

Rightly Dividing: Hermeneutic Interpretation & Biblical Logic

By David L. Burris

In our overview of the science of scriptural interpretation - our writing style sometimes could compare with the extremes of technical writing - but I have chosen to start with a fable. Like the parables of our Lord and Savior - the Master Teacher – a story can often introduce a very complicated and sophisticated subject – with much more simplicity.

Since 1884 *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* by Clergyman & amateur mathematician Edwin A. Abbott has been used to teach both secular analytical geometry and Christian Apologetic evidences to young and old alike. The Flatland Story in Synopsis: A square receives a revelation from a sphere entitled the “Gospel of the 3rd Dimension.” The sphere pulls the square out of Flatland and into Spaceland. Given this new awareness of reality - the square then presumes the sphere – a god. In clarification, the sphere explains the relationship of the sphere to the square by comparing Flatland to Pointland. Sphere describes the “King of Pointland” as a non-dimensional being – completely self-encapsulated – utterly indivisible – since he is a universe to himself. The Pointland King knows not length, breadth, nor height – he has no cognizance of the number two or even the thought of plurality.

Assuming that the average person is able to comprehend this Flatland Fable, evidentiary apologists for a century have made comparison between the character of Sphere and the ministry of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ. Similar to the mission of the sphere - when God decided that the time was right for us to see Him with our limited three-dimensional eyes, He stepped from His Nth Time-Space Dimension into our temporal dimension as the Incarnation, so He could preach a “Gospel of the Kingdom,” the Dimension of Heaven.

Although this fable has been an excellent tool for Christian conversion – among professed believers in the discourse between Old & New Hermeneutic – the terminology of Flatland is being applied in a manner never intended by the author. Proponents of the New Hermeneutic suggest those of the Old Time Religion are not to their level of **transcendence** and those Defending the Old Hermeneutic claim their critics are not to their level of **transformation**. In other words, it is a theological disputation of *woke over work*.

Wayne Jackson in *The New Hermeneutic: The Abandonment of Reason* introduces our topic of study definitively and by descriptive detail: “Hermeneutics is the procedure by which certain logical principles are applied to a document in order to ascertain the author’s original meaning. All literature is subject to hermeneutical analysis. (For ex.) In this country we have a branch of our government, the judiciary, which has been designed to practice legal hermeneutics to interpret the law.”

At the start of our analysis of the “New Hermeneutic” we must state the obvious – There Is Nothing New About The New Hermeneutic. In the Era Before Christ– about the Alexandria, Egypt area - the resident members of the Jewish Diaspora scholarly community - pioneered in an alternate non-literal scriptural commentary of the Old Testament. During the Early Christian Era that same group at that location formed the Alexandrian Allegorical Interpretative School in counterpart to the Antiochene Literal School of Interpretation; Both Schools Together Comprise What is Called the **Patristic Hermeneutic**.

In the First Century, Philo Of Alexandria’s Method is explained by Clinton Lockhart in *Principles of Interpretation* - “The folly of interpreting the Bible differently from other books is illustrated by the allegorizing of Philo on the four Rivers of Eden (Gen. 2: 10 – 14). He makes them a sketch of four virtues, prudence, temperance, courage,

and justice. The main river is the wisdom of God; and the four branches water all good actions with an abundance of benefits.”

In the Second Century - based on what most translators reject as a statement of disclaimer - “supposedly” signaling a three-fold messaging by way of “Have I not written to you *three times* in counsels and knowledge...” in Proverbs 22: 20 - *Origen* Adamantius of the Alexandrian Academy - claimed all scripture has three layers of meaning – literal, moral, and allegorical.

Lockhart continues into the 18th Century on page 34 of his book by way of describing the Swedenborg Method of the New Hermeneutic applied as to “regard all history in the Bible as parable; to find only moral and spiritual lessons in the ‘Word of God, of which Aesop’s Fables are a faint imitation’...”

Nonetheless, even after considering the entire historic record – we can state without fear of contradiction – that today’s post-modern proponents of the “*New New Hermeneutic*” have exceeded everything and everyone of the previous Alexandrian Allegorical School of Interpretation and of the Swedenborg School.

It is my belief, we achieve greater understanding of the conflicting interpretive narrative if we will initially study the methodological history in story subtext - the Carnal Mind in opposition to the Spiritual Mind; Following that we will focus on the mental gymnastics of high-level resistance encountered from those defending their preferred principles of interpretation - motivated reasoning & confirmation bias.

First, the *Carnal Mind* is Biblically Defined as the “Mind of the Flesh” in 1st Corinthians 2:14 & as “Hostile to God” in Romans 8: 7. Second, *Motivated Reasoning* is the normal tendency to accept what we wish to believe with much less scrutiny than what we do not want to believe.

Third, on the flip side, *Confirmation Bias* is the automatic tendency to notice data that fit our beliefs. “When we have embraced a theory, large or small, we tend to be better at noticing evidence that supports it rather than evidence that might counter it.” (Lecture Brochure)

Bill Moyers of the University of Michigan wrote – “Research found that actually ‘we often base our opinion on our beliefs and rather than facts driving beliefs, our beliefs dictate the facts we chose to accept. They can cause us to twist facts so they fit better with our preconceived notions.’”

PART TWO

In my opinion, there are three sources of Bias Confirmation most frequently resourced by the Utilitarian Religionist Worldly Entrained: **Corrupted Scripture Translations, Fallacious Systematic Theologies & Questionable Hermeneutics.**

Along with searching scripture to confirm preconceived prejudices by scope & focus – paraphrase & amplified translations – there are newly available translations with doctrinal insertion. Robert R. Taylor writes: “Many of the modern translations have added by putting denominational creeds (infused) into the very text of the Bible. Calvinism, sectarianism, *modernism*, millennialism – all have brought into the Bible.” Yet, as indicated by the title of our paper – bedrock basic to rightly dividing scripture is to apply correctly in combination – Sound Biblical Logic & Solid Principles of Interpretation. Accordingly, we turn our attention to the secular mindset in fundamental fixation with flawed thinking & fallacious reasoning.

Aristotle – the “father” of the study of logic – early points to confirmation bias as a classic problem: “That some reasonings are really reasonings, but others seem to be, but are not really reasonings, is

obvious. For, as this happens in other spheres from a similarity between the true and the false, so it happens in arguments... Reasoning and refutation are sometimes real(genuine) and sometimes not, but appear to be real(genuine)..."

Aristotle's usage of the Greek word *elegnchon* is always to be translated in context as debate "refutation" while the Bible renders the same word in the Greek always to be translated contextually as disciplinary "reproof."

Because Christians are commanded to present personal rationale & faithful justification to all that should inquire – we must learn how to effectively communicate our inner dialogue. Furthermore, because such conversations frequently encompass a *refutation* of false doctrines – we need to learn of those fallacious foundations of reason upon which – many if not most – analogies of faith and their systems of theology are scaffolded. These Analogies of Faith in Theological System Include – Anthropology, Christology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology. The major enemy to our evangelism effort will always be - traditional thinking.

Traditional Thinking – Coincidence, Supplementary, & Common Mind.

Coincidence Viewpoint. A prominent view of tradition holding from the time of Irenaeus (Circa 175 – 200 AD) until the mid-fifth century was the coincidence view – this view makes no distinction between the scriptures and the oral presentation and transmission, in custom and practice, of the apostolic message. Materially, the two are locked together as a total statement of the way of salvation.

Supplementary Viewpoint. This view has had major currency in Western Christianity since the fourth century. The essence of this view is that Christians owe equal allegiance both to the New Testament and

to the constant developing body of tradition that emerged in the church. Scripture and tradition were two distinct sources of revelation.

Common Mind Viewpoint. This view holds that there is a qualitative difference between the message of the apostles and the teaching of the bishops. Yet, Scripture is of much less assistance if it cannot be normatively interpreted. Here the principle that the authoritative message of Scripture is found through an appeal to the common mind of the church, arrived at through open and public discussion among a broad spectrum of respected leaders and interpreters, is crucial. As a movement that sought to proclaim the gospel in its total purity and to restore the ordinances (Baptism & Lord's Supper) to their appropriate role as places where the divine benefits are mediated, the Campbell-Stone Heritage has a major stake in a view of tradition that appeals to the common mind.

However, the logophobic enemy against logic is within as well. Since Christians are similarly commanded to “*reprove*” those erring within the church family – we need to be doubly aware of even the most innocent of mistakes in the application of Biblical Logic. Generally speaking, learning logic as a skill is an obtainable objective. As the famous figure John Locke – epic writer on politics & religion insisted: “God has not been so sparing to men to make them barely two-legged creatures, and left it to Aristotle to make them rational.”

Joel McDurmon in *Biblical Logic: In Theory & Practice* outlined several typologies of significant error in the application of Deductive Reason: Fallacies of Oversimplification & Ambiguity; Fallacies of Categorization; Fallacies of Relevance; Fallacies of Cause & Effect; Fallacies of Progression & Regression. Long term, the most damning decisions of basic choice – passive or active – are those of **Worldview & Lifeview**. Mistaken worldviews & life views are subcategorized: Fallacies of

Autonomy or Naturalism & Materialism; Subjectivism & Relativism or Nihilism & Meaninglessness. (Note: 2-Face Civil Religionists are here.)

Corrective Adjustment in Worldview and/or Life view is more or less likely of success depending upon the growth level of the subject's life and almost hopeless if they are rather **Locked Within The Closed Loop of the Carnal Mind**.

There are three life levels or spiritual stages of living: early childhood, middle adolescence, & adult maturity: The *sensual* level controlled by the primal senses that leads to carnality; The *lateral* level of human rituals & rites of religion without meaningful relationship, higher connection, or heavenly citizenship. The spiritual danger of remaining at this maturation inflection point & tilted long-term is to become lukewarm(Rev 3: 16) and then double-minded(James 1: 15). We need to be moving from a state of **Conflicted to Convicted to Committed**; Lastly, the *spiritual* level where the body is fully surrendered to God and the mind completely transformed by the Word of God is our objective. According to author Fritz Ridenour in *How to be a Christian Without Being Religious* – living on a level of spiritual freedom, ever gaining God's higher ground, and eternally abiding on Heaven's Tableland - is the main message of the Bible Book of Romans.

In practice, this transformation has been described as staggered by stair step: "By changing your thinking, You change your beliefs; When you change your beliefs, You change your expectations; When you change your expectations, You change your attitude; When you change your attitude, You change your behavior; When you change your behavior, You change your performance; When you change your performance, You Change Your Life!"

However, you have to take that first forward step up. This initial step always starts at the orientation level of **AWOKE**. It is highly unlikely

that you will venture forth if you have squeezed the Savior out of your small world and your short life – similar to how He was squeezed out of His created world His entire earthly life – the family hometown not having room at his birth @Luke 2: 7 – Him living without ordinary comforts during His Ministry @Luke 9: 58 – Our Savior Under Pressure – Suffering Agony at the Place of the Press called Gethsemane @John 18: 1... Otherwise, only a traumatic life-threatening or dramatic life-changing event of existential crisis will cause re-evaluation of life's pathway. No longer "living the dream" in a delusion of self-sufficiency – outside their comfort zone of willful ignorance - the Carnal Mind learns harshly that temporal happiness is completely circumstantial – ultimate happiness & True Joy are found in Christ Alone.

Naturalistic Worldview Ultimately Disappoints. The problem with the naturalist perspective begins with their take on human values. Naturalism reasons circularly & in a value free subjective reference system. Naturalists apply in an ethical equation – a moral standard which denies the existence of evil.

The Old Testament Book of Ecclesiastes addresses this very subject of competing world & life views as regards their transition from Worldly Secular to **Transformative Theistic**. Whereas Job is a book specific to the individual experience with special providence or arranged circumstances - Ecclesiastes is a Bible Book focused on the individual experience within normal probabilities and the laws of chance known as happenstance – the subject of **General Providence**. The book's message – Life Events Each Have the Potential to Make You Either More *Bitter or Better*. You can choose either to be *Reactive or Responsive*. In other words, it all has to do with one's life & world view. Ecclesiastes reduces this subject to four harsh realities: 1. A Transitory Life; 2. A Meaningless Earth Cycle; 3. An Inability to Know All; 4. Generational Discontinuity. Without imputing the existence of God – the human

condition is frustrating and seems hopeless. Adding God to the Equation with different worldview & opposite life view – we perceive sovereign “soul-making” purpose to this transitory life – we view a Wise God in Control & see Guidance for Those That Seek True Wisdom.

In Part Two of our dissertation on *Biblically Rightly Dividing* we have focused on the confirmation bias associated with any analysis within the closed loop of preconceived ideas; In Part Three we will demonstrate how these preconceived ideas have formatted the framework of the Hermeneutics of Higher Criticism.

PART THREE

In my opinion, there are three sources of Bias Confirmation most frequently resourced by the Religious Utilitarianist Worldly Entrained: Corrupted Scripture Translations, Fallacious Systematic Theologies & **Questionable Hermeneutics**.

As indicated by the title of our paper – the fundamentals most basic to rightly dividing scripture are to apply correctly in combination – Sound Biblical Logic & **Solid Principles of Interpretation**.

The New Hermeneutic is most often referred to in the annual Jesus Seminars & in the Bible Criticism Community as either Historical Criticism or Historical-Critical Higher Criticism.

Historical Criticism begins with studying oral traditions (Form Criticism) earlier written sources (Source Criticism) and editorial choices (Redaction Criticism). In my opinion, their higher criticism - in practical application of messaging – in their **Exegesis, They Have Exited-Jesus!**

For short treatment to this specific subject of Higher Criticism I will be referencing Dr. Timothy Gordon's – *Handbook of 10 Biblical Interpretation Methods*.

"Source Criticism (Literary and/or Tradition Criticism) – is the critical method that seeks to identify the source documents underlying the written documents of Scripture. It is concerned predominantly with such matters as underlying literary sources, types of literature, and questions relating to authorship, unity, and date of the various Old & New Testament materials."

"Form Criticism is the critical methodology that looks at the text of Scripture and attempts to see the 'prehistory' of that text, tracing it through its oral and written stages. It is concerned with the study of literary forms such as essays, poems, myths, and other units of tradition, since different writings have different forms."

"Redaction Criticism is the critical methodology that attempts to identify the editorial methods and predisposition of an author and how the authors shaped the material taken from other sources. It seeks to discern the distinctive theological and thematic emphases that the individual writers or editors gave their materials."

"History of Religions School was a late 19th Century approach to the study of religion that assumes an evolutionary continuity between ancient religions. It seeks to trace the historical development of polytheistic thought, its evolution into monotheism in Israel, and the phases of religious development in Judaism and Christianity."

"Rhetorical Criticism is the analysis of the text based on its rhetorical structure. More succinctly, it is the application of the Greco-Roman rules of speech to the written text of the New Testament, especially to the letters of Paul. The gist of rhetorical criticism is that the text is

concerned to propagate an argument, which it does by using certain rhetorical devices.”

“Canon or Canonical Criticism is the critical methodology that views each book of Scripture in its place in the canon and as contributing to the larger teaching of the Bible as a whole rather than treating each book in isolation. It seeks to find their theological meaning by analyzing their canonical shape or editorial design of their present form.”

“Narrative Criticism is the exegetical method that approaches the text from the literary perspective of the story and finds meaning in the literary structure and plot. This approach analyses the plot, theme, motifs, characterization, style, figures of speech, symbolism, foreshadowing, repetition, speed of time in narrative, point of view, etc.”

“Reader-Response Criticism is the view that a meaning is created by the reader of the text rather than being communicated by the author. It may be considered as one or two major categories of poststructuralism (deconstruction being the other more radical of the two). It does not matter if the reader distorted the original meaning of the writer as long as the greatness of the text can be appreciated.”

“Feminist Hermeneutics – Feminists read the text primarily in terms of liberation from social injustice and oppression in the form of gender issues rather than in terms of personal sin and salvation. Stress is on praxis as opposed to doctrine, and priority is given to social activity rather than individual spirituality. Feminist readers are ideology critics who undo textual hierarchies by reading against the grain by exposing the world of the text as an effect of rhetoric rather than a picture of reality.”

“Postcolonial Hermeneutics – focuses on the use of the Bible in the context of Western colonialism and its aftermath. The Bible figures not as an ancient document to be investigated, or as a source of faith to be interpreted, but as an instrument of colonial power to be unmasked and decolonized. Many advocates of this approach register a negative verdict against modern Western criticism, whose pretensions to universal validity are viewed as complicit with imperial expansion and colonial rule.”

NOTE: Dr. Timothy Gordon does not address the newest variant of Higher Criticism – *Statistical Criticism*. Statistical Criticism applies a Calculus Algorithm deciding among three versions - a Mediating Text.

Dr. Timothy Gordon, in his conclusion, enumerates *The Dangers of Historical Criticism*: 1) Much of modern biblical criticism springs from unbiblical philosophical presuppositions, such as deism, materialism, skepticism, agnosticism, idealism (Hegelianism), and existentialism. 2) It is based on an unjustified anti-supernatural bias which it superimposes on the biblical documents. 3) It either neglects or minimizes the role of the apostles and eyewitnesses who recorded the events. 4) It assumes wrongly that the New Testament writers did not distinguish between their own words and those of Jesus. 5) It incorrectly assumes that the New Testament stories are like folklore and myth. 6) It undermines the integrity of the New Testament writers by claiming that Jesus never really said (or did) what they claim he said (or did). 7) It is based on the implausible premise that the early church had no real biographical interest. 8) It neglects the role of the Holy Spirit in activating the memories of the eyewitnesses.

Next, we will examine those **Hermeneutical Issues** Related to the **Genuineness of Scripture** where there is disagreement among the Interpretative Science Scholars – those Issues that demand the taking

of sides in this debate between Old & New Hermeneutic. These *Interrelated* Hermeneutical Issues are of two subsets – **Infallibility, Inspiration, Inerrancy & Canon, Codex, Genre**. These two groups of issues are defended in debate by two separate sets of assumptions, two types of logic, almost amounting to the speaking of two different languages. In sampling the two debates over Inerrancy and Canonization we gain a good picture of the current state of affairs.

Full Inerrancy or Limited Inerrancy. Full Inerrancy maintains that statements in scripture are understood within the parameters of precision intended by their authors – quotations marks are important.

Limited Inerrancy is an **Intentionalist (Relativist) View of the Truth** – In application, the Bible has significance merely as **Redemptive Model**; It claims that the scriptural *essentials* are only without error as relate to matters of faith and practice but that the Bible may include mistakes in other matters *peripheral* such as history, geography, science, and generally as to facts. *However, Extra-Biblical Genre Cannot Determine Scriptural Meaning Because the Greco-Roman Genre Did Not Include Eyewitness Accounts & Personal Testimonies.* Moreover, *Christianity is a historical religion that stresses the real spacio-temporal physical presence of God-Man in the flesh. Jesus Speaks to Limited Inerrancy @John 3: 12* Note: *Limited Redemptive Inerrancy* is why I personally believe that those of this middle positioning should be designated separately as a school of *Compromised Criticism*.

International Council of Biblical Inerrancy Position Paper – “We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its [the Bible’s] literary forms [not extra-biblical forms] and devices, and that Scripture is to Interpret Scripture. Extra-biblical genre and forms are not to be used to interpret Scripture. For we deny the legitimacy of any treatment of text or quest for

sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, de-historicizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claim of authorship.”

Canon or Codex – Codex Collection of Single Genre of Multiple Authorship or Canonization in Multiple Genre of Single Authorship by the Holy Spirit. When those of the New Hermeneutic School speak of “inspiration” – they mean human inspiration only slightly above that of a motivational speaker. They believe all books of the Bible should simply be studied as a literature collection of tales cautionary & letters encouraging. As a codex collection, each of these letters is not to be linked to the others; In addition, they claim there is no *internal integrity of scripture proving scripture* – often referred to as the *Range of Extant Manuscripts Composing the Hermeneutical Circle* – as required in the canonization process; Similarly, they think Constantine’s Committee of Canon was the biggest mistake of human history. Thus, the liberal theologians have framed the hermeneutical debate – labeling themselves the Higher Critics because they examine for lofty meaning above the text whereas Lower Critics are among the simple minded - smaller minds futilely looking for deeper substance below the text.

This brings the third issue of Hermeneutical Controversy – an issue of such subjectivity it can never be satisfactorily resolved by the scholarly community – Sensus Plenior or Fuller Sense of Scripture. This is the belief that the Holy Spirit may intend a fuller meaning than that envisioned by the human writer. In other words, the authors wrote about more than they understood. Scriptural Support for Sensus Plenior @Daniel 12: 8 & 1st Peter 1: 10 – 12.

PART FOUR

In Part Two of our dissertation on *Biblically Rightly Dividing* we have focused on the confirmation bias associated with any analysis within

the closed loop of preconceived ideas; In Part Three of our dialogue we have demonstrated in outcome how these preconceived ideas have formatted the framework of the Hermeneutics of Higher Criticism. In Part Four of our discussion we will conversely examine the logical limitations of scope imposed by only working within the locked box of deductive & inductive interpretations.

Both those that approach the scriptures with preconceived ideas and those that approach more seriously with open minds utilize one or more of the three forms of basic logic. We will examine **Logic in its Three-Part Typology**.

Deductive Reasoning - Conclusion Guaranteed. Deductive Reasoning moves from the general statement to the specific; If the original assertion is true then the conclusion is true.

Inductive Reasoning – Conclusion Merely Likely. Induction begins with observations that are specific and limited in scope, and proceeds to a generalized conclusion that is highly likely, but not certain, in light of accumulated evidence. The scientific method relies on Inductive Reasoning in getting evidence, seeking patterns, and forming hypothesis.

At the start of the 17th Century the Roman Catholic church's authority over the whole of life was absolute; Society considered science skeptically and knowledge was classic and deductive. Although prominent philosophers such as David Hume still said much later that nothing new could be learned from Inductive Reasoning – they were considered by most – the remnants of the past because - by the end of 17th century – the status quo had been largely overturned. Looking back, however, it can be said that Hume was somewhat justified in his comparative analysis because ironically - it was Inductive Thinking that had once led to the false conclusion that the Earth Was Flat. Obviously,

both methods have their shortcoming and are strongest when used together in combination.

Abductive Reasoning – Optimal Inference. In the 1930's Pragmatist Charles Pierce wrote of a Third Approach he initially labelled Retroductive Analysis – which later he changed to - Abductive Reasoning. He wrote: "Of the three types of reasoning – it is abduction that offers one the most extensive range of reference. Deduction is entirely analogical, or self-referential. It imparts no new information and refers only to what is found with the proposition under consideration. Induction, on the other hand, is synthetic in nature, it does refer to objects that exists outside the proposition considered. Nevertheless, it is limited to conclusions that can be reached through repeated prior experience. Abduction, on the other hand, is able to introduce new ideas, to solve problems, and to lead to new explanations of life and reality." Deduction applied properly yields a Necessary Conclusion. Induction applied properly yields a Probable Conclusion. Abduction applied properly yields the most Plausible Conclusion.

In my opinion, the 1930's dating for first introduction to Abductive Analysis is significant because the primary references for the brotherhood in the study of the science of Hermeneutics are the Axiom Laws & Interpretative Rules from the classic work by Clinton Lockhart *Principles of Interpretation* along with the classic book by Professor D. R. Duncan & it's derived workbooks *Hermeneutics: Understanding Biblical Interpretation* both written before the 1930's. While Professor Duncan may be correct as to the utility of the several methods of which he wrote – Allegorical, Hierarchical, Rationalistic, Apologetic, Dogmatic, Literal, & Inductive – I believe him – incomplete. Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that – D.R. Duncan's Linguistic-Grammatic, Etymologic, & Morphologic Analysis in unit review of the Lexical-Syntactical Method in

the section entitled *Interpretation of Words and Sentences* is still of timeless value.

Similarly, the 1960's addition by Edward de Bono of **Lateral & Critical Thinking** in contrast to Vertical & Analytical Thinking – warrant further update to the classic principles of scriptural interpretation.

In other words, in our constant *Search for the Truth* we must put to work the brain God gave us – we need to approach at all angles and to resource all three ways by which we rescue truthful absolutes from the moral relativists – Theories of Correspondence, Coherence, & Consensus. **Correspondence Theory of Truth** – Treats Truth as Common Sense & Reliable Description of Reality; **Coherence Theory of Truth** – Axiomatic Construction of Truth Propositions & their Demonstrated Proof; **Consensus Theory of Truth** – Pragmatist Utilitarianism of Received Religion & Traditional Interpretation. (“A History of Truth” by Felipe Fernandez Armeto)

In Part Two of our dissertation on *Biblically Rightly Dividing* we have focused on the confirmation bias associated with any analysis within the closed loop of preconceived ideas; In Part Three of our dialogue we have demonstrated in outcome how these preconceived ideas have formatted the framework of the Hermeneutics of Higher Criticism; In Part Four of our discussion we have conversely examined the logical limitations of scope imposed by only working within the locked box of deductive & inductive interpretations; In Part Five we will be shift to the debate over the **New Historical Criticism & Old Textual Criticism** Hermeneutic on our Home Turf - American Restoration Movement & Local churches of Christ. Additionally, for purposes of illustration, we will be revisiting Flatland's Squares – multi-dimensionally unaware – not totally there – spiritually comatose in their dysfunctional dream.

PART FIVE

David L. Cooper (KISS)ed it with his **Golden Rule of Interpretation**:

“When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; Therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.”

In *Christianity Restored*, Pages 96, 97 in the chapter on Principles of Interpretation - Alexander Campbell shares his Seven Rules of Interpretation: 1) On opening any book in the Sacred Scriptures, consider first the **historical circumstances** of the book. These are the order, the title, the author, the date, the place, and the occasion of it.; 2) In examining the contents of any book, as respects precepts, promises, exhortations, etc. observe who it is that speaks, and under what **dispensation** he officiates.; 3) To understand the meaning of what is commanded, promised, taught, etc. the same (literary) **philological principles**, deduced from the nature of language; or the same laws of interpretation which are applied to the language of other books, are to be applied to the language of the Bible. 4) *Common usage*, which can only be ascertained by testimony, must always decide the meaning of any word which has but one signification; but when words have according to the dictionary, more meanings than one, whether literal or figurative, the **scope, the context, or parallel passages**, must decide the meaning. 5) In all tropical (figurative speech) language, ascertain the point of resemblance, and judge of the **nature of the trope [figure]**, and its kind, from the point of resemblance.; 6) In the interpretation of symbols, types, allegories, and parables, this rule is supreme: **ascertain the point** to be illustrated; for comparison is never to be extended beyond that point – to all the attributes, qualities, or circumstances of

the symbol, type, allegory, or parable. 7) For the salutary and sanctifying intelligence of the Oracles of God, the following rule is indispensable – We must come within the **understanding distance**.

Alexander Campbell in chapters 1 - 33 of his book on *Christianity Restored* is describing his Hermeneutical 5-Pointed Polar Star of Interpretative Principles: LITERAL – HISTORICAL-GRAMMATICAL – RHETORICAL – CONTEXTUAL. This Interpretative Methodology - known today as *The Old Hermeneutic* – are rules of thumb that emerged from the writings of those early church scholars represented by the Antiochene School in counter commentary to those of the Alexandrian Allegorical School. It is important to note that the Scottish & American Restoration Movement put special emphasis on the last polar star feature of *context* - **Book, Chapter, & Verse Evangelism**.

As we flash forward from 19th Century to the 21st Century and we shop for information as to the New Hermeneutic Debate Within the Church of Christ - I have as usual found the most useful resource material at the World Video Bible School; In fact, the WVBS had study notes which I obtained for an entire class taught by Dave Miller entitled *The 'New' Hermeneutic*. Brother Miller is very concise and organized with the title given each section of his class syllabus – The “Form” of Scripture; Logic, Human Reasoning, and Implication; Historical Context; Presupposition & Cultural Conditions; & **Atomistic Interpretation & a “Flat” Bible**. Whereas, we have already covered in comments - the contents of his class - except for the last section - we will devote our attention to it.

In the previous sections of his class presentation Brother Dave Miller has explained how those of the New Hermeneutic have further stolen the terminology & framed the Hermeneutic Debate Specific to the churches of Christ. From their Higher Criticism vantage point they see the conversation within the brotherhood regarding the principles of

interpretation as one between biblical scholars & reactionary traditionalists or as a debate between - **Restoration Hermeneutic & Scholarly Hermeneutic.**

Restoring Textual Analysis. Restoration writers have through the many years suggested a series of questions for rediscovering the Original Meaning of the Bible Text: Q1 – Who really wrote the passage?; Q2 – Who was their target audience?; Q3 – Why & When did they write it?; Q4 - In which literary style did they write?; Q5 - How has it been translated back to us?. Those of the Scholarly Movement believe that background research of scripture like identifying the author, identifying the speaker, identifying the purpose, identifying the date of the writing, and identifying those being addressed is searching for significance not contained in or not important to informal letters of correspondence which they believe the scriptures all to be.

Restoring Biblical Authority. Those of the Scholarly Hermeneutic, believing the Bible Book Canon simply a Letter Literature Codex, reject all discussion of *Scriptural Layers of Significance & Depth of Bible Authority*. Practitioners of the Old Hermeneutic recognize Levels of Authority – Direct, Indirect, Casual, & Corrupt. Those specific to the Restoration Movement Apply a Restored Decision Science - Primary: Direct Command & Secondary: Approved Example & Tertiary: Necessary Implication or Inference. Those of the Scholarly Party respond in separating Direct Statements Apodictic or direct commands of general application from Statements Casuistic or those that specifically apply to some people only in some circumstances and insist that this triad metaphor has wrongfully given its restoration practitioners a false sense of “epistemological certainty.” Moreover, they claim that the emphasis on “necessary” regarding inference is derived from Scottish Common-Sense Philosophy whereas an internet search easily finds this entire decision triad linked at levels of authority

originating from British Utilitarianism @William Paley. Regardless of conceptual origin – the real question is whether this study tool is Biblically Based. Responding to the cry for change by these scholarly critics F. LaGard Smith recently proposed in his book *The Cultural Church* a modern repurpose and an alliteration change in wording – **Purpose, Principle, & Precedent**. He wrote that we must first understand the *purpose* the original author had in mind, then we must determine whether there is a *principle* which would apply to us. Finally, we must ask whether there is a *precedent*. Putting these “p’s” into practice we end at the same place we were with the original restoration decision triad. Needless to say, those of the Scholarly School of Modern Interpretation are still not satisfied. [Note: According to Chris Reeve, The New Hermeneutic in modified form has most severely impacted the conservative non-institutional churches of Christ through the writings of **Charles Holt** & *The Examiner* Magazine.]

FLATLANDER FOLLIES: Flipping the Narrative on the Rationalism Movement, Critical Language, Layered Scripture, and Bible Study.

The New Scholarly Hermeneutic flips the Cartesian Narrative of the Rationalist Movement by asserting that man is incapable of understanding the truth of things spiritual. Yet, they do not deal with passages stating clearly that he can and condemning willful ignorance. All we have to do is to simply turn to John 8: 32 & Ephesians 4: 18 – 21.

The New Hermeneutic “Scholars” flip the Critical Language narrative regarding charges of preconceived ideas by claiming it is worse to approach any Bible Book assuming an internal integrity within canon – that is the Sin of *Closed-Minded Preunderstanding*. Some “scholars” have asserted we remain in a period of progressive revelation – the Letter Codex never complete – so “preunderstanding” impossible.

The New Hermeneutic Scholarly Movement within the churches of Christ demonstrate their greatest agility at twisting scripture in seminar when they contort about the depth of scripture and mock those meditating and making personal application and/or those that engage in serious Bible Study. Those of the Old Hermeneutic & the Restoration period authors writing on interpretative principles like D. R. Duncan would greatly disagree. Duncan in his book in the chapter section entitled A Desire to Know & To Do the Truth, Is Necessary says on page 22: “Being without interest respecting its claims, or, it may be, set opposite them, wishing not to find the truth, as almost anything else would comport better with their lives, the truth will not be found in them... Men can find what they look for, but what they do not want to see, it is difficult to make them understand. Hence if there is not a good and honest heart, there will be but little fruit from the sowing.” In other words, we must both transform and transcend - it takes both hard study and perfection in prayer – the Bible Bookworm Chrysalis Cocooning in Life’s Struggle – to spiritually break free & finally fly away. However, for our cloud dwelling Higher Critics – there is no place to fly!

WVBS’s Dave Miller next writes in detail of these last two flips of the hermeneutic narrative – Flat Scripture & Atomistic Interpretation.

Brother Miller states “They say the ‘old hermeneutic’ approaches the Bible ‘atomistically’ and treats the scriptures as if they were flat. By ‘atomistic’ they mean we fail to treat each Bible document separate on its own merits by introducing passages from other books and contexts into the book we are trying to interpret. To do so is to be guilty of the ‘unpardonable’ sin of ‘proof texting’... Whenever we are told our hermeneutic is a ‘flat’ Bible, they mean we should recognize that not all facts and truths presented in the Bible are of equal importance.” In other words, these thought leaders have redefined – deciding for us - those matters weightier. For example, these “scholars” of the Lord’s

Church say singing with or without musical accompaniment is a but a mere “technicality” – an issue of “trivial” concern.

PART SIX

*In conclusion, we need neither New Hermeneutic or Old Hermeneutic, we need neither a Scholarly Hermeneutic or a Restoration Hermeneutic – **We Need the Hermeneutic of the Double-Edged Sword** – We Need to Resource the Primitive Principles of Interpreting the Old Testament Applied by Jesus Christ in His Earthly Ministry. In other words, WDJJ?*

Part Six picks up from Brother Dave Miller again but this time from a different source of publication and a separate article readily available on internet search under the title – “**Jesus’ Hermeneutical Principles.**”

For every teaching, for every passage, for every verse, for every word of the Bible, there is a meaning that God intended to convey. That is what the Apostle meant when he wrote: “No prophecy of Scripture, is of any private interpretation” (2 Peter 1: 20). He meant that men did not decide what information to include in inspired material – God did. God has given every responsible human being the task of ascertaining that one correct interpretation. Furthermore, most relevant to this task is to explore the attitude of Jesus Christ toward Old Testament Scripture and how He employed Scripture to avoid conformity to those who would compel compliance to religious traditions rather than to God’s Will.

Jesus’ Attitude Toward Scripture. Jesus clearly considered Scripture to be divinely inspired through human instrumentality. Jesus pointed to O. T. human writers of prophetic statement and their fulfillment in the New Testament. Jesus acknowledged the credibility of the didactic and historical elements of scripture. For Jesus, O. T. Inspiration extended to the verbal expression of the thoughts of sacred writers. Jesus defended the *tense* of the O. T. grammar as well. (In Hebrew the tense is implied

by descriptions of incompleteness or imperfection in time.) To even the experts of the law he explained passages as a child (Luke 2: 47) and as an adult challenged the Pharisees with passages of prophetic puzzle - He readily explained in Matthew 22: 45. Jesus' allusion to the "jot and tittle" in Matthew 5: 18 constituted a tacit declaration of belief in verbal inspiration not only of the thought of scripture, but the words themselves and the letters that they formed. In Matthew 19: 4, 5 the words seem to be more authorial, narrational, comment by Moses, the writer of the Pentateuch; Yet, Jesus attributed the words to God.

Jesus viewed Scripture as *Propositional, Absolute, and Objective*. Jesus knew Scripture and used it as the basis of objective perception (Matthew 21: 16; 22: 29). The propositional nature of Scripture is particularly apparent in Christ's frequent use of isolated Old Testament statements (i.e. propositions) to prove various contentions. For instance, he conflated Psalm 110: 1 & Daniel 7: 13 in Mark 14: 62 to prove his Messianic identity and impending resurrection.

Jesus' Pragmatic Usage of Scripture. Jesus relied very heavily upon Scripture often citing known book reference (Scrolls Didn't Have Chapter & Verse). In addition to a heavy reliance upon scriptural quotation, Jesus repeatedly demonstrated incredible proclivity for rationality by way of sharp logic and sound argumentation; He always advanced logical reason to justify actions taken. Jesus was continually besieged with questions and verbal tests to which He constantly displayed use of rational, reasoned response (Luke 11: 53, 54). Jesus was so sensible and rational in His discourse that when hard-hearted Jews declared Him to be mad or demon-possessed, others countered: "These are not the words of one who has a demon (John 10: 21). Jesus' evidenced in full spectrum - His attitude toward and utilization of scripture - during the occasion of His Temptation by the Devil in the Desert detailed in Matthew 4: 1 – 11. Satan posed three arguments,

urging Christ to act on the basis of erroneous reasoning. Jesus demonstrated in return an applied hermeneutic analogous to the traditional triad that calls for Command, Example, or Necessary Inference as sole authority for belief and practice.

Closely related to Jesus' emphasis upon logic is His virtually constant use of implication – Matthew 12: 1 – 9 & Matthew 21: 23 – 27 are both stand out passages to this point. Jesus' most clever usage of implication was in Matthew 22: 41 – 45 where in response to what the Pharisees thought a trick question - He linked 2nd Samuel 7: 11 -17 with Psalm 110: 1 in a necessary implication that the Messiah would be both physically descended from David and yet Lord of David.

In Conclusion – Brother Dave Miller says: “It is evident that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, demonstrated several significant hermeneutical principles in His own attitude toward and use of Scripture. He approached Scripture with the abiding conviction that the Old Testament is the authoritative, absolute, propositional, plenary, verbally inspired Word of God. In His handling of the Scripture, He relied heavily upon extensive Scriptural quotation, proper logical reasoning and implication.”

Final Word. This David shares the same opinion as Brother Dave Miller that those seeking the Restoration of the Ancient Order in logically and rightly dividing the Holy Scriptures should first focus on mirroring of – **Jesus' Hermeneutic & Principles of Interpretation.**