

**NO
HERMENEUTICAL
GYMNASTICS,**

PLEASE!



**THE ESSENTIALITY OF
CORRECT BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION**

by Louis Rushmore

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**Introductory Chapter by
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Cover art by Betty Choate

**J.C. Choate/Louis Rushmore Publications
P.O. Box 72
Winona, MS 38967**

**662.283.1192
www.WorldEvangelism.org
www.GospelGazette.com**

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The Importance of Our Study

By Gary Hampton

The Problem

The Bible is currently being attacked from numerous directions. It is relatively easy for most Christians to identify the fallacies in the arguments set forth by atheists. Few will find their faith overwhelmed because of them. However, a much larger number will not even recognize the danger in statements made by some who profess to believe in God and wish to express a desire to pursue His will. For instance, there are those who would try to explain the role of women in the leadership and public worship of the church by saying Paul's words were directed to people living in a different culture and cannot be applied in the same way in our culture.

At first glance, there seems to be some validity to such a point. After all, the customs of a first century city containing a temple to the goddess Aphrodite would be quite different from the towns and cities in which most of us live. Surely, we might say, God would expect us to recognize those old rules were not meant for our time. However, a closer examination of Paul's statements will reveal that he is arguing from principles God laid down in the very creation of the world!

Additionally, there are those who are proposing that we need a new hermeneutic to properly understand God's Word. "The main interest of those espousing the new hermeneutic within the churches of Christ is destroying the effectiveness of the old hermeneutic. There is special interest in attacking the use of command, example and necessary inference" (Miller 114). Specific attacks on the old hermeneutic often begin with the charge that it relies too heavily upon human reasoning. Of course, even those following the new hermeneutic use reason to help them understand the Bible. As Miller observes, the most important thing is to be sure

such reasoning is sound, or correct (115).

Further, “The ‘new hermeneutic’ is rooted in subjectivity and relativism in its approach to Scripture. It seeks to give man more say in his religious pursuits, while attributing such subjective inclination to the Holy Spirit” (117). The birth of these types of ideas may have come because of a number of different factors. Among them is the fact that the majority of institutions of higher education do not believe there is any such thing as logically certain truth. Instead, truth is viewed as being in a constant state of flux (124). The weakness within such thinking can be found in numbers of passages which demonstrate that God delivered a law and expected man to keep it. For instance, our Lord said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15 Note: This and all future quotations from Scripture in this chapter will be from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.). John told early Christians, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). Other passages clearly underscore God’s expectation that man would obey Him (1 Samuel 15:22; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Romans 6:16; Hebrews 5:9).

Obviously, we need to spend some time learning how to view the various passages of God’s Word with the ultimate goal of discovering more fully His will for our lives. For this reason, it is necessary to study of biblical interpretation, or hermeneutics.

Some Important Definitions

D.R. Dungan, in his book *Hermeneutics*, defines his subject as “the science of interpretation.” Unfortunately, many today are proposing each should read Scripture and ask only, “What does this mean to me in my circumstances at this moment in time.” They would even suggest the answer to such a question is provided by the Holy Spirit without any further effort on our part to delve more deeply into the

words God used and the message He set forth. The truth of the matter is that God used His Spirit to reveal the mind of God to man and guide him into all truth.

But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:9-11)

Jesus told his disciples they were not ready to receive all of his instructions at the time He walked on the earth. “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:12-13).

So, those who would actively seek out God’s will for their lives must become interested in philology and exegesis. This is true because one who is interested in philology is a lover of words and is dedicated to the study of them. An exegete is one who tries to draw out of a text all that the writer put into it. Our purpose will be to learn to effectively practice the science of interpretation, the study of the words God used and learn to draw everything out of a given passage that God placed there for us.

Our Purpose Expressed By Other Truth Lovers

We live in a time when it seems many have turned their backs on the will of God. Like ancient Jerusalem, it seems the protective walls have been torn down and God’s people stand in jeopardy. We can take a lesson from Ezra, who,

along with Nehemiah, sought to restore the walls of the city and return to a proper worship of the true God. It is time for those who would truly be God's people to, like Ezra, prepare their hearts to seek his law, do it and teach others to do the same (Ezra 7:10).

Some things remain hidden or secret, but those things which are revealed are uncovered so that man can do God's will (Deuteronomy 29:29). Scripture is not the product of man's imagination, but it is God's spoken Word as revealed by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). To understand this revealed will, man must "be diligent to present yourself approve to God," which would involve much more than sitting down to a desk (2 Timothy 2:15). We should especially notice the careful, respectful attention given to the study of God's Word during Nehemiah's and Ezra's day (Nehemiah 8:1-8). David describes (Psalm 1:1-2) the blessed man as one who meditates on the law of God day and night.

The Importance of Knowing and Obeying God's Will

The importance of knowing and obeying God's will is vividly portrayed in Abraham's conversation with the rich man in Luke 16. After realizing there was nothing that could be done to ease his own torment, the rich man asked that Lazarus be sent back to earth to warn his five brothers lest they join him in torment. Abraham told him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." The rich man evidently did not think they would pay attention to the written Word, but did think they would heed the words of one returned from the dead. Abraham said, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead" (Luke 16:19-31, especially 27-31). Friends, we must learn to get out of a passage all that God put into it so that we do not join the rich man in eternal

suffering. God speaks to us only through His Word.

A proper interpretation of the Bible could heal the divisions in the religious world. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. They tried to place Jesus on the horns of a dilemma by telling of a woman who had married a man and then each of his six brethren, after each previous husband died. They asked Jesus whose wife she would be after the resurrection. Jesus answered by saying, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:23-29). The ridiculous nature of their question would have been obvious to them had they been better Bible students.

Of course, a proper understanding of the Bible is absolutely necessary for my salvation. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). It is the truth that must be known if a man would be set free (John 8:32). Truth is found in God’s Word (John 17:17). Writers like John wrote that we might know we have eternal life, and Peter assured his readers that if they developed the virtues he had listed they would never fall (1 John 5:13; 2 Peter 1:10). Plainly, we need to learn how to better understand God’s Word.

Prerequisites to Biblical Interpretation

One prerequisite to successful biblical interpretation is to properly regard the Word of God respecting its divine origin, divine transmittal to mankind and divine preservation. The Word of God is to be revered because it is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16, lit. “divinely breathed” *Biblesoft’s*; *Robertson’s*; *Vincent’s*). After acknowledging the divine utility of the Word of God, one must determine to understand what it means and be willing to make any needed application to himself. “Because the Bible claims to be the Word of God to man, it behooves man to understand the Scriptures with precision” (Thomas 307). Properly ascertaining Bible authority through valid biblical interpretation materially affects the acceptableness of one’s conduct and worship on earth, as well as one’s eternal destiny.

Failure to accept the divine origin of the Bible and that God has given us an authoritative message that He expects mankind to understand and obey derails effective Christianity. “...the strongest challenges presently [1975] being made to true Christianity are at the point of: ...the proper method of interpreting the Bible” (Warren, “When” viii). Even accepting the divine origin and authoritative nature of the Word of God (the Bible), but failing to understand it correctly promises mankind no good on earth or in eternity.

Further, anyone preaching, teaching or otherwise affirming a doctrine is obligated biblically to defend that doctrine with a correct biblical interpretation of God’s Word. The apostle Peter affirmed, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15), whereas the apostle Paul likewise addressed the need for a child of God to prepare himself (or herself) to explain (from Scripture) his or her

religious beliefs and practices: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Colossians 4:6).

Especially preachers and other church leaders (e.g., elders and teachers) ought to be able to practice correct biblical interpretation and have so prepared themselves ahead of time as to explain the Christian faith (Philippians 1:17). “To preach (or write) that a certain religious doctrine is true is to put oneself under the obligation to demonstrate that proposition (that is, *prove* it to be true)” (Warren, “Logic” 71). Irrespective of how inconvenient it may be, one needs to follow the **evidence** wherever it leads.

One must be accomplished in successful, correct biblical interpretation before he can either teach the Christian faith or defend it from those who would misrepresent it. Elders, preachers, teachers and every child of God have the responsibility to warn fellow Christians about pending apostasy from true Christianity. Under Judaism, God considered His prophets (preachers) as though they were His watchmen on the city wall respecting the proclamation and practice of the Jewish religion.

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because

thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul. (Ezekiel 3:17-21)

Likewise, the apostle Paul warned:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (Acts 20:28-31)

The writer of Hebrews noted the special responsibility of elders respecting the (implied) biblical interpretation and application of the Christian faith within the Lord's church. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17). "If preachers in the pulpit, teachers in the classrooms, and elders 'go to sleep' (cf.: Eph. 5:14) in the matter of warning the people concerning these matters, not much time will pass until the church goes into almost total apostasy. The Lord commends those who oppose error (Rev. 2:2)" (Warren, "When" viii).

Much disturbance within the Lord's church could be avoided if when elders, preachers and teachers no longer

believed the fundamentals of the Christian faith that they believed when appointed, that they simply remove themselves from those areas of responsibility. We agree with brother Gardner when he writes:

Honesty demands that one resign who no longer believes the biblical purpose of the church or school, and one who causes confusion and division. Designated officials should remove the person if it is evident he or she is at variance with the fundamentals, and this should be executed without hesitation. ...One should resign if one promotes in any way the following: * The ecumenical movement and compromise with denominationalism. One who believes that the church is a denomination and one among denominations. * Instrumental music either acceptable as a practice in worship to God, or believe it is a non-issue, or believe that it is not a salvation issue. One must oppose the use of mechanical instruments in worship. * Acceptance and promotion of false teachers either at the university or at the congregation where membership is held. (Gardner 6).

It is unfortunate that often those who have made shipwreck of their faith attempt to wreck the faith of their brethren (1 Timothy 1:19). Sadly, Christians sometimes turn from the straight and narrow pathway to heaven (Matthew 7:13-14) and look for doctrines more palatable to their sensuality (as opposed to spirituality) (2 Timothy 4:1-4). However, confidence in the Word of God as being divinely inspired, inerrant, providentially preserved, understandable and authoritative in our lives is a precursor to successful and correct biblical interpretation. After that, we must be willing to apply divine instruction to our lives whether we especially like it or not.

Prerequisite to Biblical Interpretation: Handling the Word of God Aright

The principle of 2 Timothy 2:15, “Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **handling aright the word of truth**” (ASV emphasis added), applies aptly to the categorization of Scripture a would-be-interpreter may make of the Word of God. If one adopts an improper attitude toward any portion of the Word of God, obviously his interpretation of biblical passages must be viewed with a degree of suspicion. This is so important because faulty hermeneutics (or biblical interpretation) conceal the **authority** of God’s Word and the subsequent **application** of it to mankind. Whereas one must properly distinguish between the two Bible testaments, likewise, one must handle aright especially the New Testament since all people now living are amenable to it. All divine instruction (e.g., salvation, worship, Christian living, Christian service, etc.) and promised blessings (e.g., eternity in heaven) that are applicable to mankind today can only be learned from properly interpreting the New Testament.

For instance, the assertion that there is a distinction between the Gospel and doctrine, the former only being essential and pertaining to salvation, while the latter applying to Christians only and not pertaining to salvation, is a biblically unsubstantiated interpretation and false doctrine. Defining the Gospel of Christ to exclusively refer to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), and as it pertains to imitating it in baptism, distinguishing the Gospel (and salvation) from the balance of New Testament instruction is erroneous and false doctrine. The Gospel is suitable for preaching to Christians (Romans 1:15) as it is to non-Christians (Mark 16:15-16), and is a synonym for the

Word of God in the New Testament (Acts 8:14; 2 Peter 3:5) or doctrine (Acts 2:42; 5:28). Therefore, doctrinal instruction cannot be wholly separated from instruction about salvation.

Furthermore, defining “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9-11) to include only references to the historicity of Jesus Christ is false doctrine, the only purpose of which being to avoid (1) application of God’s Word to oneself, and (2) to denounce Christian doctrine as having any bearing on one’s salvation. Given the 20 centuries since the ministry of Jesus Christ, not the historicity of Jesus Christ (i.e., not merely the doctrine **about** Jesus Christ), but New Testament doctrine (teaching) is the basis of salvation, as well as the basis of fellowship both with fellow Christians and God; to attack New Testament doctrine or the church for which Jesus died to establish is to attack Jesus Christ Himself (i.e., **Jesus Christ specifically sent His apostles to all the world to communicate not His historicity but His teaching or doctrine**, Acts 1:8; 2 John 9-11; **what the apostles taught as they went throughout the world preaching constitutes the fulfillment of what our Lord directed them to do**). Christianity is a useless, hollow shell without New Testament doctrine.

Contemporaries of Jesus of Nazareth did not deny his historicity. The biblical record obviously speaks to the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth, but so does secular history acknowledge the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. Only rarely and relatively recently do some deny the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth, and only then by ignoring the agreement between the biblical narrative and secular history concerning the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. Not the historicity of Jesus Christ, but His teaching or doctrine (the New Testament or the Gospel) was the object of the spoken and written instruction of the apostles of Christ. **Hermeneutical gymnastics** with the New Testament may appease some people’s repulsion and application of New Testament doctrine to themselves, but such shenanigans do not equate to correct biblical interpretation.

Prerequisite to Biblical Interpretation: Understanding the Importance of the Church

If one has an erroneous appreciation for the worth of the church about which one can read in the Bible, especially as it appears in the New Testament, he is ill-prepared to interpret the Bible successfully. Further, the assertion that it is a mistake to restore the first century church is a bold endorsement of anything else besides the church for which Jesus Christ died to establish, over which He is the Head and for which He will return someday.

In addition, it is a dodge and a case of dishonesty of supposing that Christians interested in restoring primitive Christianity are faced with the prospect of duplicating the numerous errors of the Corinthian church or any first century congregation about which the New Testament records spiritual deficiencies or sins. Contrariwise, the New Testament clearly teaches what the church should be, by noting the sinful imperfections of various congregations and Christians and contrasting what should be with what they sometimes did. **Jesus Christ established His church as a perfect, divine institution.**

The church as established by Christ was perfect. Christ was its founder and it was purchased by his blood (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). Christ was (and is) both the foundation and the head of the church (I Cor. 3:11; Eph. 1:22,23). The church is composed of people who have obeyed God's perfect plan of salvation (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38, 47). It has a perfect system of worship, a perfect organization, and a perfect mission. All of these features of the church are fully described and clearly set forth

in the New Testament, the perfect pattern for the church of every age (II Pet. 1:3). (Fulford 5).

The New Testament church is discernible in salvation, worship, Christian living, Christian service and doctrine; however, man can never discern that to which he blinds himself (Matthew 13:14-15).

The New Testament represents itself as a pattern for duplication in congregations and the lives of Christians (Romans 6:17; 1 Corinthians 2:11-13; 4:6; Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 1:13; 1 Peter 4:11). God has given us everything we need doctrinally (2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3). No changes to the Gospel or New Testament are permitted (Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19; cf. Numbers 22:18). Clearly, the inspired, New Testament teachings were to be passed along to others (2 Timothy 2:2).

God has not left us at sea without a rudder. The New Testament was not merely “human correspondence between or among various human beings.” Paul said, “If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord” (I Cor. 14:37). It has been suggested that the New Testament writers never perceived or intended that their writings would become a guide for men throughout succeeding generations, but the statement of Paul contradicts that assertion. (Highers 23)

Hence, the seed principle respecting the Word of God is valid today (Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:23). Everything produces after its own kind (Genesis 1), so that even the Word of God when planted in honest hearts produces after its own kind—Christians or the Lord’s church.

Several Old Testament examples illustrate the need for and divine approval of patterns in religion, and when

necessary, the restoration to God's way of doing things (Exodus 25:40; Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:5). King Josiah is one powerful example of restoring the way of God (2 Kings 22:13). Following the return from Babylonian captivity, the Jewish religion was restored (Jeremiah 6:16).

No, not the human errors, but yes, the divine plan for the church for which Jesus Christ died, over which He is the Head and for which He is coming back to retrieve must be restored according to biblical patterns. If not, then there is absolutely no hope whatsoever of receiving divine favor in this life or in the eternity to come, because man's ways only lead astray. "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Any attempt at biblical interpretation that either ignores or denies the importance of the Lord's church is doomed to become a **hermeneutical train wreck!**

Prerequisite to Biblical Interpretation: Recognizing the Biblical Hermeneutic

Hermeneutics pertains to interpretation, and no matter of interpretation could be more important than a correct interpretation of the divinely revealed and preserved revelation from God, namely—the Bible. The correct or valid mechanics or principles of biblical interpretation, then, are a necessary tool for comprehending the Word of God. Without proper hermeneutics and subsequent valid interpretation, how could one know (1) what blessings God reserves for his creation—man, (2) what prohibitions God expects mankind to respect, (3) how God desires to be worshipped, (4) how one can become a child of God, (5) how God expects mankind to manifest Christian living or (6) Christian service, etc.? Hence, faulty hermeneutics will result in faulty interpretation, and faulty interpretation of God’s Word will result in failing to comply with the will of God for us, thus missing the blessings that God intends for us.

Fortunately, understanding biblical hermeneutics for the most part is not a terribly difficult task; essentially, there is little to no difference between biblical hermeneutics and the common, everyday hermeneutics that people, from small children to adults, exercise through the ordinary communication between humans. Hermeneutics and interpretation represent the core of all communication. The difficult part of especially biblical hermeneutics is hearkening to the Word of God when we humans do not prefer God’s instructions! Therefore, some Christians attempt to pare hermeneutics—cutting away approved examples and implication—leaving only direct statements as authoritative.

However, the assertion that **only** commands or direct

statements in the Bible constitute authority in religion today is erroneous because it **contradicts** itself. “Every logical contradiction is false” (Warren, “Logic” 23). (1) *“One can prove that a proposition is false by showing that it contradicts an explicit statement in the Bible... (2) One can prove that a proposition is false by showing that it implies a false doctrine...(3) One can prove that a proposition is false by showing that it implies or involves a logical contradiction”* (Warren, “Logic” 75-77). The contradiction occurs when those who cry against inferences “...bind their deduction, that deductions are not binding when it comes interpreting the Bible. ...They ‘reason’ that one does not need reason in interpreting the Bible” (Pugh 120). “It is amusing to see men try to bind their deductions on other men in an effort to rule out all deductions as binding. Such an effort is obviously self-contradictory” (Warren, “When” 67), hence, false.

The obvious contradiction of opponents to biblical implication from which humans must correctly infer is plain, and would be laughable were it not for the eternally serious nature of the dilemma. **First**, a proponent of such must **attempt to infer** from the Bible that only commands or direct statements are authoritative, because nowhere does the Bible command or make a direct statement that only commands or direct statements are authoritative. *“There are no explicit statements in the Bible which explicitly say that only explicit statements have binding force on men living today”* (Warren, “Logic” 7). *“There are no explicit statements which say that men should regard all matters which are taught implicitly as being non-obligatory”* (Warren, “Logic” 62). “If it is the case that ‘only direct statements tell us for certain what God thinks’ then the position itself (viz. that only direct statements tell us for certain what God thinks) must be rejected, because there is **no** direct statement in the Bible which so instructs men. The position is self-contradictory, and is thus false” (Pugh 121).

Second, since no part of the Bible is directly addressed to any person living today, one must **infer** even that commands or direct statements are authoritative. **Question:** Does any portion of the Bible apply to you today? If you say, “Yes,” then you have to acknowledge two things: (1) The Bible **implies** that some of its content applies to you today, and (2) You have to **infer** that at least some of the Bible applies to you today. “Since the name of *no man now living* appears in the Bible, inference (as to what the explicit statements of the Bible imply) is the *only* way one can come to *know* that men now living are amenable to the gospel of Christ” (Warren, “When” 31). “To determine that men living today are under obligation to do certain things which are taught in the Bible, one must infer such from explicit statements in the Bible” (Warren, “Logic” 19). “Since the Bible has no such ‘direct commands’ specifically directed to anyone now living, in effect, the positions noted above reject the Bible as meaningful revelation from God to man today” (Warren, “Logic” 62).

“Whatever is bound by the explicit statements of God (in the Bible) is bound on men living today not because *men inferred* the proposition (conclusion) involved but because God *implied* it!” (Warren, “When” 29). “...what is bound on men living today by implicit teaching is thus bound not because men have *inferred* the particular points of doctrine but because God (in the Scriptures) has *implied* it” (Warren, “When” 96). “The reason I am bound by God’s word is not that I read it but that He wrote it. The reason I am bound by those things implicit in His word is NOT that I inferred it BUT that HE implied it” (Warren, “Logic” 64). The entire New Testament (Gospel) is irrelevant and non-applicable (i.e., a dead letter) **unless** correct biblical interpretation includes divine implication, from which mankind is obligated and capable of drawing only warranted (necessary) inferences, because the name of no one living today appears

anywhere in the New Testament. Personally, I gave up “dead letter religion” when I converted from Catholicism to New Testament Christianity, and I’m not going back!

Third, if inferences from biblical implications are required even to acknowledge commands or direct statements as authoritative today (and they most certainly are), and if inferences are disallowed, **then none of the Bible** is authoritative to anyone living today. “No one can understand the Bible without inferring what the Bible implies” (Warren, “Logic” 13). “a. If the doctrine under review is true, it would follow that the Bible binds absolutely nothing on men living today. This is the case because even though the Bible does teach that all men now living are under (amenable to) the Gospel of Christ specifically (and the principles of the Old Testament) there are no explicit, direct commands to this effect. To arrive at this truth. One must recognize (a) that the Bible binds by implication (b) that that which is bound by implication is just as binding as that which is bound by explicit, direct command (on people living in Bible times), and (c) that one must correctly use the principles of logic in reasoning about the evidence set forth in the Bible. b. If the doctrine under review is true, it follows that no one could rightly say to another person, ‘You must be baptized in order to be saved from your sins’” (Warren, “Logic” 67). “So far as men living today are concerned, is there even *one* statement which involves *obligation* for men now living which does *not* involve *implication*? The answer is no!” (Warren, “When” 94).

Therefore, the assertion that only commands or direct statements in the Bible constitute authority in religion today is erroneous, misdirected at best and a sinful agenda at worst. There are two reasons on the very face of the proposition as to why the assertion that “only commands or direct statements in the Bible constitute biblical authority” is obviously false doctrine: (1) Since no one living today is named or otherwise

specifically addressed in the Bible, for commands or direct statements from the Bible to be applicable today, one must first correctly **infer** from divine **implications** that some of what the Bible says applies in our time. (2) Further, one must correctly **infer** from divine **implications** even from among commands or direct statements in the New Testament as to which commands or direct statements apply today (e.g., “Thy kingdom come, Matt. 6:10; “desire spiritual gifts” 1 Cor. 14:1; etc.). Therefore, the claim that divine implication and warranted, human inference have no part of Bible authority disallows even commands and direct statements from Bible authority—leaving **no Bible authority at all!** This is clearly throwing out the baby with the bathwater! Anything that proves too much doesn’t prove anything at all!

“In short, it seems that ‘union’—not true Biblical unity—is the all-consuming goal of many in the church today. In espousing this ecumenical goal they ‘join hands’ not only with the liberal members of the church but also with the modernistic ‘Disciples of Christ’ (Christian Church). If repentance does not come, there will surely be souls in hell over this matter” (Warren, “Logic” 34). “Indifference to the distinction which obtains between truth and falsehood is perhaps the most basic sin of all” (Warren, “Logic” 121).

The assertion that **only** commands or direct statements in the Bible constitute authority in religion today is erroneous because without inference one cannot even prove that the Lord’s church was established on the Pentecost after the Ascension of Jesus Christ, or that the kingdom of prophecy and the church are the same institution. “The Bible teaches implicitly—but not explicitly—the proposition: ‘the church was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ from the dead... ‘the church of Christ and the kingdom of God are one and the same body of people’” (Warren, “Logic” 31). “The particular brand (type) of irrationalist which is abroad in the Lord’s church today is

one who holds that only that which is taught explicitly in the Bible can be binding on men living today. They deny that anything which is taught implicitly is—or can be—binding on any man living today. Second, It Should Be Clear To The Thoughtful Observer That These Men (irrationalists In The Church) Do Not Really Believe The Irrationalism Which They Claim To Espouse. (No one can deny the law of rationality and sensibly address himself to the task of proving such plain Bible teaching as, say, that the church of Christ was established on the first day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead)” (Warren, “Logic” 93).

This is just a sampling of the massive amount of Scripture that cannot be known or applied without duly recognizing biblical implications from which humans are obligated to correctly infer or deduce. Without recognition of biblical implication and inference, essentially most of the Bible is reduced to no more than “stories” that have no direct impact on anyone (e.g., what some brethren call love poems or love letters from God, thereby lacking any authoritative quality).

Only inference from biblical implications can account for the refusal of Christians in the New Testament record and in early church history to obey civil government whenever government interfered with the practice of Christianity. “Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; I Peter 2:13-17 command and demand that Christians obey civil authorities even though civil authorities were pagan and personally wicked. ...there is never included in any of these instructions a phrase or an exception clause saying ‘except for conscience sake.’ ...we do have clear illustrations of Christians engaging in civil disobedience for conscience sake. In Acts 4:17-21...Another example...Acts 5:29...We conclude that it is essential for Christians to practice civil disobedience in order to live in all good conscience and obey God. This conclusion is the result

of the necessary inference we must draw from the combined implications of combined general commands and specific examples. ...we logically infer that we as Christians in every age and in every country must practice civil disobedience when civil authorities try to stop us from preaching or teaching Christ or practicing Christianity” (Kearley 70-71).

If this is not the case, then Christianity would have vanished from planet earth centuries ago, almost at its inception. If this is not the case, then Christians who oppose biblical implications and human inference will do either one of three things: (1) Cease practicing Christianity upon anyone’s first objection to it (e.g., homosexuality laws, the very existence of Christianity in most nations around the world), (2) Refuse to surrender his or her practice of Christianity, effectively denying the proposition against biblical implication and human inference, or (3) Refuse to surrender his or her practice of Christianity, however, concluding that he or she is sinning by violating civil law. Imagine the view that it is sinful in some circumstances to practice Christianity! Go figure!

Biblical hermeneutics is not all that complicated. Yet, we humans can muddle up almost anything, especially if the plain and obvious understanding of something goes against what we want to do. Successful verbal communication between persons (divine or human) derives from commands or direct statements, approved examples and implications. If not, then verbal communication is basically useless and ineffective, and we might as well restrict our verbal communication to “Ugh,” purring or growling.

Biblical Hermeneutics: God Intended for Divine Revelation to be Understood

Every honest and right thinking person must acknowledge that a biblical hermeneutic is an absolute necessity, because without a valid hermeneutic there is no way to comprehend divine revelation. However, God gave divine revelation (the Bible) to communicate with mankind, and God intended for his revelation to be understood. There would be no reason for God to provide divine revelation unless both God was able to provide discernible communication, and God designed mankind with sufficient faculties to understand it (2 Timothy 2:15; John 8:32). The mechanism whereby divine revelation is the bridge between the mind of God and the mind of mankind is a valid, biblical hermeneutic.

God created mankind with the mental capacity to understand His revelation. Deuteronomy 29:29 clearly teaches that God intends for mankind to assess properly divine revelation in a knowing way. There are some matters about which mankind may muse with an idle curiosity, which God has not revealed and mankind cannot know. Yet, other matters, which God has revealed within His divine revelation, God requires mankind to understand and implement. In order for that to occur, there must be a valid hermeneutic.

These following, astute observations voice the same maxim in other words. "...all men, having been created by God with intelligent minds (able to recognize, to observe and to properly consider the evidence which God has given) are required by God to draw only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence" (Pugh 121). "God reveals what man needs to know and is capable of knowing" (Carruth 57). "Faith comes as a result of proper evaluation of the evidence

God has given to man (Rom. 10:17; cf.: Rom. 1:18-22)” (Warren, “When” 122). Without proper appreciation of biblical interpretation, one cannot have proper biblical faith. Therefore, mankind is obligated to try to understand divine revelation.

Logic or sound reasoning is a necessity to successful biblical interpretation (as well as successful comprehension of anything in this life). Logic or sound reasoning is the necessary and proper effort of trying to understand divine revelation. Logic simply distinguishes between correct and incorrect reasoning, and everyone uses it to some degree from infants through adults.

One must approach study of Scripture rationally or logically with orderly procedure to comprehend communication from God to mankind. “Simply stated, logic is the process of correct reasoning. ...It is sound reasoning” (Pugh 112). “The only way to avoid logic is to quit thinking, because logic is the basis for all thought” (Pugh 113). Hence, mankind sometimes opts for dismissal of logic or sound reasoning in an attempt to exempt himself from divine instruction for which he does not care. Yet with the following, one must concur, or else divine revelation must be thought to be incomprehensible and communication from God to mankind must be thought to be hopelessly lost on humanity. “It must be emphasized that of all the various types of statements in the Bible, there is *none* which can, without the proper use of *logic* (principles of valid reasoning), be used to prove a thing to be essential (either obligatory or prohibitory) for men living today. Without the proper use of *logic*, not even *commands* can be so used” (Warren, “When” 44-45).

Dismissing apostolic example and divine implication while purporting to hold on to divine commands or direct statements is as unfaithful to divine truth as is the theistic evolutionist who on one hand purports to believe in God while at the same time ascribing the created world to evolutionary

theory. The latter dismisses the opening chapters of the Bible for starters, and the former jettisons two-thirds of the mechanism for understanding divine instruction; neither proposition is faithful to divine truth.

Sound reasoning or logic is the blood and guts of true biblical hermeneutics. Astoundingly, even the opponent of sound reasoning and logic inadvertently appeals to the principle of sound reasoning and logic in a lame attempt to disprove sound reasoning or logic as the core of biblical interpretation or hermeneutics. Any argument to prove or disprove something acknowledges the place of sound reasoning or logic to decide a matter. Therefore, the objection to sound reasoning or logic to discern biblical instruction essentially betrays the objection itself as invalid. “To hold that the *conclusions* which are drawn from the *explicit* statements of the Bible (by the *correct* use of reason—the principles of logic, the principles of valid reasoning) is *mere human* doctrine, and thus, *cannot be bound* on anyone is *absurdly false doctrine!*” (Warren, “Logic” 21-33).

“Reason, if it is handled properly, can never be a *hindrance* to the gaining of Biblical faith. Rather, it is a *prerequisite* to faith” (Warren, “Logic” 119). One might as well be a rock or a vegetable if he subscribes to the notion that reason or logic is beyond human proficiency. “The truth of the matter is: if a man cannot establish Christianity by the proper *gathering* of evidence and the proper use of *reason* in the *handling* of that evidence, then he cannot establish it at all” (Warren, “Logic” 120). It is not the case that generally mankind is unable to understand divine instruction, but rather he understands it well enough to know that in many instances he does not like it.

Yes, mankind is capable of understanding what God determined that man should know and that which He expects mankind to comply. The procedure to understanding God’s Word is essentially the same as it would be to understand

anything. “As concerns the truth as to what the will of God is on any matter, one must not only *gather* the evidence (learn the explicit statements of the Bible) but he must also *handle* that evidence correctly; that is, he must *reason correctly* about that evidence” (Warren, “Logic” 71).

The human duplicity is that “...men strive to be logical when logic is ‘on their side,’ but they tend to become illogical (irrational) when rational thought (valid reasoning) shows that the doctrine which they have espoused is false. I plead with brethren everywhere to watch for this sign: when a man is teaching false doctrine, he will reject and castigate the proper role of logic! But logic plays a crucial role in the great task of properly interpreting the Bible. Men who are convinced that valid reasoning will establish (prove) what they are affirming will not turn against logic” (Warren, “Logic” 74). Truly, “...no man turns against reason until reason turns against him” (Warren, “Logic” 4).

To be anti-logic is to be anti-Bible because the Bible not only demands that men reason but that they reason correctly in their study of the evidence which He has given them (1 Thess. 5:21; Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1; 1 Cor. 15:12-19; etc., etc.). Men who believe and teach the truth do not oppose the correct use of logic. But men who have espoused some “go by feelings” philosophy or some “leap into the dark” concept of faith do oppose logic. If a man knows that his position will not stand the searchlight of logic, then no doubt he will oppose logic. The basic reason why men oppose valid reasoning is that they cannot produce adequate evidence for the doctrines which they have espoused” (Warren, “When” 30).

God intended for His divine revelation to be understood. Therefore, He outfitted humanity with sufficient mental tools to understand divine revelation. God did not make biblical interpretation a matter of mastering some superhuman God

language or God think, but He opted to reduce biblical hermeneutics or biblical interpretation to the level of common communication between humans (of all ages). One cannot profess to understand anything without implying his acceptance of the very principles that enable him to comprehend the Word of God (and become responsible for making appropriate application of God's Word to himself). The ordinary tools for spoken communication between humans involves sound reasoning or logic, the basics of which are: direct statements, examples and implication. Mankind cannot have it both ways; either he is well equipped to communicate with his fellows and God, or he cannot communicate effectively with either, and he has the aptitude for communication of a rock or a vegetable.

Biblical Hermeneutics: The Impotence of a Defective Hermeneutic

The word “impotent” means, “not potent: lacking in power, strength, or vigor: HELPLESS” (*Merriam-Webster’s*). There is nothing and no circumstance more sadly impotent than a defective biblical hermeneutic. This is so because failure to properly understand and correctly apply God’s Word to one’s life probably will affect one’s earthly pilgrimage adversely and definitely will affect one’s eternity adversely. Only a proper biblical hermeneutic can adequately order one’s life on earth and adequately prepare one for eternity. We cannot overstate the importance of ascertaining correctly the biblical hermeneutic, since we do not get another-go-around-in-another-life to do a better job next time handling aright the Holy Word of God (Hebrews 9:27).

The impotence of a defective hermeneutic can be demonstrated in a number of ways. For instance, Christians who surrender the biblical hermeneutic, which includes apostolic or divinely approved example and warranted inference from divine implication, could not **establish** and **operate** the church of Christ, which they inherited from those who have gone before them. In addition, they could neither name it nor could they organize its worship. Such a one could not identify the church as belonging to Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16) without inferring or deducing that this information is applicable to Christians today. Such a one could not organize a scriptural, autonomous congregation with elders and deacons (Titus 1:5). Such a one could not discern the type of worship that God requires toward Him, or even when God expects Christians to worship Him (Acts 20:7; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 14:15). Some Christians (including elders and preachers), who

are on record verbally and in print as holding exclusively to biblical commands or direct statements, have already jettisoned in theory the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper and a cappella music in Christian worship. In time, when key persons (in some cases, older family members) pass away, they will practice their cowardly, convictionless Christianity, based on a defective hermeneutic. Others with reckless courage presently press for these departures from New Testament Christianity. In any case, the impotence of a defective biblical hermeneutic cannot reproduce the Lord's church today (or tomorrow)!

The impotence of a defective hermeneutic can be seen by to what it not only reduces divinely given, biblical instruction, but by what it does to the vehicle of communication in general. For instance, the assertion that Bible authority relates **only** to commands or direct statements is false because it erroneously supposes that approved examples and implications from which one must make inferences are not part of **human communication**. Yet, the same mechanisms for communication between people are the same mechanisms of communication between God and mankind, only some people are reluctant to acknowledge the application of God's communication (the Bible) to them. "There is no essential difference between the study of the Scriptures and the study of any other subject, respecting the mental outlay necessary to success" (Dungan 16). "...the child learns...from his parent's (sic) commands, their example...by necessary inference..." (Kearley 57). "The ability to learn this way [necessary inference] is basically called common sense" (Kearley 58). "There has been no new hermeneutics in the world since God endowed Adam and Eve with the ability to communicate and understand communication. Genuine hermeneutics and hermeneutical principles are inborn in the human brain" (Kearley 58). Regarding "authority," Kearley noted correctly, "The process is the same everywhere"

(Kearley 58). "...clearly, in the normal realm of human activity, authority is established by: 1. commands... 2. examples... 3. necessary inferences..." (Kearley 60). "Logic, family activities, the history of nations, and law and the study of businesses and every institution prove beyond any shadow of a doubt that authority for human behavior is established by commands, examples, or judgments and necessary inferences" (Kearley 72).

The young child who pleads with a parent for or against something will often go to great lengths, including citing the example of or the implied approval of an action based on what Mommy and Daddy do. The following, ill-advised, parental instruction never did anything for me in my childhood, and it is generally ineffective: "Don't do as I do, but do as I say!" The expression grants that example and implication are universally recognized as effective avenues of communication and the basis of authority as well.

In truth, there are three avenues of interpretation, including biblical interpretation, by which truth (including divine truth) can be known. Note the following: (1) Biblical Examples for Commands or Direct Statements, (2) Biblical Example for Apostolic or Approved Example, and (3) Biblical Example for Implication and Inference.

Biblical Examples for Commands or Direct Statements (Mark 16:15; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

Purportedly, opponents of approved examples and divine implications in the Bible believe that commands or direct statements (i.e., in the New Testament) alone constitute applicable religious instruction. Nevertheless, divine implications and corresponding (necessary) inferences must be employed to deduce: (1) that the New Testament rather than instructions to Adam and Eve or Noah or Moses, etc.

are applicable today, and (2) that some New Testament commands, but not all New Testament commands, are applicable today (e.g., “thy kingdom come,” Matthew 6:10). Even direct **commands** carry their own implications from which we are obligated to make warranted (necessary) inferences. For instance, our Lord’s command to “Go ye into all the world” (Mark 16:15) implies a means by which to go, and because no certain way of going is specified, it is implied and we must infer that any way of going (that doesn’t violate some other New Testament instruction) is satisfactory to accomplish the command. Therefore, one could “go” by car, bus, train, plane, animal, bicycle, walking, etc. However, one could not steal a car or stowaway with God’s approval.

Biblical Example for Apostolic or Approved Example (Acts 20:7).

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (NKJV). “Follow my **example**, as I follow the **example** of Christ” (NIV) (1 Corinthians 11:1 emphasis added). Robertson observes of 1 Corinthians 11:1: “The preacher is a leader and is bound to set an **example** or pattern *tupos* (NT:5179) for others (Titus 2:7)” (emphasis added). Thayer gives as one of his definitions for “imitate” or “example” (*tupos*), “an example.” “Brethren, join in following my **example**, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a **pattern**” (NKJV emphasis added). “Join with others in following my **example**, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the **pattern** we gave you” (NIV) (Philippians 3:17). See also 2 Thessalonians 3:9. The New Testament (through an inspired writer, the apostle Paul) **commands** the observance and application of **examples**! “Religious truth may be gathered from approved precedent.—We learn from the authorized conduct of the children of God. . .no one can be religiously wrong while he is scripturally right” (Dungan 95).

Biblical Example for Implication and Inference.

“Inference may be used legitimately in the ascertaining of facts, and also in the conclusion reached from them. ... Abraham went down from Canaan into Egypt; when he came out from that country Lot returned with him. Though it is not said that Lot went into Egypt with him, we infer it” (Dungan 91). “Truth may reach beyond empirical observation” (Flatt 68). “...that which is taught implicitly is just as binding as that which is taught explicitly” (Warren, “Logic” 64).

The Bible, the same as every other form of fruitful communication, relies upon the three possible mechanisms to accomplish that transferring of information: commands or direct statements, approved examples and implications from which warranted inferences must be drawn. There is no new hermeneutic wherein approved examples and implications (and corresponding inferences) are ineffective. Rather than a new hermeneutic or a commands and direct statements only biblical interpretation, this platform more uniformly fogs, disguises and ultimately dismisses (rejects) legitimate divine revelation that most certainly is applicable in our day. The agenda and result of this new hermeneutic is to reduce the inspired, Holy Writ to merely love letters from God, which by their nature bear no authority and have no effective application (no prohibitions, anything essentially goes, according to one’s preferences). A so-called new hermeneutic that dismisses apostolic example and implications from which correct inferences must be made is an impotent, defective hermeneutic, providing no effective instruction from God in this life and promising no satisfactory eternity in the life to come.

Biblical Interpretation: Orderly Thinking

Orderly thinking is as essential to valid biblical interpretation as orderliness is necessary and observable in the created universe around us. True science depends upon orderliness of the created universe to arrive at tested and reliable laws of nature. Orderliness is logical, and through logical analysis of the orderly universe, knowledge can be discerned and accumulated.

Logic is organized thinking, as opposed to unorganized thinking. Respecting carefully worded statements, "... there is no middle ground between a proposition being true and being false (non-true)" (Warren, "Logic" 21). "Every precisely stated proposition is either true or false" (Warren, "Logic" 44). Given definitive information, one can ascertain truth; Jesus and the apostle John affirmed that truth can be known (John 8:32). Of course, there is no more important truth and no more furthering reaching impact of truth than truth of divine origin—the Word of God—the Bible.

The Word of God must be handled aright, however, before one can ascertain the meaning and application of even divine truth (2 Timothy 2:15). "To be rational, one must draw only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence which he has" (Warren, "When" 4). Further, "[i]t is not pleasing to God for any man to draw conclusions (in regard to God's will) for which he does *not* have adequate evidence" (Warren, "Logic" 91). The basis of the command in 1 John 4:1 to distinguish between truth and error is the fact that biblical doctrine cannot be both true and false at the same time, a principle of sound reasoning or simple logic or orderly thinking.

Sometimes people otherwise capable of thinking clearly in a number of areas, and who use thinking skills all their waking moments daily, vainly attempt to dismiss orderly

thinking by appealing to orderly thinking. “One might attempt to deny the need to honor the law of rationality, but the very moment he begins to give ‘reasons’ for denying this law he is, in fact, admitting the truth of it” (Pugh 115). Over and over again, “[t]he Bible honors the law of rationality. . . . Acts 17:2-3...” (Pugh 115), and the footnote in the NASV for Acts 26:25 reads “Lit., of truth and rationality” (Pugh 116). The Bible is a specimen of orderly thinking, most important because it is divine in origin.

Valid biblical interpretation depends on discerning the message of God in His revelation, though the revelation from God is what it is irrespective of whether mankind handles it aright. However, to comprehend the Word of God, one must bring as much objectivity as he possibly can to the process of biblical interpretation in order to succeed at biblical interpretation. We must concede that “[a]ny interpreter’s work is influenced by his own attitudes, prejudices, and personality” (Flatt 60). However, divine instruction in the Bible is not so vague as to be overpowered by examination by honest hearts. Honest hearts will employ orderly thinking to the interpretation of the Word of God—to discern the message that God conveyed rather than some supposed divine equivalence. We humans need less commentary or more unadorned translation (and application) of the Holy Word of God.

Biblical Interpretation: The Validity of Deductions in Understanding Divine Instruction

Normal, everyday communication among humans, adults and children, includes implications from which participants in communication must deduce what is meant. (Communication includes direct statements or commands, approved examples and implication that demands warranted inference.) Definitive, reliable instruction can be ascertained (deduced) from implications. We humans do it every day in secular affairs, but sometimes we become spiritually incompetent if the communication turns to consideration of religious matters. Divine instruction is not cloaked in God-words and mechanisms of communication foreign to the ordinary ways people communicate and comprehend communication.

One of the simplest explanations of how implication requires inference of truth is to consider a square, the one side of which is known to be 5 inches long. Just knowing the length of one side of a square, one can accurately and confidently know that the circumference of the square is 20 inches and that the area within the square is 25 square inches. Deducing the circumference and area of a square when the length of one side is known does not diminish the truthfulness of warranted conclusions respecting the circumference and area of a square. In other words, **through implication and inference, absolute, objective truth can be known!** Another excellent illustration of the validity of induction and deduction or implication and inference appears at the pen of brother Warren.

To say that an action is authorized (by the Bible) *explicitly*, is to say that it is taught in just so many words... For example, the proposition, "John is taller

than Charlie” teaches in these exact words that John is taller than Charlie. One does not have to use his powers of...logical deduction... to make clear the difference between what is taught explicitly and what is taught implicitly, let the following propositions be considered: (a) “John is taller than Bill,” (b) “Bill is taller than Tom,” and (c) “Tom is taller than Charlie.” These three propositions explicitly affirm (teach) three things... None of the three propositions explicitly affirms that John is taller than Charlie. It is also the case that the conjunction of the three propositions does not explicitly affirm that John is taller than Charlie. ...if the three original propositions are true, then the proposition, “John is taller than Charlie” of necessity must also be true! (Warren, “Logic” 28)

Careful consideration of sufficient evidence can yield definitive knowledge. “It is clear that the basic rule of a sound Biblical hermeneutic involves both adequate *induction* (the gathering of the needed relevant data or evidence) and correct *deduction* (the drawing only of such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence)” (Warren, “When” 96). Of course, without sufficient information, one may be unable to come to know the truthfulness of some proposition, but especially in biblical matters, mankind is **obligated** to acknowledge the truthfulness of propositions that are sufficiently supported by divine revelation (evidence).

Furthermore, the fact that a person can reason incorrectly does not mean that reason cannot be trusted, including implications from which inferences must be drawn. Just because it is possible for a person to misconstrue biblical information (e.g., to suppose that King Herod went about on all fours and had a red, bushy tail, Luke 13:32) is no reason to disregard reasoning in biblical interpretation. For instance, “[t]here are absolute standards of right and wrong. Though one’s understanding of truth is incomplete, absolute truth is

not relative. Mankind's understanding of truth changes, but truth remains the same" (Flatt 68). In addition, contrast the certainty of truth (Jesus, John 8:32) versus skepticism of truth (Pilate, "What is truth," John 18:38); truth is nevertheless truth irrespective of whether one so acknowledges it as truth.

Whether because one does not like the direction divine truth goes on a particular subject, or whether one's skills for interpreting God's Word may be deficient is no excuse for failure to know what God wants mankind to know, and for which divine instruction has been preserved for us. "Due to human ignorance and imperfections, there may always be problems where inferences are concerned. However, it is a tragic mistake and really impossible to throw out inference as a necessary part of communication and execution within any system of authority" (Kearley 62). You see, throwing away implications from which mankind is obligated to correctly infer dispenses with biblical authority—as though God failed to provide the divine revelation in the first place. We have the only Word of God that heaven will ever provide us (Galatians 1:6-9; Jude 3), and if we fail to properly esteem it, because God will not provide us any additional revelation, we have no Word of God—no divine revelation—no divine instruction, and no way to know how God wants to be worshipped, how to properly practice Christian living, how to demonstrate correctly Christian service or how to obtain the forgiveness of sins.

Without deductions or inferences from divine implication, we have no Bible at all! Since no one living today can read his or her name upon the pages of inspiration, one must deduce that even commands or direct statements appearing in the Bible apply to him or her today. Without divine implications from which we are obligated to deduce correctly meaning and application, we have no discernible communication from God—hence, no hope for salvation from past sins or the prospect of an eternity in heaven. We must be careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water!

Application, the Functional Side of Biblical Interpretation

Biblical interpretation or hermeneutics is no more than meaningless academic gymnastics—unless there is definitive application. Without application, biblical interpretation amounts to no more than wasted hot air associated with senseless banter, misspent time reflecting on biblical hermeneutics and ruined office supplies corresponding to paper, ink and computer bytes devoted to nothingness. Biblical interpretation—what does it all mean? How can one demonstrate in a practical way that biblical hermeneutics is important?

Well, one way to demonstrate the practical application of studying biblical interpretation is to consider the aspect of New Testament worship we call the Lord's Supper. This is so because the New Testament definitely teaches that the Lord's Supper is to be observed by Christians weekly on the first day of the week. However, that definitive teaching derives from an apostolically approved example, which in addition, people living outside of Troas in the first century or anyone living since then must recognize the divine implication and correctly infer from it.

The command to the Corinthian church to give of its wealth weekly on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2) is similar to and comparable to the wording of Acts 20:7 respecting the worship on the first day of the week, during which the Lord's Supper was observed; further, the stated purpose for the gathering on a weekly basis by the congregation in Troas was for observing the Lord's Supper. The example of the day on which and the frequency of observing the Lord's Supper is obligatory and permanently binding on Christians then and now. The biblical precedent for when and how often to observe the Lord's Supper provided sufficient divine

instruction for first century congregations to know God's will on this subject, as well as this same biblical precedent provides sufficient divine instruction for congregations in any century to know God's will respecting the day on which and the frequency for observing the Lord's Supper.

The strongest example is with the church at Corinth. First Corinthians 11:20-16:2 basically deals with problems concerning the assembly on the first day of the week and regulate this assembly. Paul, by inspiration, regulates that they are to observe the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner. They are to sing, pray, and edify one another decently and in order in their assembly. They are also commanded to make a contribution in their assembly. According to I Corinthians 16:2 the time of their assembly is the first day of every week. The RSV translates, "On the first day of every week"... The example is missing of early Christians and churches ever observing the Lord's Supper on any other day [than the first day of the week]. (Kearley 68-69)

Consider also that every memorial day in Scripture is definitively specified and repeated regularly (e.g., **Pentecost** annually, 50 days after the Passover each year, Leviticus 23:16; **Passover** annually 14th day of the first month, Leviticus 23:5; **New Moon** monthly, Numbers 10:10; 28:11; **Lord's Supper** weekly, Acts 20:7; cf. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). It is reasonable (logical) to find New Testament instruction for the regular observance of the Lord's Supper. The instruction for on what day and with what regularity to observe the Lord's Supper does appear in the New Testament, howbeit, by approved, apostolic example.

To dismiss from the biblical hermeneutic approved example has the effect of dismissing divine instruction respecting the observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week. Proponents of an amended (decimated)

biblical hermeneutic have no problem with that, of course. Frankly, the overall objective of meddling with hermeneutics is to free oneself from what some consider burdensome strictures that God has levied on mankind. Hence, instead of divine instruction, we are told that the Bible is a collection of love letters from God; how much structure for Christian living, Christian service, salvation and Christian worship do mere love letters invoke in humankind? Not much, we would say by observing and listening to those who opt to jettison correct biblical interpretation.

Biblical Interpretation: Critical to Conversion to Christ

Many are the Christians who have purposely departed denominationalism for the one, true church of the Bible—and **we refuse to go back into apostasy!** However, aside from biblical interpretation, one could neither recognize the one true church of the Bible (the church for which Jesus Christ died to establish, Acts 20:28, and over which He is Head, Colossians 1:18) nor be aware of denominational or other world religion counterfeits. Fortunately, fundamental biblical interpretation is no more difficult than conversation (communication) between children. Yes, some aspects of the Word of God are more difficult to comprehend than some other passages (2 Peter 3:16), but the basic biblical instruction in the New Testament for salvation, Christian worship and Christian service are not complicated. In other words, God chose to use the mechanism of communication between humans (even between children) to communicate His will to mankind through the Bible. Consequently, Christians can **know that they know** that they are the children of God (1 John 2:3), because God’s Word is discernible and we can conform to it. (This conformity is not sinless perfection or earned salvation, but it is nonetheless obedience, which saves according to Hebrews 5:8-9, and which unleashes the grace [Ephesians 2:8] and mercy of God [Titus 3:5].)

Some Christians, though, do return into the darkened world of sin (2 Peter 2:20-22). While some slip away unintentionally (1 Peter 2:25), others purposefully turn from Gospel truth (Romans 16:17-18; 1 Timothy 4:1-2; 1 Peter 2:1) because they are offended at the truth (Matthew 11:6; 13:21). “Most often, digression from truth does not just happen; it is part of a planned agenda” (Anderson 3). We must take special care not to become ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:8; Luke 9:26);

becoming ashamed of the Gospel of Christ is the beginning of one's downward, spiritual spiral.

Lamentably, opponents of correct biblical interpretation lambaste faithful Christians for taking God at His word in the Gospel or New Testament. One of the key lightning rods for digression is music in Christian worship.

Although opponents are ridiculed for their narrow thinking, change leaders stress the need for unity and ask their members not to be judgmental of others. Even so, blame is subtly directed toward those who favor a cappella singing. Persuasive sermons are preached on the need for change, and many members become convinced. The elders explain how carefully they studied the issue of instrumental music in worship and engaged in lengthy periods of prayer. With the influence of both the pulpit and the elders, the congregation is persuaded to believe that God has led them to this conclusion. Such is the strategy for apostasy. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1 NKJV). (Anderson 3)

Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, among other similar passages, still say what they say and still mean what they mean after all the dust of digressive confusion settles. The Bible was never intended to be subject to different interpretation than what God expected the original recipients to understand and do (2 Peter 1:20). Contradictory interpretations to what God expected the original recipients of divine revelation to understand amount to adding to and taking from the inspired Word of God (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19).

Some things can be known, and those things from God's Word are (eternally) important. To malign a brother or sister who acknowledges the validity of biblical interpretation

is contradictory in principle to such an assertion as well as defamatory, too. “Let it be emphasized that it is one of the worst of misrepresentations to charge someone with claiming to be infallible just because he claims to know one, or two or three or more things. Unless the men involved are unmitigated skeptics and/or radical agnostics, then they themselves claim to know at least a few things” (Warren, “Logic” 58). God’s Word is much more than a collection of love letters or poems from God, the weight of which love letters and poems is wispy and without practical significance. The words that are divine in origin will judge each of us in the last day (John 12:48).

Can we know how to become the children of God in this age? Can we know how God wants to be worshipped? Can we know how God wants us to live our lives? Can we know how God wants us to serve Him while we are on earth? Has God not left us sufficient instructions to answer these questions with certainty? Has God not made mankind sufficiently able to understand divine revelation respecting these matters just mentioned? Does it matter if mankind prepares to meet God in Final Judgment (Amos 4:12)? Answering, “Yes,” to any of these questions also affirms that biblical interpretation (biblical hermeneutics) is critical to conversion to Christ, as well as critical to Christian living, Christian service and Christian worship.

Helps and Hindrances to Biblical Interpretation

There are several contributions to successful biblical interpretation.

For successful biblical interpretation, one must examine the biblical context carefully: immediate context, remote context, total biblical context. Biblical context (the immediate passage, the book, the testament and the entire Bible) is crucial to correct biblical interpretation. Kin to the foregoing: “A passage of Scripture is to be understood in the light of all Scripture” (Kelcy 79).

In addition, one must avoid in his biblical interpretation backdating present circumstances to the ancient, biblical past (i.e., we must avoid overlaying the past with the template of the present). An interpreter must realize that “Christianity began and took its initial shape in the context of first century Judaism. The writers of the New Testament lived and thought within the categories of Jewish tradition” (Chouinard 196). That is: “In order to understand what a passage means to men of today, one must first ascertain what it meant to those to whom it was first written” (Kelcy 80). “Only when one understands what a text meant in the First Century will he be able to understand with clarity what are its implications for the present” (Osburn qtd. in Flatt 68).

One cannot underestimate the importance of familiarizing himself with the historical setting of biblical text. “Without a knowledge of Old Testament history, anything like a satisfactory understanding of the New Testament is impossible. The New builds on the Old...” (Le Moine Lewis 246). “It has become clear in the twentieth century that any interpretation of Scripture must be judged by history” (Le Moine Lewis 253).

The interpreter should first view a passage in terms of its historical and cultural setting, the intent of the author for his original audience, and the message they likely would have derived from it. This guards against the interpreter's reading his own desires and viewpoints into the text, and he may then apply the message to himself and to the people of his day. The interpreter should allow the text to modify and to mold his own preunderstandings, prejudices, and presuppositions. This is difficult but not impossible. (Flatt 70)

Further, one must begin with acknowledgement that the Word of God (Bible) is divinely inspired, and as such, far exceeds all other resources. Confidence in the divine inspiration of the Bible is a necessary precursor to biblical interpretation (2 Timothy 3:16-17). "In examining the text and related resources, one makes certain important presuppositions: The true canon of Scripture has been established. ...The text we have is reliable. ...The text of the Bible can be adequately translated and understood" (Flatt 65-66). To correctly interpret the Bible, one must acknowledge that "God's truth (the Bible) is *absolute* (objective) and attainable (it can be learned) (John 8:32)" (Warren, "When" 33). To arrive at successful biblical interpretation, one must concede that the Bible does not contradict itself.

Hence, the Bible must be viewed as authoritative respecting whatever topic that it addresses. "To be pleasing to God in work and/or worship, one must do *only* what God (in His word) *authorizes* man to do. God has never allowed man (with God's approval to do just as he (man) pleases (Hebrews 5:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 2 John 9-11)" (Warren, "When" 34). In addition, correct biblical interpretation is helped along by acknowledging that God has a right to make demands of mankind, and that He has done that through the Bible. One must have reverence for God and the Word of God to

exercise biblical interpretation successfully (Psalm 111:9; Hebrews 12:28). Correct biblical interpretation will be ever elusive, unless one harbors the desire to and is determined to understand the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15).

Still further, a person must have a good and honest heart plus an open mind to correctly interpret the Bible, especially since correct biblical interpretation may be inconvenient. One must have a certain amount of education and common sense or reasonableness to understand correctly communication, human or divine. Knowledge of the original biblical languages or the familiarity with the resources to define biblical words, etc. contributes to biblical interpretation. Knowledge of history contemporary with Bible times, places, characters and events contributes to correct biblical interpretation. For instance, "...without the knowledge of history, we will not know whether the writer is speaking of Herod the Great, [Herod] Archelaus, [Herod] Artistobulus, [Herod] Antipas, [Herod] Philip, [Herod] Agrippa I., or [Herod] Agrippa II., and everything will be confused" (Dungan 31).

A student of the Word of God must value it above human philosophies to achieve correct biblical interpretation. One must distinguish between historical inclusion of information versus divine instruction in the Bible to arrive at correct biblical interpretation (e.g., King Solomon's sins versus divinely inspired instruction). For biblical interpretation to be correct, one must distinguish to whom a biblical covenant was or is applicable (e.g., Noah was instructed to build an ark, but that divine instruction is not a part of the covenant to which we are amenable). One is amenable to biblical instruction in the divine covenant applicable to him, despite some of the divine instructions in the covenant applicable today also appear in previous covenants. Kin to this is that what may be applicable eternally in heaven is immaterial to contemporary conduct per the covenant to which one is amenable.

For correct biblical interpretation, it is important to

know to whom any portion of Scripture under scrutiny is addressed. Knowing the type of biblical literature (e.g., history, prophecy, prose, literal, figurative) being studied contributes to successful biblical interpretation. Knowing when a portion of Scripture was written can help understand its meaning and application better. “Always interpret according to the known purpose of the author” (Dungan 172). The Bible is its own best commentary; difficult biblical passages can be more easily understood by consulting the Bible in other passages that are more easily understood about the same subject. “Light may be thrown upon a doubtful or difficult passage by comparing it with other statements of the author on the same subject.—In several epistles of Paul, he dwells more or less on the same subject in several of these communications” (Dugan 180-181). “Help may be had in the interpretation of sentences by examining the statements of other writers on the same subject, who are of equal authority” (Dugan 181-182). “All words are to be understood in their literal sense, unless the evident meaning of the context forbids” (Dungan 184).

There are several hindrances to successful biblical interpretation.

Desiring to please others or oneself hinders correct biblical interpretation (Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:4). Reading the Bible without expecting to understand it hinders interpreting the Scriptures successfully.

Without a predetermination to accept God’s Word as authoritative in whatever it specifies will surely lead to a train-wreck exercise of biblical interpretation. **“If the Bible does not mean what it says, there is no way by which we can know what it does mean”** (Dungan 60). “...the demands have changed, but the absoluteness of obedience remains the same now as then” (Dungan 110). It borders on blasphemy to assert either that God could not communicate His will to

mankind in such a way that He could be understood, or that God could not create mankind in such a way that he could understand divine instruction. Worse yet would be to assert that God could communicate successfully with mankind, or could create mankind so he could understand divine instruction—but did neither.

Among the significant hindrances to correct biblical interpretation are false brethren (2 Corinthians 11:26; Galatians 2:4). False teachers and apostate brethren must be noted when they persist in their apostasies (Romans 16:17-18). Brethren need to help each other know the truth more perfectly (Matthew 18:15-17; Acts 18:24-28; 2 Timothy 2:25-26). Faithful Christians must not commune with disorderly Christians (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:5; 2 John 9-11; Romans 16:17-18). It is false doctrine, whether by decrying biblically approved examples and biblical implications (and their inferences) or by relegating “the doctrine of Christ” to mere historicity that the following are non-essentials and unrelated to salvation: how we worship, church organization, church autonomy, a cappella music, church name, the age of the earth (suggestive of acceptance of at least theistic evolution), marriage-divorce-and-remarriage, the undenominational nature of the Lord’s church, the role of women, the emphasis on baptism and weekly communion. Relegating these biblical doctrines to a category of nonessential or non-salvation represents a fundamental shift in doctrine that has the affect of changing a congregation from a church of Christ into something completely different. To affirm a so-called *church of Christ heritage* or assign the beginning of the church of Christ to the time of the American Restoration Movement is an outright, unveiled disavowal of loyalty to the singular church Jesus died to establish, over which He is Head and for which He will return—in other words—apostasy (2 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 3:12; 2 Peter 3:17). There are important questions

to ask for ascertaining the credence one actually gives to the Holy Word of God (biblical authority). Is it a sin to use instrumental music in Christian worship? Yes or no! (See Matthew 26:30; Acts 16:25; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; James 5:13.) Does a person need to be baptized (immersed) for the remission of sins, **and know that he is being baptized for the remission of sins?** Yes or no! (See Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 10:43; Romans 3:25.) When aware that a couple is living in adultery, is it necessary to teach a prospect to repent of this sin also before being baptized? Yes or no! (See Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:2-3.) Are there faithful Christians in denominations? Yes or no! (See Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 20; Ephesians 2:16; 4:4; Colossians 3:15.) Answering “No” to the first three questions or answering “Yes” to the fourth question clearly demonstrates one’s lack of loyalty to biblical authority and apostasy from primitive Christianity (1 John 4:1).

Faithful Christians, while they should not be unnecessarily brash, need not cower in the least before apostatizing brethren who may attempt to foist on the faithful the responsibility for congregational unrest. This ploy is an old one, tried by King Ahab, but firmly rejected by the prophet Elijah: “And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim” (1 Kings 18:17-18). Put in a crude form of the modern vernacular, it is not the faithful child of God who politely but firmly resists apostasy that causes a “stink” and unrest among the children of God today, but those who forsake biblical authority are responsible for stinking doctrine and turmoil among Christians in our time. Hate division, but discern and stand for truth firmly and kindly, nevertheless, stand (1 Corinthians 16:13; Philipians 1:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:15).

Guidebook or Love Letters, Which?

The catalyst for this series of articles about biblical interpretation was the sequence of three similar events of which I was a witness in 2008. After the third occasion, which was the most pronounced of the three, I set out to defend biblical interpretation. Initially, the principals that I hoped to impact with the rhyme and reason of correct hermeneutics or biblical interpretation were the leaders where the third episode of fatally flawed hermeneutics was demonstrated. Unsuccessful in persuading them contrariwise with reason or logic and valid hermeneutics, I committed my studies on the subject to a wider audience through *Gospel Gazette Online* (www.gospelgazette.com). It was not my intention to write a book, even a small one, but several articles (chapters) later, alas a short treatise about biblical interpretation or hermeneutics evolved.

From the several quotations appearing in this series on biblical interpretation and the corresponding “Works Cited,” it is apparent that lack of fidelity respecting biblical hermeneutics is at least a four decades old cancer afflicting the churches of Christ in modern times. In the intervening years between then and now, several, mostly larger, city congregations have jettisoned valid hermeneutical principles to *restudy* themselves into doctrinal apostasy. The primary consequence of abandoning reason or logic and biblical interpretation or legitimate hermeneutics is the relinquishment of Bible teaching about worshipful music and the role of women. However, several other biblical doctrines have been the collateral casualties of this so-called new hermeneutics. Actually, this is an unwarranted hermeneutical shift and a train wreck of communication between Almighty God and mortals. It is an unapologetic and indefensible mishandling of the Christian faith and of the only divine instructional

manual (the Bible) that humans have.

The **first** of these three challenges to biblical hermeneutics occurred during a late winter college lectureship. I hasten to add, and happily so, that the university representative and faculty member responsible for introducing the speaker and closing the session, kindly, yet firmly, disapproved of the speaker's improper handling of biblical interpretation. That speaker categorized matters of biblical doctrine and non-scriptural matters as inconsequential issues over which there should be no dissension among brethren. Namely, a cappella music was lumped together with contentions over the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the number of communion cups, whether to have Bible classes, etc. The thought was that we should not divide over communion cups, Bible classes, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and a cappella music versus instrumental music in Christian worship. This was the old *apples and oranges* or comparing unlike things as though they were the same. Whereas misidentifying fruit is relatively inconsequential, it is tragic to treat divine instruction as though it were non-scriptural hobbies, non-salvation issues and generally among non-essentials.

The consequences of this dabbling in minimizing biblical hermeneutics were several. Perhaps 1,000 or more persons, many of whom were youthful, were potentially led astray respecting biblical interpretation when the speech was first delivered. Such a disgraceful lectureship presentation was an undeserved spot on that program and upon the reputation of that institution. This preacher's congregation (as well as his family) was disturbed when after he and his elders could not reach accord they parted ways; the ensuing wake on the congregational level was a blow to the church and affected the congregational membership of a few families.

The **second** of these three challenges to biblical hermeneutics occurred during a pre-spring college lectureship. I wish I could hasten to and to happily add that the

representative of the university who introduced and closed the session rebuffed the speaker, but he did not. Further, at the conclusion of that presentation, the university representative called for a round of applause for the speaker, which was forthcoming. The institution overall and its leaders may not concur with that digression from true, biblical hermeneutics.

I was suspicious of the title of the lecture, which included the words, *Thinking Outside of the Box*; I don't know who selected the theme for that presentation, or what was intended. As I recall, the lesson was innocent enough until toward the end, when a laundry list of non-essential religious matters was declared, to include therein a cappella music in worship. The specific supposition was that trading in a cappella music for instrumental music in worship for an inner city church planting would be more productive; the speaker is a principal person in such an inner city church planting. Apparently, that preacher continues his work unabated and as far as I know without repercussions even when he publicizes his lack of fidelity to true, biblical interpretation, especially as it pertains to Christian worship. Hundreds, if not many more, are affected by this unrestrained devil talk.

The **third** of these three challenges to biblical hermeneutics occurred in yet a third southern state and masqueraded as a Sunday morning sermon. Bonnie and I were in that worship service by happenchance (or maybe even providentially). It was personally painful from the commencement of the discourse throughout; I had never heard anything anywhere presented by our brethren that was so thoroughly distant from primitive Christianity.

The sermon was entitled, "What Is So Wrong with Legalism," and was an unrelenting attack from beginning to end against the church of the Bible for which Jesus Christ died to establish and over which He is Head. The so-called *sermon* was loud, angry and harsh. Decried were patternism and legalism, and a long list of non-essentials in religion

were assembled to include: church organization, church autonomy and a cappella music in Christian worship. As it turned out, the *preacher* plagiarized word for word and punctuation mark for punctuation mark a chapter from the book of an elder, lawyer, politician who has already crossed the biblical Rubicon.

A requested audience with that preacher and his elders occurred the same day and lasted for hours. **First**, those elders fully supported the doctrinal stance of the preacher, and since then they have publicly announced to their congregation specifically their agreement with the sermon in question. **Second**, the premise underlying this doctrinal shift from New Testament Christianity is that only *commands* but not also apostolic or approved biblical *examples* and biblical *implications* (from which we must correctly infer) have to do with biblical interpretation. Accordingly, the elders and preacher with no hesitation surrendered both the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper as well as the day on which the Lord's Supper is to be observed (Acts 20:7, example). **Third**, the elders acknowledged that they had been persuaded from former convictions during the nine-year tenure of the current preacher. **Fourth**, the elders informed me that they *studied the Scriptures* and discovered that the doctrinal characteristics of the churches of Christ with which they have never been satisfied are not salvation issues after all (e.g., a cappella versus instrumental music in worship, Baptist baptism is satisfactory, etc.). **Fifth**, they have no intention of making any changes to worship services because that would cause division.

The preacher has publicly encouraged clapping with singing though that is not practiced because it goes against the conscience of some present members, and he has publicly held up reference to a Baptist preacher as a model of faith and conversion comparable to the faith and conversion of the apostle Paul. He refers to denominational people as

Christians (e.g., Baptists, Episcopalians, etc.).

Challenged for their apostatizing views on the Word of God, these leaders reacted variously: (1) Verbally toeing the line in their apostasy, (2) intimidating some brethren one-on-one at their homes to back down in their opposition to the direction the leaders are taking the church, (3) mitigating the sermons coming forth from the pulpit, sometimes speaking about types and anti-types in the Bible (hardly the steady course preceding objections).

It is difficult to awaken brethren to the real dangers of flawed hermeneutics, especially if it is only talk for now and no actual changes have occurred in the acts of worship—yet. Good brethren will even defend **the right** of false teachers to be false teachers (contrary to New Testament instruction, Romans 16:17-18; 2 John 9-11). However, wiser souls than me have observed the tactics of two steps forward, one step back, two steps forward as false brethren make sure though patient progress in their agenda of change. It is equally difficult to be balanced and not be wholly negative and accusatory. Extremes hinder rather than complement true Christianity.

Apostasy among the churches of Christ that has played out in recent decades in some of our largest congregations has finally filtered down to my backyard and yours, and affects the congregations sometimes with which we endeavor to worship even in small-town America. I left Catholic, dead-letter religion, and I will not return to some semblance of the same though wayward members of the Lord's church would so lead toward that end. The Bible is neither a dead letter nor appropriately styled love letters from God. The Word of God is the guidebook for this life, Judgment to come and preparation for eternity. Some make too much of it, and many more make too little of it.

These several chapters and especially this final chapter are vague respecting the persons who are guilty of leading

the apostasy surrounding flawed biblical interpretation or hermeneutics. This is not accidental, but purposeful for a few reasons. **One**, I want to emphasize the departure from valid biblical interpretation and encourage rather genuine hermeneutics. **Two**, I want to protect the innocent. **Three**, I am working with some brethren (as the apostle Paul didn't immediately give up on Corinth and our Lord bore awhile with five of the seven churches of Asia), hoping to improve their view and estimate of God's Word.

These chapters, though, are not vague regarding the essentiality of properly evaluating and applying divine communication in our lives. In order for this to occur, however, we must correctly view biblical hermeneutics or biblical interpretation. Finally, if there is a place for this writing, and it proves edifying to just one soul, and glorifies God, I will be pleased and sufficiently rewarded.

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Gospel Gazette Online made its debut in January 1999 as a monthly, religious Internet journal. Today, the *Gazette* is read by people all over the world (from all seven continents, including Antarctica). Obviously, *GGO* via the Internet is available even in some places in the world to which one cannot easily go physically with the Gospel of Christ (e.g. Saudi Arabia and Antarctica). Each issue sports articles by Christian men and women on a variety of biblical subjects, questions and answers, plus an audio message. In addition, thousands of articles from past issues appear in the archives and may be selected with the help of the site search engine.

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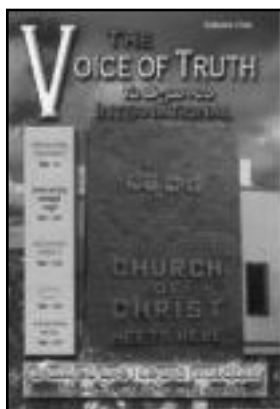
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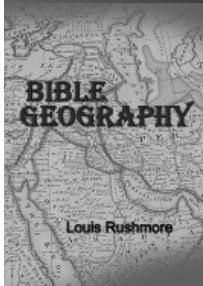
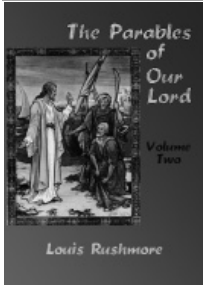
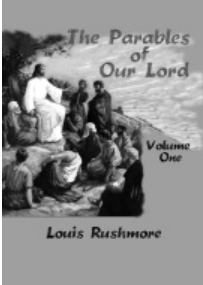
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