

HERMENEUTICS

THE HISTORY OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION (PART V)

THE POST REFORMATION. In the 17th and 18th centuries Calvinism spread as well as reactions to Calvinism. The Westminster Confession spelled out the tenets of Calvinism for Britain. Concerning the Scriptures the Westminster Confession states, "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of Scripture (which is not manifold but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly." The most well-known opponent of John Calvin's view was Jacob Arminius (1550-1609). He was a Dutch theologian who disagreed with many of the teachings of John Calvin, especially his teachings on predestination. Arminius taught that man has a free will where Calvin believed that man's will could not be free due to the effects of the fall.

During this time various movements emerged: Mysticism is the view that man can have direct knowledge and communication with God apart from the Scriptures. Pietism developed as a reaction to beliefs in creeds. Pietism influenced the Moravians, who influenced John Wesley (1703-1791). Wesley believed the Bible is to direct us to Christ. He reacted to Rationalism which stressed that the human intellect alone can decide what is true and false.

THE MODERN ERA. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, new movements emerged regarding the interpretation of the Bible. Liberalism denied the revelation of God in His Word. Biblical criticism with its naturalistic views explained away the supernatural elements of Scripture and attempted to reduce the Bible to the works of men rather than a revelation from God. Consequently, Liberalism denies the doctrines of sin, depravity, and hell. For the most part Liberalism has accepted Charles Darwin's theory of evolution rather than the Genesis record of creation. There were also many conservative scholars who wrote excellent exegetical commentaries on the Bible. These commentaries emphasized the meaning of the Biblical text in its historical and literary contexts. The twentieth century brought Neo Orthodoxy which holds that the Bible becomes the Word of God in our personal experiences with God. In other words Neo Orthodoxy does not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible.

It is important for all who take a verbal view of inspiration to continue to stress the historical-grammatical, literary approach to the Bible. It is this view alone that enables us to arrive at the author's one intended meaning, which is the ultimate goal of hermeneutics.

Tomorrow we will begin to deal with general principles of interpretation