"HOW TO READ THE BIBLE FOR ALL IT'S WORTH"

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Qualifications and presuppositions

Biblical hermeneutics
- The Bible is unique and ordinary because it is divine and human
    - Should the Bible be read like any other book? Yes and no
    - God and human language; the adequacy of human language and the doctrine of creation
- "Hermeneutics" from Greek god Hermes (Acts 14:12)
- The importance of hermeneutics
- Naïve and mature reading
- Microscopic and macroscopic reading

The roles of the Spirit and the church in interpretation
- The need for the Heavenly Teacher as well as earthly teachers
- Pray, pray, pray
- Church tradition (our interpretive and creedal heritage); the Bible's homeland
- The provisional nature of interpretation
- Ethics and hermeneutics (the spiritual condition of the interpreter matters; analogy with interpreting general revelation)

The hermeneutical spiral/dialogue

Obstacles to biblical interpretation
- Biblio-phobia
- Gaps: The strangeness of the Bible
    - The Bible was written *for* us, but not *to* us (Rom. 15:4)
    - Language, culture, and redemptive-history
    - The need for imagination
    - Can we read the Bible like a newspaper?

Does the Bible have a single, overarching theme? A single, overarching structure?

Bible reading in 3-D (note these are *dimensions*, not *perspectives*)
- First dimension: Canonical

- ◆ What is the "canon"?
  - ◊ Rule/standard
  - ◊ Canon and community
  - ◊ How many books?
- ◆ Canon and history (canonical reading considers the historico-cultural situation; canonical reading integrates history and text)
- ◆ Reading the Bible from within
- ◆ Canonical structure: One covenant or two? Two testaments or four? (the symphony of Scripture)
  - ◊ Stages in revelation: Priestly-Kingly-Prophetic-Fulfillment
  - ◊ Different ways of "rightly dividing" the canon, each with its own strengths and weaknesses
- ◆ Mapping out the Bible's deep narrative structure: the Bible as storybook
  - ◊ Stages in history: Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation
  - ◊ The master narrative underlying all other biblical narratives
- ◆ Historical development vs. the finished product (diachronic vs. synchronic reading -- the Bible as work in progress vs. the Bible as completed work)
  - ◊ Reading the Old Testament as a pre-Christian book and as a Christian book
- ◆ Context and cotext
  - ◊ Context = historical situation
  - ◊ Cotext = surrounding text
- ◆ Scripture is its own interpreter (the "analogy of faith")
- ◆ Intertextuality (inner-biblical exegesis)
  - ◊ The interplay and interfacing of texts: how do biblical writers use other biblical texts?
  - ◊ Intertextuality and literary tradition
  - ◊ Read organically, listening for echoes and allusions
    - ∗ Micro- and macro-allusions
    - ∗ Volume of the echo
    - ∗ New Testament as echo chamber
    - ∗ How stories shape stories
    - ∗ Intertextuality as an application of the analogy of faith
  - ◊ Intertextuality and interconceptuality
  - ◊ Read the Bible "in stereo" listening to "both speakers"
- ◆ *Tota Scriptura* (all 49 books!)
- • Second dimension: Literary
  - ◆ The ultimate work of literature
  - ◆ Deep reading
    - ◊ C. S. Lewis' *An Experiment in Criticism*
    - ◊ Features of ancient literature (grid of literary conventions)

- ♦ A Christian aesthetic: the beauty of holiness and the holiness of beauty; beauty and functionality
- ♦ The aesthetics of Scripture: the beauty of the Word
  - ◊ The beauty of the incarnate Word is refracted through the inscripturated Word
  - ◊ Form and content, medium and message: Literary features integral to meaning; the shape of the text
- ♦ The rhetoric of Scripture: the persuasiveness of Scripture
  - ◊ We don't read the Bible simply to acquire information but to be transformed (the *effect* of Scripture on the believing community; contemplation vs. action)
  - ◊ The Spirit and rhetoric (see especially 1 Cor. 2)
  - ◊ Rhetorical analysis
- ♦ Literary form and historicity
- ♦ A literary approach and apologetics (literary criticism vs. historical criticism)
- ♦ Literature and levels of meaning
- Third dimension: Christocentric/Kingdom-centric
  - ♦ A Christocentric view of God and his Word (Christocentric theology and hermeneutics)
    - ◊ Christian vs. theist
    - ◊ The focus of Scripture
    - ◊ The Scriptures are the "cradle" in which Christ is laid, the "swaddling cloths" in which he is wrapped
    - ◊ Avoiding moralism/legalism and doctrinalism
    - ◊ Christocentrism vs. Christomonism
    - ◊ Theocentric vs. Christocentric reading
    - ◊ "All theology is Christology"
    - ◊ The center of the center: Christ's death and resurrection
    - ◊ What is the "gospel"?
    - ◊ Is there any "non-messianic" Scripture?
  - ♦ The unity of Scripture and the covenantal kingdom: Christ and his people (union with Christ/*Totus Christus*); Augustine's first rule of biblical interpretation; Christocentric hermeneutics means ecclesiocentric hermeneutics
  - ♦ The climax of the covenant: Jesus as the new Adam and new Israel -- Behold, all things have become new!
  - ♦ Promise-fulfillment model

Integrated reading: uniting history, literature, and theology into a holistic approach (newspaper vs. novel vs. textbook)
- Historical literature, historical theology
- Literary theology, literary history

- Theological literature, theological history

Inventory of tools available to the reader

The languages of the Bible
- Language history; language theory
- Hebrew
- Aramaic
- *Koine* Greek
- Etymology: use and abuse

Reading without rules
- Is interpretation a science or an art? (analytic mind vs. poetic mind; skills vs. rules)
- The modern obsession with "method" (over content)
    - The "historical-critical method"
    - The "grammatico-historical method"
    - The "law-gospel method"
    - The "inductive method"
    - The "good and necessary consequence method"
- Hermeneutical maximalism (*sensus plenoir*) and layers of meaning (knowing by abstraction vs. knowing by addition; Greek vs. Hebraic models of interpretation; Ockham's razor vs. Bonaventure's beard); "thick exegesis"
    - Interpretation by association (organic reading; looking for connections)
    - Controls (Are we hearing all God is saying or are we putting words into God's mouth?); imagination and exegesis; combining artistic sensitivity with scientific rigor; the dangers of under-reading and over-reading; an iron fence around a garden
- Rule based reading vs. letting the Bible teach you how to read itself
- The genre issue
    - What is a genre?
    - What's the big deal? The good and bad of genre analysis
    - Rules of thumb
    - The pitfalls of "hermeneutical pluralism"
    - Learn to cross genre lines; no pure genres in Scripture; the Bible transcends all human genres; do not impose genre categories upon the Bible

Reading within community
- Pastors and teachers interpret Scripture for the community
    - The Bible and the church (*Sola Scriptura*: Biblical authority vis-à-vis the church and her creeds; Reformed vs. Anabaptistic conceptions of *Sola Scriptura*)

- ♦ The priesthood of all believers; individualistic distortions ("Read the Bible as though no one else has ever read it")
- ♦ Belonging to an interpretive tradition (a home or a prison?); the importance of community; an ecumenical community?; knowing the history of interpretation; "All theology is ecclesiology"
- ♦ Church and academy: "The Babylonian captivity of the Bible"
- Hermeneutics and application are communal endeavors – an isolated individual can no more "perform" the text of Scripture than he can perform a symphony
- *Hearing* the Bible
  - ♦ The "means of grace"
  - ♦ The Bible as public truth
  - ♦ How the Bible shapes us
  - ♦ Does faith come by hearing or reading?
- Word and sacrament
  - ♦ Word and sacrament working together; the sweep of God's saving action
  - ♦ Baptism and illumination
  - ♦ Does taking the Eucharist every week help me understand Scripture better?
- Hermeneutics and ritual

The metaphoric/poetic worldview of Scripture
- "Metaphorical language just doesn't measure up"
  - ♦ The myths of literalism
  - ♦ Modern and postmodern distrust of metaphor (metaphor and truth)
  - ♦ The wonders of metaphor
- "Metaphor is the key to Scripture"
  - ♦ Metaphor, Trinity, creation, Scripture, and application
- Creation as the *poesis* of God
  - ♦ A Christian-theistic account of metaphor
    - ◊ The inadequacies of the medieval defense of metaphor
    - ◊ Metaphor as a theological master concept
  - ♦ Metaphor in text and world
    - ◊ Using words to signify; using things to signify
    - ◊ "Going with the grain of creation"
- Cosmic symbolism (the world as text)
  - ♦ The world reveals God, but *how*?
  - ♦ Basic categories of creation symbolism
  - ♦ Anthropomorphic/theomorphic language
  - ♦ Learning the "language" of biblical symbolism
- Narrative symbolism (symbol in history)
- The reservoir of images

- Learning to read visually
- Biblical symbolism as a language
- Symbolism in Torah (stories, rituals, tabernacle, etc.)
- Symbolism and metaphor in poetry, history, and prophecy
    - Creation and new creation, protology and eschatology
    - Types and symbols
    - Special features of prophecy
- Symbolism in New Testament
    - Symbolic frameworks in Gospels, Acts, and epistles
    - Revelation: The symbolic climax of Scripture

The literary architecture of the Bible
- Poetics and hermeneutics (*how* a text means vs. *what* a text means)
    - A philosophy of biblical literature
    - Structure and meaning
    - Tragedy and comedy (fall and redemption stories; Bible as master story)
    - Basic story shapes/patterns:
        - ◊ Creation-fall-redemption-consummation
        - ◊ Creation-exile-exodus-victory house building
        - ◊ Creation-death-resurrection
        - ◊ Word-response-evaluation
        - ◊ Two Adam stories and laws
        - ◊ Husband/bride stories and laws
    - Dynamic vs. static readings of biblical stories and characters
- Pay attention to detail (there are no brute facts in the Bible – interpret *everything*!)
- Chiasm/palistrophe
- Parallelism (poetic and narrative)
- Numbered patterns
- Inclusions
- Type scenes
- Repetition
- Recapitulation
- Reversals
- Classical rhetorical models (the sixfold pattern)

The literary techniques of Biblical authors
- Irony, satire, sarcasm, hyperbole
- Rough language
- Coded language/key words
- Characterization (flat vs. round; full-fledged vs. type vs. agent; personal description)

- Story telling (perspective/viewpoint/"camera angle," narrative speed, plot formation, rising and falling action, transition from wrath to grace, etc.)
- Parables, allegories, puzzles, and riddles
- Poetry and prophecy (special language)
- Songs and creeds (liturgical fragments)
- Numerology
- Puns/word plays
- Names
- Chronologies and genealogies
- Lists
- Aphorisms
- Chreia
- Rhetorical questions
- Synecdoche

The music of history
- The purpose of history
  - ◆ The Father creates a daughter to marry his Son and the Spirit acts as matchmaker
  - ◆ The developing human consciousness and historical "ages" (Galatians 3-4); the goal: the maturity of humanity (Eph. 4)
  - ◆ The ages of story, law, wisdom, and prophecy
  - ◆ Understanding history and culture in light of God's plan
- The biblical metanarrative: story, history, and eschatology
  - ◆ Narrative as Scripture's foundational genre
  - ◆ Narrative and worldview (how stories work)
  - ◆ Narrative, culture, and community (narrative and identity)
  - ◆ The narrative quality of experience; How did the story get there?; story and Storyteller
  - ◆ Scriptural narrative and application
    - ◊ Finding yourself in the story
    - ◊ "Be who you are"
    - ◊ What I do with the story vs. what the story does to me
    - ◊ The biblical metanarrative as unfinished story
- Story theology and a theology of story
- Analyzing the biblical narrative
  - ◆ The phases of history
  - ◆ Covenants as structuring bonds
  - ◆ Epochs and redemptive history (Scripture's eschatalogical substructure)
    - ◊ Multiple ways of "rightly dividing the word"
    - ◊ New covenants and new creations

- ◊ Narrative substructure of Pauline theology; Was Paul a systematic theologian or a narrative theologian?
- ◊ Peter's "worlds"
- Biblical prophecy
  - ♦ The Old Testament as pervasively "prophetic"
  - ♦ Prophetic history and prophetic prophecy
  - ♦ The anticipatory-definitive-progressive-final pattern
  - ♦ When fulfillment exceeds expectation
  - ♦ Multiple fulfillments, fluidity in fulfillment, and typological patterns
- Biblical typology
  - ♦ How the Spirit coordinates history: correspondence and escalation
  - ♦ Typology vs. allegory
  - ♦ Typology vs. prophecy
  - ♦ Meaning of *typos*
  - ♦ Categories of types
    - ◊ Events, rituals, persons
    - ◊ Explicit and implicit
    - ◊ Creation, redemption, and typology
    - ◊ The problems with "typological minimalism"
  - ♦ Features of typology
  - ♦ Typology within the Old Testament (the rhythms of history established)
  - ♦ Old Covenant as typological era, prefiguring the New Covenant
  - ♦ Typology as metaphor applied to history
  - ♦ Typology outside canonical history (the canonical rhythms continue to reverberate)
- Biblical narratives and historical maturation
  - ♦ Types as mere "static snapshots" and stories as mere "doctrinal illustrations"
  - ♦ Types as "prophetic sonograms" or "dynamic pictures"
  - ♦ Typology and the movement from glory to glory
- Key patterns/archetypes/motifs (especially exile/exodus and new creation themes)
- Patterns in history (exemplars and capstones)
- The rhythm of history: spiral theology
  - ♦ The *downward spiral* of the old covenant (old covenant as failure)
    - ◊ Three environments (sanctuary, home, world) and three falls (against Father, Son, and Spirit) in a threefold pattern (Gen. 1-9; Gen. 12-50; Exile-Restoration Era)
    - ◊ Jesus is expelled for us; all three environments and relationships restored

    ◊ Note: one incomplete mini-spiral (Gen. 9-11), spiral two provides hope of restoration (Gen. 12-50)
  ♦ The *upward spiral* of redemptive history as a whole (old covenant as preparation)
    ◊ The pre-fall Adamic covenant + six sub-covenants of the old covenant era + new covenant = eight covenant administrations/epochs
    ◊ The priestly-kingly-prophetic cycle x 2 + the new covenant (in which Christ is our priest, king, and prophet)
  ♦ Beyond 70 A. D.: Patterns in history
    ◊ *Zeitgeist* and distinct historical periods
    ◊ Applying the spiral to world history: Where are we in the spiral? What's next?
    ◊ Integrating downward and upward spirals

Other special features
- Sacred time (God and the calendar; various ways of tracking time; recurrent time frames)
- Sacred space (theological geography)
- Ritual and sacrament
- Symbolic/prophetic actions
- Symbolic colors, metals, jewels, clothes, plants, animals, heavenly bodies, etc.
- Symbolic numbers

Spanning the horizons: Applying an ancient revelation to today's world
- The primacy of ethics, the power of the Spirit
- We have not understood the text until we have applied it and it has transformed us – understanding entails performance; the hermeneutical project is not complete until we embody the truth of the text in our lives individually and corporately
- The necessity and difficulty of applying Scripture
  ♦ Scripture does not give us an abstract, timeless ethic; we cannot "just do what the Bible says"
  ♦ The cultural embeddedness and the cultural transcendence of the Bible
    ◊ To say "The whole Bible is culturally conditioned" is to make a statement about how it should be interpreted, not its authority
  ♦ Epochal/trajectory adjustments
    ◊ Living under the authority of the Old Covenant Scriptures in the New Covenant age: Conjugating the Old Testament into New Covenant forms
    ◊ New Testament as trans-epochal (*krisis* ethic); How directly does the New Testament apply to us?

- Root metaphors/focal images: community, cross, new creation
- Application as metaphor-making (NT examples) and enactment
- Risky metaphors:
    - An unfinished drama/script: How is the story supposed to go?
    - A score composed for others to sing: Are we in tune?
    - Achievement and implementation: Are we being the body of Christ for the world? Are we living out Jesus' new way of being Israel?
- Application by way of imitation, rule/principle, fulfillment/transformation, contrast, and analogy/metaphor/paradigm
- The missing piece: wisdom

Putting it all in perspective: A short history of biblical hermeneutics
- Ancients: Early Jewish and Rabbinical exegesis
- Apostles: A story completed, a promise fulfilled, a law transformed
- Patristics: The Spirit and the Letter
    - Alexandrians vs. Antiochenes (allegory vs. typology)
    - The rule of faith (and love)
    - Creation-fall-redemption pattern (Athanasius)
- Medievals: The four-fold method (*Quadriga*)
    - The literal sense
    - The spiritual sense(s)
        - ◊ Allegorical
        - ◊ Anagogical
        - ◊ Moral
- Reformation: The *sensus plenoir* debate; rejection of allegory; correcting Medieval abuses
- Modern and Postmodern: Philosophy and interpretation
    - The linguistic, literary, and narrative "turns"
    - Modern: Is presupposition-less interpretation possible?
        - ◊ Grammatico-historical exegesis (minimalism; rationalism)
        - ◊ Kant, the Enlightenment, and the rise of the historical-critical method; "scientific exegesis"
        - ◊ Presuppositions and interpretation (the Bible as God's interpretation of history; we offer an interpretation of an interpretation)
    - Postmodern: Is "objective" interpretation possible?
        - ◊ What is the "public" task of the interpreter?
        - ◊ Is there a meaning in this text?
        - ◊ Multi-referentiality
        - ◊ Do we read the text or does the text read us?
    - Getting a foothold
        - ◊ A Trinitarian approach to the location of meaning

     ∗ Author, text, and audience
    ◊ Identifying text with interpretation (Is all interpretation provisional?)
    ◊ Living as a Scripture shaped community
- What's next?
  - ♦ Critical realism; symbolic realism
  - ♦ Towards a Reformed *Quadriga*
    - ◊ Literary-historical
    - ◊ Theological/christological/ecclesiological
      - ∗ Symbolic/metaphorical
      - ∗ Typological/eschatalogical
      - ∗ Ethical/applicational

Special problems in biblical interpretation
- Alleged internal contradictions
- Alleged contradictions with the "assured results of scholarship"
- The role of general revelation in reading special revelation

Common exegetical mistakes