

III. GENERAL HERMENEUTICS

A. Basic assumptions

1. The Bible is to be interpreted like any other book

- a. By this we mean that the general principles used for interpreting other types of literature are employed in studying the Bible. Thus, in principle we are suspicious of the "oracular" use of Scripture, of allegoristic hermeneutics in their various forms, and of merely Pietistic searching for a "blessing."

People may have been blessed by these other approaches, but we must be suspicious of these techniques

- b. On the other hand, we qualify this principle with the recognition that the Bible is unique by virtue of its inspiration. This does entail some difference of approach to the Bible when dealing with issues like the fulfillment of prophecy, the unity and non-contradictory nature of the Bible, etc.

2. The language (and the message) of the Bible is culturally and historically specific-- biblical language does not miraculously cross cultural or temporal barriers to impart its meaning.

This is true but we must be balanced b/c obviously there are commands (such as NT commands for moral purity) that need little "translation" to our day & culture. - This process is very important & makes the passage ~~seem~~ much clearer, but it takes much work

3. There is a difference between meaning and significance, i.e., between the message of the author to his original audience and the application of that message to the modern reader/hearer. *Of course, sometimes what was said to the original audience also applies directly to us*

The result is that the exegete has minimally a twofold task: 1) to determine the author's intention and 2) to determine the relevance of the author's message for a new cultural-historical situation. To err on either of these points is still to err.

Pietistic approaches bypass #1; academic intellectualism ignores #2

4. Context is crucial. We distinguish two aspects of context.

- a. Historical-cultural context: the concern here is with basic questions of authorship, date, destination, political-geographical-cultural background. We will elaborate this below.

- b. Logical-syntactical context: Grant Osborne suggests that the logical-syntactical context be seen as a descending series of concentric circles with each smaller circle having increased relevance for the interpretation of the passage. *- How the passage fits together*

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