁵⁰ *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982), Article XXIV.

⁵¹ Dr. Michael Svigel, Dallas Theological Seminary.

⁵² Todd R. Hains.

and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations. **We deny** that extrabiblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it.”⁵³

10. Reflections.

- a. The Bible is both shallow and deep.
 - (1) “For as the word of God, by the mysteries which it contains, exercises the understanding of the wise, so usually by what presents itself on the outside, it nurses the simple-minded. It presents in open day that where-with the little ones may be fed; it keeps in secret that whereby men of a loftier range may be held in suspense of admiration. It is, as it were, a kind of river, if I may so liken it, which is both shallow and deep, wherein both the lamb may find a footing, and the elephant float at large.”⁵⁴
- b. Bible study is hard work.
 - (1) **Pr 25:2** 2 It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.
 - (2) “The Bible is good enough for me, just the old book under which I was brought up. I do not want notes or criticisms, or explanations about authorship or origins, or even cross-references. I don’t need nor understand them, and they confuse me.”⁵⁵
- c. What we do understand is far more important that what we don’t understand.
 - (1) “What I fail to understand in [the Bible’s] inerrant message does not concern me nearly as much as what I do understand.”⁵⁶
- d. Each generation is responsible to freshly interpret the Bible for itself.
- e. Interpreting the Bible is an art, not a science.

⁵³ *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982), Article XX.

⁵⁴ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, 1.pref.4.

⁵⁵ Grover Cleveland.

⁵⁶ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, 17.

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