

Some Basic Hermeneutic Principles Established By Christ for the Exegetes of All Centuries

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Modern hermeneutics is in a crisis. It is confused, disoriented, and in a state of revolution. Each exegete interprets as he thinks best and moreover wants his particular perspective to form one of the basic norms in the hermeneutic world, or at least each exegete wants his particular interpretation to be kept in the forefront of the academic world.¹ As Larkin has precisely noted, the pluralism of the postmodern hermeneutic enterprise is one of chaotic diversity that generates in its participants a cynical or apathetic lack of commitment.² Third world biblical hermeneutics can roughly be divided into two categories, a liberation focus and a culturally sensitive approach.³ Over the past years, western theological circles have mainly been exposed to the theology of the Latin American liberation movement with its strict liberation agenda. The feminist movement, which has been felt in all cultural contexts, has also left its mark on the field of hermeneutics,⁴ with various feminist interpretations emerging in recent years. This ex-

¹Barton emphasizes that this situation is not so much an issue regarding the interpretation of any particular book, but is more acute in regards to the methods that should be employed in studying them all. John Barton, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John Barton (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 1; hereafter *Biblical Interpretation*. Uríbarri in turn mentions that the plurality of current exegetical methods have notably divorced the exegesis from the theology. Gabino Uríbarri, "Interlocutores de la teología de la segunda etapa postconciliar," *Estudios Eclesiásticos*, 73 (1998), 172.

²William J. Larkin, "Culture, Scripture's Meaning, and Biblical Authority: Critical Hermeneutics for the 90s," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 2 (1992), 172.

³R. S. Sugirtharajah, "Vernacular Resurrections: An Introduction," in *Vernacular Hermeneutics*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1999), 11.

⁴For a synthesis of the liberation theologies see, T. Schmeller, "Liberation Theologies," John Hayes, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 2:66-74, hereafter *DBI*. For a description of the method of feminist interpretation see, V. C. Phillips, "Feminist Inter-

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treme diversity of exegetical proposals⁵ could well be explained as “symptoms of the decomposition of interpretation and hermeneutics” at the current time.⁶

Now—as the modern world collapses into postmodernism,⁷ fearing some unknown apocalyptic cataclysm on the threshold of a new millennium, or when the idea of a stable home is becoming more of an elusive concept even as we extol the global village dream or when a reevaluation of the ancestral and native is looked upon to be the element *sine qua non* of the exegetical task—now, more than ever, we need to look for orientation in the Scriptures, always bearing in mind the interpretive principles instituted by the Lord of the Scriptures Himself. We believe that in His Word, God Himself has already given us guiding principles for any hermeneutic task.

1. Ignorance of what God has revealed can only produce an ignorant and mistaken hermeneutic.

“*You do err, ignoring the Scriptures.*” Matt 22:29

“*You err a lot.*” Mark 12:24, 27

In these verses Jesus uses two verbs that are so clear that there is no room for supposition. To err⁸ and to ignore⁹ are serious faults in any attempt at exegesis. It is impossible to rightly interpret divine revelation while at the same time ignoring it.¹⁰ In these two passages Jesus not only speaks of what happens

pretation,” *DBI*, 1:338-398. For a perspective on this interpretation, see Ann Loades, “Feminist Interpretation,” *Biblical Interpretation*, 50-56.

⁵For a detailed discussion of modern hermeneutic theories, see John Barton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, especially Anthony Thiselton, “Biblical Studies and Theoretical Hermeneutics,” 25-113. For a review of the hermeneutical trends regarding Old Testament studies, see L. Alonso-Scholke, “Trends: Plurality of Methods, Priority of Issues,” *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 285-292.

⁶Joseph Ratzinger, *La interpretación bíblica en crisis. Problemas del fundamento y la orientación de la exégesis hoy* (Lima: Vida y Espiritualidad, 1955), 11.

⁷Larkin, “Culture, Scripture’s Meaning, and Biblical Authority,” 175.

⁸*Planao* is “to err, be led astray.” The passive form *planasthe* is “to be deceived, led astray.” The Greek term is equivalent to “wander astray, to be lost, out of the way, wrong.” (Herbert Braun, s.v., “*planao*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968], 6:229-231, hereafter *TDNT*). The term implies to be entirely out of reality, or the truth, or to be totally clueless, wrong, and deceived.

⁹*Eidotes*, is the act. ptc. m. pl. of *oida* that means “to learn, know how, be familiar with, know, acknowledge, understand.” The participle is really explicatory of *touto* (e.g., *dia touto planasthe, me eidotes* . . . , “this is why you are in error, you ignore [do not know] . . .”). A. T. Robertson, *The Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 700. The ptc. preceded by *me* just means “do not know, do not understand, do not recognize, ignore.”

¹⁰Jesus mentions two crucial things of which the Pharisees were ignorant: “the Scriptures and the power of God”—*tas grafas, mede ten dunamin tou theou*. The Scriptures are a direct reference to the set of the sacred books that contain the divine revelation. In fact Jesus is referring to the Old Testament canon that was at that time respected as inspired by God. The actual Christian consensus understands that the Scriptures are the canonical books of both Old and New Testaments.

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when the given revelation is ignored, but goes on to predict the degree of error at which one arrives by utilizing this ignorance: “You err a lot.” That is to say, one arrives at a gross error.

A central feature of this ignorance as it is seen today is the refusal to accept the Scriptures as God’s revelation of truth. This mindset limits God’s power to the human finite. God has thousands of ways of working, and we know those ways He has revealed to us. Even these we only vaguely understand through a veil of ignorance. Paul in his writings demonstrates the corrupt situation in which the Greek-Roman world of his day was submerged due to the ignorance (voluntary or involuntarily) of what God has revealed, with all its disastrous consequences (Rom 1:19-25).

2. A hermeneutic consensus of the theology in vogue is not a sure guide to the correct understanding of what Scripture reveals.

“Should I forgive him up to seven times?” Matt 18:21-22

“Why then say the scribes . . . ?” Matt 17:10

“Who do men say the Son of Man is?” Matt 16:13-14

“Are you at this time going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?” Acts 1:6

These four biblical examples demonstrate that the theology in vogue, as determined by the hermeneutic consent of the scholarly world, is not a sure guide to understanding what the Scriptures declare concerning any matter revealed in them. The popular hermeneutic consensus misled the people of God when the Savior was born, because they did not even know the “fulfillment of the time.” The true nature of the Kingdom of God as well as of its King had also been completely distorted. And this same misguided consent blinded the theologians, leaders, and ruling class of Jesus’ days to the point that they rejected Him. It also confused the disciples when Jesus was crucified. Their messianic interpretations collapsed when they saw the One they thought would redeem Israel sentenced, killed, and crucified (cf. Luke 24:20-21). For them the death and the resurrection of the Master didn’t fit in the puzzle of the current hermeneutic consensus. They didn’t understand it; neither did they accept it. And even afterwards, accepting the current consensus confused the disciples and filled them with false hopes when they saw Jesus resuscitated (cf. Acts 1:6).

The preceding centuries have proved the disappointing nature of biblical interpretation based on the premise of hermeneutic consensus. In 1844 the hermeneutic agreement among serious Bible students led to overwhelming disappointment. Hermeneutic consensus has not led to a clear understanding of the message of Jesus’ intercessory ministry in the heavenly sanctuary as revealed in Daniel 8:14. And now in end times it should not be surprising that the same forms of hermeneutic consensus will make a come-back to universalize and impose its premises and deceive if possible even the elect.

We would do well to remember that the hypotheses and paradigms that have guided interpretation are neither invariable nor irreplaceable. Scholarly

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interpretive proposals are continually being revised and replaced. The hermeneutic field has always been a changing landscape, and this will continue.¹¹

3. The hermeneutic of the text based on tradition—"you heard that it was said"—is not enough. The exegete must submit himself to the divine authority of the "but I tell you."

"You have heard¹² that it was said . . . but I tell you." Matt 5:17-48

Today as never before modern exegetes have an incredible variety of useful tools at their disposal. The biblical text has been examined¹³ from grammatical, philological, archaeological, political, philosophical, sociological, psychological, and theological points of view. The majority of these focuses and conclusions are useful and illustrative. All form a part of the "you have heard that it was said" which the exegete should know, for it is a valuable and undeniable help. However, the biblical exegete needs to hear, above all, the One who is the supreme authority in hermeneutics. Only His "but I tell you" gives the correct theological perspective so peculiar to the Word of God. And it is precisely this peculiar biblical theological perspective with its God-oriented message that is so necessary today.

Matthew 5:17-48 shows explicitly the hermeneutic importance of the "but I tell you" opposing, enlarging, or clarifying the accepted positions of "that it was said." Here the dimensions of the five cases presented surpass the repetitive treatment the text is given in the then current legalistic form. The "but I tell you" adds the true theological dimension to the interpretation so the attentive exegete can find the perfect meaning as (cf. 5:48) taught by the Lord of perfection.

4. In the biblical message there is always something that is beyond the limits of human exegetic-hermeneutic.

"That which is been born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is been born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3:5-6

In this verse two hermeneutic schools stand in contrast. One school is tradi-

¹¹James Luther Mays, David L. Petersen, and Kent Harold Richards, eds., *Old Testament Interpretation. Past, Present and Future. Essays in Honor of Gene M. Tucker* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 7.

¹²*Ekousate* (aor. ind. act. *akouo*, "to hear"). In the light of rabbinical parallelisms, here this verb could be translated as "you have understood," and it refers to the interpretations the rabbis usually gave to the Old Testament passages. Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 10.

¹³It is well known in the current hermeneutical atmosphere that many a renowned writer in the field of Biblical studies first proclaims as a 'new paradigm' "his reading of the text—giving it a slanting from its political-historical interest and the historical meaning of the Bible to a socio-historical style of lecture, sociological literary or postmodern." Then, in a parallel manner, these very interpreters usually fight, arguing that their "new paradigm in no way is new, but the restoration of an older method that in some way was dimmed by the historical-critical method." Barton, *Biblical Interpretation*, 1-2.

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tional, cautious, doubtful, calculating, limited, cold, and human. The other school is creative, sure, limitless, dynamic, based on Scripture, and of heavenly origin. While the traditional school sought only to know, the other sought to share and to teach. And in this dynamic hermeneutic school, Jesus took each step with certain security, founded on the Scriptures and His own divine authority. Clearly, Christ's approach showed rabbinical exegesis with purely human resources to be limited, indeed useless. Earthly things cannot be seen by the human exegete in their real dimension, for celestial realities are far beyond purely human understanding (cf. John 3:10-12). Even Christ Himself is seen as simply another rabbi and nothing else. He is not perceived as the Lamb of God who should be understood and exalted in His true redemptive dimension.

Due to the inherent character of the Holy Scripture, that is, its divine origin, the conviction that the exegete has in regard to its origin will largely predict his hermeneutic approach. Alonso affirms:

A fundamental characteristic that we find in the Bible is that the sacred writers proffer a communication claiming to be a word, a message from God. Jews and Christians believe that these authors were inspired or assisted in a special way for a divine gift, since the message that they transmit belongs, in the first place, to the sphere of God, who wants to communicate with us. The hermeneutical orientation one takes with regard to the Bible will depend a great deal on what one understands by "inspiration"; in the same way, one's concept of the inspiration concept will substantially mark one's hermeneutical orientation.¹⁴

Exegetes who consider the Bible simply an outstanding book are limited to a very narrow framework of biblical understanding. They should understand and accept that the Bible is in fact inspired by God. Otherwise, from the start, the direction of their exegesis will be uncertain and their hermeneutic will be essentially erroneous.

5. Without the illumination of the divine Paraclete there can be no true exegetical understanding of the Scripture.

"The Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all truth." John 16:13-15

Mechanical exegesis is one thing, but the correct understanding achieved through the procedure of exegetical extraction of the text's content is quite another. Certainly, the steps of the exegetical procedure are very useful and necessary in examining the book, chapter, or text that the exegete chooses to study. But it must be remembered that the passage is part of a writing that has come to us via inspiration (cf. 2 Tim 3:16). Its authorship transcends the human pen. The one who seeks to study the Bible should look for the illumination of the One who breathed it. In each of the mentioned verses Jesus emphasizes the fact that

¹⁴Luis Alonso-Schokel, *A Manual of Hermeneutics* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1998), 22.

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the divine Paraclete is the only true source of eschatological knowledge. The triple “he will make you know,”¹⁵ expresses the constant activity carried out by the celestial Paraclete in the task of guiding and leading¹⁶ all who want to know what is revealed in the prophecies or the message of the Word of God. Jesus emphasizes that the illumination of the Holy Spirit is vital to the completion of the exegetical task. Without the Holy Spirit’s help exegesis becomes a mere conjectural, theoretical, textual analysis lacking the essential element of the truth that we all desperately need to know and understand.

6. A hermeneutic based on mere human tradition doesn’t honor the Word of God but rather invalidates it.

“Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?” Matt 15:1-3

Traditions are collections of experiences lived in a certain environment or society together with the diverse beliefs adopted along with these past experiences. They could be summarized as the way in which a certain society has tried to solve its difficulties and enigmas by means of pure human intellect. They are the customs or ideas that have become fixed as norm and belief for all by force of repetition. Jesus was prepared to confront and even call for the eradication of tradition on several occasions.¹⁷ Jesus mentioned that no matter how refined or fixed a tradition is, it does not form a valid criteria in the hermeneutics of the Word of God. It doesn’t matter how old, ingrained, in fashion, or respectable these traditions are. They should not be the interpretive norm of the Word of God, because “all the traditions are human and fallible.”¹⁸ The Scriptures transcend any human tradition, but no human tradition can transcend the Word of God. The Holy Scriptures did not emanate from the traditional heap of human knowledge; they originated in the Arcanum of the Eternal one.

7. The diligent exegete always finds delight and new treasures in the Word of God.

“Every learned scribe in the Kingdom of heaven . . . brings out of his treasure things new and old.” Matt 13:51-52

¹⁵The repetition of *anaggelei* underlines the emphasis on this specific aspect of the Holy Spirit’s Work. Rogers, Jr. & Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key*, 220.

¹⁶ISEDET, *Clave Lingüística del Nuevo Testamento Griego* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones La Aurora, 1960), 218.

¹⁷The tradition of the elders was the oral tradition that formed the Talmud. This body of traditions accumulated during the centuries, represented the rabbinical interpretation of the Torah, and was considered mandatory for all aspects of Jewish life. The Pharisees gave the oral tradition a value similar to that of the written law, arguing that Moses received the oral law at Sinai, then it was transmitted orally to the prophets and in the same way to the members of the Great Synagogue. Frank Stagg, “Matthew,” *The Broadman Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman, 1969), 8:165-166.

¹⁸Robert Morgan, “The Bible and Christian Theology,” *Biblical Interpretation*, 123.

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Throughout the centuries the Bible has been an inexhaustible source of investigation. During the last century, the work of the biblical scholars has been refined and increasingly specialized as different methodological proposals have unfolded.¹⁹ Biblical interpretation continues as a vital and central part of biblical studies, and the continuous development of new methods has only served to reflect the serious and central nature of this interest.²⁰ In fact, the biblical field has not shrunk as an area of investigation, but grown.²¹

Biblical exegesis is always an adventure. Besides being exciting, it is loaded with expectation and is well-rewarded. The possibilities of true knowledge by means of biblical exegesis are infinite. Each text contains mysteries and truths that are revealed in a real and gradual way. Each word of the Word of God is part of the tapestry of knowledge that God has given to man. In saying “every scribe,” Jesus includes all who perform or want to undertake the exegetical task. But their exegesis should lead them to be “learned in the Kingdom of heaven.” That is to say, it should transform exegetes into experts in the revealed eternal realities of God as revealed in His Word, now opened by means of the exegetical task. For exegetes the task is pleasant and full of recompense, for they constantly discover in the treasure of the revelation new truths without neglecting the old truths that are always a basic part of new knowledge. This exegetical approach is closely linked to the reality of progressive knowledge, the continued “knowing of YHWH” (cf. Hosea 6:3) in that dimension where God Himself wants us to “fully be able to understand.” He wants us to understand “Christ’s love that exceeds all knowledge,” so that we may be filled with the “fullness of God” (cf. Eph 3:17-19).

8. An incorrect hermeneutic always causes ruin.

“If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” Matt 15:12-14

It should not be surprising that the Pharisees were very offended when their hermeneutical premises were shown to be false due to their incorrect exegesis. They believed themselves to be bearers of light to the blind pagans, but the only thing they offered was a different blindness.²² Jesus noted that not only the interpretation of a passage suffers if it is incorrectly exegeted. The resulting falsehood causes double damage in that it deceives the interpreter and misleads the one taught by it. Jesus calls both blind men by the same Greek term.²³ They are

¹⁹Gina Hens-Piazza, *Of Methods, Monarchs, and Meanings. A Soteriological Approach to Exegesis* (Macon: Mercer UP, 1996), 1.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 155.

²¹Alonso-Schokel, *Manual of Hermeneutics*, 156.

²²Jesus condemns them in such a way because their blindness was the direct result of their hardening and insensibility toward the things of God. F. Graber, s.v., “blind,” *TDNT* 1:220.

²³*Tuflos* is not only used in the total sense of the incapability to see with the eyes. It was also commonly used in the sphere of the capability of knowledge and understanding. (Wolfgang Schrage, s.v., “*tuflos, tufloo*,” *TDNT* 8:276). In this way, to call someone blind implied that that person was not only totally incapable of knowing but also was incapable understanding that this knowledge was

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unable to see the reality of, or understand the truth of, their common destination—namely perdition. Countless interpretations nowadays are no more than an exegesis of theories imposed on the Writings in a vain attempt at forcing these theories to reveal themselves to be true. These interpretations are then also products of the blindness that produces a double blindness about celestial things.

9. Many exegetes are moved by deceit.

“Do not be deceived,, for many will come in my name.” Luke 21:8

Since mankind was first deceived by the master deceiver there has not been a moment in human existence where the human race has not been besieged. Our first parents believed in the hermeneutics of the deceiver concerning the truthfulness and kindness of the Creator, and they followed the exegesis of the father of lies, rejecting the authority of the Word of God. The false hermeneutics of the tempter led them to believe the lie of immortality, and as a result we live with the terrible reality of sin, suffering, and death. There is no area of human activity that has not been affected by satanic cunning. Unhappily, hermeneutics is no exception. There are methods and concepts that have flooded the hermeneutic discussion whose authors have had the sole purpose of undermining the Word of God. Jesus has warned us of the multiplicity of these methods and concepts, of their purposes, and also of the uselessness of paying attention to these methods and concepts.

10. The Scriptures are always the real source of all true biblical hermeneutic criteria.

“How do you read?” Luke 10:26

“Have not you read?” Matt 12:1-8; 19:4; 22:31

“Did you never read?” Matt 21:16, 42

Time after time, Jesus reminded his listeners and disciples that teachings and doctrinal beliefs should have their real source in the Scriptures. In current academic circles a lot of discussion revolves around the correct “reading” of the Bible.²⁴ Although each of the current methods can make a contribution towards the understanding of some aspect of the Bible from a new and different perspective, the philosophical and often theological bases of such methods are often far from the purpose for which the Scriptures were given. Under the umbrella of these methodologies²⁵ new readings are often imposed on the biblical text which

necessary.

²⁴E. V. McKnight, “Reader-Response Criticism,” *DBI*, 2:370-373; see also, David Jasper, “Literary Readings of the Bible.” *Biblical Interpretation*, 21-34.

²⁵These readers declare that in reading in postmodern ways, they represent modernity having achieved its maturity; and besides, they themselves believe that in this way they have rescued the Bible from its “ecclesiastical and academic casuistries expressed in hermeneutical ways that have grown into an ecclesiastical grade during centuries.” Robert P. Carroll, “Poststructuralist Approaches. New Historicism and Postmodernism,” *Biblical Interpretation*, 51.

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carry worrisome presuppositions.

With reason Fokkelman states that hermeneutics is the art of explanation, and that the Biblical text is so complex, so rich in meanings and sense, that explanations can only come from the Bible itself by means of a conscientious hermeneutics.²⁶

Jesus warns us repeatedly that the Scriptures are always the real source of all true biblical hermeneutic approaches. He repeatedly pointed out to His contenders the fact that they read the Biblical text in a fickle manner. There is an incorrect and inappropriate way of “reading” the Scriptures as well as a correct way of reading them. The correct way stems from an acceptance of the basic literalness of what the Bible means or the reality of what it reveals. Its message, no matter how cryptic it may appear, can only be correctly read in the light of the divine revelation. Often the doctrinal or textual difficulties in the ecclesiastical or theological environment have been derived from a wrong reading of the biblical text.

11. The true biblical hermeneutics should always be “Christ-centered.”

“Search the Scriptures . . . they are they which testify²⁷ of me, and you don’t want to come to me that you might have life . . . for had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me.” John 5:39-40, 46

“And he declared to them what the prophets said of Him in all the Scriptures.” Luke 24:26-27, 44-46

“This is life eternal . . . that they might know . . . Jesus Christ.” John 17:3

The true purpose and goal of all Christian hermeneutics is to know what the Scriptures say of Christ and all that has been revealed of Him in them. From the first Mosaic pages until the last letter of John, there is a conspicuous link—impossible to ignore—that unites the total revelation with the center of the Scriptures—Jesus Christ. There is no book in Scripture that does not present this unequalled Center in some way or another, and attentive exegetes, even while they investigate other biblical topics, will notice how their study is intrinsically linked to the Center.

12. Biblical hermeneutics should be an edifying and giving enterprise.

“ . . . freely you have received, freely give.” Matt 10:8

The hermeneutical mission is searching, edifying, and serving. As the exegete comes into contact with the source of infinite wisdom, he begins a process

²⁶J. P. Fokkelman, *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible at the Interface of Hermeneutics and Structural Analysis. Vol. I: Ex. 15, Deut. 32, and Job 3*—*Studia Semitica Neerlandica* 1 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1998), 23.

²⁷Here the use of *marturousai* (act. ptc. pres. *martureo*) emphasizes the always relevant and contemporary nature of the biblical testimony. That is to say, the Scriptures are still witnessing Christ’s assertions. If any passage is mentioned explicitly, this constitutes an important hermeneutical key. Rogers, Jr. and Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key*, 195.

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of unimaginable learning. At the same time, as he delves into the Word, he discovers new horizons and perspectives that enlarge his knowledge and understanding of the revealed Word, because scripture always “enlightens the understanding” (Psalm 119:130). This edifying task should however rebound in a double benefit, because this should be poured out for the edification of others, so the dynamics of grace and service, of giving and sacrifice, can be known. Or, as Jesus Himself puts it, “*freely you have received, freely give.*” True hermeneutics will always be both receptive and sharing. Otherwise it would be denying the very essence of the examined Word, since the Word never stops acting. The author of the inspired Word assures us that His Word will never “return empty” (Isa 55:11). Within the dynamics of the biblical hermeneutics, exegetes are privileged in a double way—as apprentices discovering the mysteries of the divine revelation and as teachers of what they have learned. Even exegetes are included within the maxim of, “it is more blessed to give than to receive . . .” (Acts 20:35).

13. The parameter of all correct biblical hermeneutics was, is, and will be the Word of God.

“ . . . *it is written* . . . ” Matt 4:1-10

Any method that deprives the Bible of the absolute right of being its own interpreter should be revised if not rejected. The presuppositions of postmodern, progressive, and liberal scholars have in one way or another manifested the common goal of imposing their own approaches on the Scriptures. In Matthew 4 the audacity with which the deceiver seeks to impose his deceptive hermeneutics on Jesus is astounding. The encouraging aspect of the passage is the way Jesus makes the Word of God the parameter of His flawless hermeneutics. For Jesus, what the Scriptures say, God said.²⁸

In the same way, when Jesus confronted the exegetes of his time who were confused by the sophisms of the eternally deceitful “you will not surely die” theory, He invited them to accept in all seriousness what “Moses and the prophets” had already written on the matter. All the Hellenistic philosophical arguments and the fables already accepted by the hermeneutics of the Pharisees and Sadducees with respect to the immortality of the soul were to be discarded by the clear revelation that Moses and the prophets had given on the problem. This hermeneutic solution, besides being clear, is simple and comprehensible, biblical and Christ-centered. Were it not, it would not be a true hermeneutic solution. The parameter for a correct hermeneutic is the Word of God.

²⁸Undoubtedly Jesus not only believed the veracity of the Old Testament history, but He also utilized it as the ultimate authority in questions of faith and conduct and took the Scriptures as inspired. “To Christ the Old Testament was true, authoritative, inspired. To him the God of the Old Testament was the living God, and the teaching of the Old Testament was the teaching of the living God. To him, what Scripture said, God said.” John Wenham, *Christ and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 17, 30, 44.

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With reason Hiebert affirms that “it is the divine revelation in the Scriptures that finally defines the questions, that provides the categories, and sketches the methods that help us to see the reality. It is this world well-known by God, not the worlds that we create, that is the real world. All the other systems, including that of the sciences, should arise from this biblical realism.”²⁹

As the end of this century approaches and we embark on the third millennium it would be well to remember that the hermeneutical approaches established by Christ did not diminish the force of Scripture. Rather, they changed the direction of the rabbinical interpretation and became a forceful Christian hermeneutic which completely changed biblical studies from then on. This same dynamic is now needed so the Word of God can complete its individual or collective purpose of teaching, of edification, of giving, of service, of convincing, of orientation, of justice, and even perfection in all good work (cf. 2 Tim 3:16).³⁰

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²⁹Paul Hiebert, “Beyond Anti-Colonialism to Globalism,” *Misiology* 19 (1991), 275.

³⁰ Speaking of good work, I would like to thank my exegetical colleagues Gerald and Chantal Klingbeil of Peruvian Union University for translating this paper for me.