The Use of Hermeneutics in Sermon Preparation

By Theodore G. Gullixson

The first and foremost purpose of Bible interpretation is to give glory to God. - Victor Mennicke

An experienced carpenter building a house may not need a set of blueprints to work from. Even if he has all the proper tools except a tape ruler and a level, without these measuring devices the building will be crooked throughout. The Bible interpreter who has the skills of languages, theology, systematics, and homiletics; but does not know or practice the measuring device of hermeneutics in his work, his sermons will eventually be twisted away from the clear teaching of Scripture.

The stimulus for this paper came from a reading of Martin Chemnitz's book *The Lord's Supper*, which has as much to say about the proper interpretation of the Bible as it does about the Sacrament of the Altar. Chemnitz stated:

> Thus when we predicated the bread of the Lord's Supper that it is the body of Christ, the word "bread" has and retains its own proper meaning. And we should add the note regarding the word "body" that because it was given for us we are absolutely compelled to understand it in no other way than in its proper and natural sense – as the substance of the human nature, conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, and nailed to the cross. The copulative verb "is" (*est*) denotes what obtains, what is present, what is distributed and received, namely, that this bread here present, after receiving its name from God is not only bread but at the same time also the body of Christ. Thus the words of this expression possess and retain their own proper and natural meaning without being changed by a figure of speech. (46)[i]

Rare is the theological or exegetical paper today that demonstrates such an awareness of hermeneutics as Chemnitz does. If someone thinks that hermeneutics is assumed in all interpretation, the modern hermeneutical approaches render this idea as being too passive. For the present theological climate exists because of hermeneutical confusion. If someone objects that hermeneutical study of the Bible is not necessary since pastors have vowed to be guided by the Lutheran Confessions, the objection is not valid. While the Lutheran Confessions are a correct exposition of Holy Scripture, they do not cover every Bible text or doctrine. Preachers dare not use the Confessions as a crutch to avoid their own study of God's Word. The Confessions can be used to enrich the preacher's biblical understanding and as a litmus test to check the results of interpretation.

This paper contains a two-fold purpose: to call attention to why the study of hermeneutics is so vital and necessary to the modern Lutheran Church, and to demonstrate how hermeneutical principles may be practically employed in sermon preparation. As someone said almost a century ago:

> Especially should the theological exegete endeavor to serve his hearers or readers by opening to them the Scriptures and thereby making their hearts burn within them, chiefly by expounding unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Christ.[ii]

The discipline of hermeneutics has generally been subsumed under the study of Exegesis or Dogmatics. Its relationship to homiletics has been recognized in the past but it has not been extensively treated by homileticians. Hermeneutics should not exist as a set of pre-suppositions and principles which are not actively involved in the interpretation of Scripture. If the Bible is God's inerrant Word which speaks to His people, then sermons should not be preached without a careful consideration of the hermeneutical principles applied to the text.

While every Christian should aim to read the Bible with understanding (Mennicke 58), and while Bible interpretation should never be the sole monopoly of the trained exegete (Mayer 43), the preacher especially

needs to pay particular attention to hermeneutics. In a textbook for homiletics, Joel Gerlach and Richard Balge state: "Whenever you investigate and interpret the original meaning of any portion of Scripture, you will want to practice sound hermeneutics" (19).

Since the glory of God's name is at stake, and because the salvation of many souls are at risk, the preacher must be certain of what he proclaims. Victor Mennicke, in *The Abiding Word*, quotes Luther:

> You yourself must be so certain of this word of grace that if all people should speak otherwise, yes, if all angels should say no, you nevertheless stand alone and say, "And yet I know that this word is correct." (Luther, St. Louis VIII:1003)

Mennicke adds:

> In matters of faith it is not sufficient to say that a passage might have a certain meaning. We must be so certain that we can say, It *must* be understood this way and not otherwise. (40)

The Need to Study Hermeneutics

If elephants can be trained to dance, lions to play, and leopards to hunt,
surely preachers can be trained to preach. – Erasmus (Stott 213)

The need to study the discipline and principles of hermeneutics ought to be self-evident. Yet the correct interpretation of God's Word hinges, in part, upon knowing this discipline. Twentieth Century religious thought gives preachers many reasons for the need to practice hermeneutics.

First, preachers need hermeneutics

> to ascertain what God has said in Sacred Scripture; to determine the meaning of the Word of God. There is no profit to us if God has spoken and we do not know what He has said. (Ramm, *Protestant* 2)

Bernard Ramm assumes that God can speak to human beings and that what He says is meaningful. For if God had spoken to man in the language of angels, humans would not know the words or their meanings, since angels and men do not have common referents. Modern linguistics has defined words as symbols which have a unique and a determinant (rather than a non-determinant) meaning. God spoke in human language through holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost to write what He wanted to reveal to humans about their sin and His salvation.[iii]

Luther identified a second need for hermeneutics:

> Here Christ would indicate the principle reason why the Scripture was given by God. Men are to study and search in it and to learn that He, *He*, Mary's Son, is the One who is able to give eternal life to all who come to Him and believe on Him. Therefore he who would correctly and profitably read Scripture should see to it that he finds Christ in it. (quoted in Surburg, *Presuppositions* 21, from sermon on John 5:39, 40, 43)

Here Luther describes a fundamental Lutheran hermeneutical principle. Without this understanding, the Bible would simply be regarded as great literature like the works of Homer, Chaucer, Shakespeare, or Milton. Should preachers fail to find Christ in Scripture, they will fail their listeners, and themselves, and they will fail to glorify God.

Third, biblical interpreters need to be objective in their study of Scripture. William LaSor states: "There is nothing cultic or fantastic in the interpretations. The literal meaning is always definitive, and both the fuller meaning and the typical interpretation are developed from the literal" (116).[iv] Because Bible interpreters can follow clear principles of hermeneutics and show how they arrived at a certain interpretation, their results can be tested and verified by others. Interpretation should not become a playground for how one *feels* about a certain text.

Errorists of the present time provide a fourth reason to study hermeneutics. With scholars meeting to determine which parts of Scripture are authentic, which words did Jesus actually speak, which events are not myths, orthodox Lutherans need to assure the faithful that such attempts are contrary to a correct understanding of Scripture. Christians need to know that the cults also misuse Scripture to "prove" their errors. The Science of Mind Church teaches that humans are partly divine, citing the words of Jesus "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21) to mean that divinity is within man. The Jehovah Witnesses use Jesus' words "that they all may be one, as You, Father are in Me" (John 17:21) to deny that Jesus is equal to the Father, as He says "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). Also, the millennialists have interpreted Revelation 20 incorrectly along with many other passages which they claim "proves" their error. All these are problems of hermeneutics and the answers to these problems arise from this discipline. Luther shows why preachers need to study hermeneutics and exegesis:

> While a preacher may preach Christ with edification though he may be unable to read the Scriptures in the originals, he cannot expound or maintain their teaching against the heretics without this indispensable knowledge. (quoted in Ramm, *Protestant* 54-55)[v]

A fifth need for the study of hermeneutics results from the preceding one. The person in the pew needs to have confidence that what he or she hears in the sermon and in the Bible class is the correct understanding of God's Word. Mennicke wrote: "Every Christian should busy himself with Bible interpretation, i.e., aim to read the Bible with understanding, for his own blessing and salvation" (58). Without learning the basic principles of hermeneutics, lay people may be unable to deal with the cult members who come to their door or to follow the arguments drawn from Scripture during doctrinal controversies. Orthodox Lutherans cannot hide their heads in the sand and hope that the problem of Bible interpretation will go away. Believers can be affected by false doctrine and need to have confidence in the correct interpretation of Scripture.

Sixth, hermeneutics is vital to a proper understanding of the Lutheran Confessions. One cannot read the Confessions without appreciating how deeply they are grounded in hermeneutical principles. Referring to Romans 15:4, the Formula of Concord states: "It is certain that any interpretation of the Scriptures which weakens or even removes this comfort and hope is contrary to the Holy Spirit's will and intent" (FC SD XI: 92). And Robert Preus declares:

> A doctrinal position may well seem nonsense until we grasp the exegetical method and canons of hermeneutics which yield this position. It is particularly important for us as Lutherans to know how the writers of our Lutheran Symbols read the Scriptures, inasmuch as we have subscribed to and are committed to the doctrine of these Symbols. And certainly subscribing to the doctrine of the Confessions involves our agreement with the basic approach and hermeneutics which were employed by the Confessions in reading Scripture and drawing doctrine from it. (*Biblical Hermeneutics* 83)

Finally, the preacher also needs to be closely connected with the discipline of hermeneutics.[vi] Ramm declares:

> Hermeneutics, exegesis, and preaching form one continuum. The minister who stands in the tradition of the Reformation that the minister is the minister of the Word of God (*ministerium*

verbi divine [sic]) believes that the center of gravity in his ministry is the Word of God. (Ramm, *New Hermeneutic* 9)

The preacher who fails to mine his text for the central thought and chief applications through use of hermeneutics and exegesis has failed his hearers. Prof. M. Reu declares:

The sermon is the presentation of God's Word in its meaning for the Christian congregation of the present. But before the preacher can know what his text means for the present he must understand it in its meaning for the past, in which it was originally set forth as a word of God. (339)

The preacher needs to bridge the gap between two worlds of thought and culture. This means he must distinguish between a covenant and a contract, show how Old Testament sacrifices pointed to Christ, fit the ancient customs in Jesus' parables into our modern age, and show how customs like foot washing and women wearing hats in the service are to be interpreted and applied to modern times.

A Definition of Hermeneutics

A solid hermeneutics is the root of all good exegesis and exegesis is the foundation
of all truly Biblical preaching. – Ramm (*New Hermeneutics* 6)

The last one hundred years have seen such an expansion and change in the meaning of "hermeneutics" that there is no easy definition of the word. For the higher critics have linked "hermeneutics" with the way that the Bible is approached rather than the principles one applies to interpret the Scriptures.

Etymologically, hermeneutics took its origins from the Greek "god" Hermes, who brought messages from the "gods" to mortals. "Exegesis" originally meant a "narration" or an "explanation." Etymology, however, is not particularly useful in determining the meaning of words, since words often change their meaning or develop different semantic fields through the centuries.[vii] Plato was the first to use the term ἡ ἑρμηνεύτικη, as a technical term (Berkhof 11) .

The Bible uses the concept of "interpretation" in a different way. The Old Testament generally uses the concept in reference to the interpretation of dreams (Ramm, *Protestant* 10-11). The New Testament uses five forms with the basic meaning of "to translate" for ἑρμηνεία.[viii]

The noun "exegesis" does not occur in the New Testament. The verb form, ἐξηγέομαι, meaning "to lead out" is found in John 1:18 where it says that Christ "exegeted" the Father to man. This means that Jesus revealed and explained the Father and His will to the human race (Vines 2-3).

Biblical usage does not help with the way people today use "hermeneutics" and "exegesis." Modern theologians use "hermeneutic" to speak of one's whole approach to Scripture – presuppositions and methods. A person's hermeneutic may be form-criticism, Gospel reductionism, demythologizing, or all three. Today, exegesis not only covers what the words mean, but also the extra-biblical disciplines one uses to draw meaning out of the text.

A traditional meaning for these two terms does exist. Louis Berkhof defines hermeneutics as "the science that teaches us the principles, laws, and methods of interpretation" (11). Jerry Vines identifies exegesis as "the procedure for discovering the intended meaning of a Bible passage" (3).

Hermeneutics and exegesis are not synonyms but they are related terms since they have the same goal – to dig the meaning out of God's holy Word. There are several ways to define this relationship. According to the *Encyclopedia of Theology*, hermeneutics naturally follows *philologia sacra* and immediately precedes exegesis (Berkhof 13). And while Bernard Ramm states that any division between the two is a little artificial, he makes the attempt: "Hermeneutics studies the theory of interpretation and refers to exegesis only to illustrate its points.

Exegesis deals concretely with the text and refers to hermeneutics only to argue a point" (*New Hermeneutics* 9). In his textbook on hermeneutics, Ramm compares the two to a rule book in a game. The rules are not the game, but the game cannot be played without rules. "Hermeneutics proper is not exegesis, but exegesis is applied hermeneutics" (Protestant 11).[ix] The distinction between hermeneutics and exegesis is important to keep in mind so that the interpreter first learns the principles of hermeneutics before he begins exegesis. Ramm declares: "A solid hermeneutics is the root of all good exegesis and exegesis is the foundation of all truly Biblical preaching" (*New Hermeneutic* 6).

The discipline of hermeneutics has usually been divided into two categories – general and biblical hermeneutics. General hermeneutics refers to the principles which would govern the interpretation of any work of literature. Biblical, or special, hermeneutics considers those principles which deal with the special nature of Scripture, e.g., parables, prophecy, poetry, and apocalypse (Ramm, *Protestant* 11).[x] Recent scholarship has added more considerations to the discipline. D. A. Carson notes, "A critical interpretation of Scripture is one that has adequate justification – lexical, grammatical, cultural, theological, historical, geographical, or other justification" (12). In order to treat these added considerations, this paper will use a three part division of hermeneutics – presuppositions, principles, and rules (see discussion beginning page 12).

Hermeneutics has further been defined by Ramm as both a science and an art. Hermeneutics is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation" (*Protestant* 1). While the computer has been helpful to the interpreter in many areas of hermeneutical work, it cannot produce a faithful interpretation of Scripture just by programming in some rules. For the true interpreter requires the gifts and wisdom of the Holy Spirit to guide his interpretation.

A History of Hermeneutics

It is the bold claim throughout our historic confessions, that the saving doctrine presented is biblical, the result of exegesis. – Robert Preus (*How To Interpret* 3)

The history of hermeneutical study highlights both those who have remained faithful to the literal interpretation of the Bible and those major figures who twisted and bent God's Word to suit their fancy. For hundreds of years the Christian Church was dominated by those who used unscriptural principles of interpretation.

M. S. Terry shows how vital a knowledge of hermeneutical history is to the interpreter:

> A knowledge of the history of biblical interpretation is of inestimable value to the student of the Holy Scriptures. It serves to guard against errors and exhibits the activity and efforts of the human mind in its search after truth and in relation to noblest themes. It shows what influences have led to the misunderstandings of God's Word, and how acute minds, carried away by a misconception of the nature of the Bible, have sought mystic and manifold meanings in its contents. (quoted in Ramm, *Protestant* 23)

A detailed history of hermeneutics cannot be presented in this paper (see Appendix A). However, the Reformation era represents such a radical break with previous interpretations that more attention is needed in this area of study.

For one thousand years the allegorical method dominated biblical interpretation in the Christian Church. It was popular because: 1) its practitioners displayed a profound respect for the Bible to find its deepest meanings, 2) it made the Bible an inexhaustible storehouse of spiritual truth, 3) it solved difficult problems of interpretation, and 4) the preacher could find texts to explain his points of view (Mayer 26).

Many factors made Western Europe ripe for the Reformation, the foremost being the renewed study of Hebrew and Greek (Ramm, *Protestant* 51). But modern Lutherans need to appreciate the fact that "the Lutheran

Reformation was intimately connected with a hermeneutical revolution that was foundational for Luther's Copernican theological revolution" (Surburg, *Luther* 7-8).[xi] In fact, the Reformation could not have succeeded as it did had not both theologians and lay people read the Bible with new eyes opened by Luther's new biblical hermeneutical principles (Surburg, *Presuppositions* 279).

Expounding the Scriptures was Luther's life work from October 22, 1512, when he became a Doctor of Theology and the professor for *lectura in Biblia*, to his death in 1546. His lectures were nothing else than biblical exegetical lectures. Luther said, "Theology is nothing else than grammar occupied with the words of Holy Spirit" (quoted in Spitz 15). Because Luther also shared the preaching duties at the town church in Wittenberg, the interpretation and application of the Bible was a daily occupation for Luther where the fruits of his exegetical work could be applied to the hearts and lives of the people (Carter 517). Luther's Large Catechism is a homiletical and practical application of texts to the specific needs of the day, yet behind it lies a profound exegetical understanding of Scripture (Preus, *How To Interpret* 6). With all the books and helps which modern scholars possess, one has to marvel at Luther's development of true hermeneutical principles and at his consistent application of those principles.(For a description of Luther's principles, see Appendix B.)

Though the Formula of Concord is the only Lutheran Confession not written by either Luther or Melanchthon, Robert Preus states "There is no difference between the hermeneutical presuppositions and norms of Luther and Melanchthon and the writers of the Formula of Concord who were their students" (*How To Interpret* 5).

Not everyone is ready to praise Luther's exegetical skills. Bernard Ramm declares: "It is true that to Luther we owe the honor of having broken through to a new Protestant hermeneutics, but it was Calvin who exemplified it with his touch of genius" (*Protestant* 57). Berkhof stated that Luther's "hermeneutical rules were far better than his exegesis" (26), and said of Calvin: "He was, by common consent, the greatest exegete of the Reformation" (27).[xii]

A kinder judgment was rendered by Lewis Spitz,, Jr.: "In one respect his (Luther's) commentaries will never be superceded: in the congeniality of the expositor and the text, in the sympathetic bond of feeling and understanding uniting the strongly religious man to the source of his faith and Christian understanding" (19).

As heirs of Luther's hermeneutics principles, orthodox pastors today need to see that they have inherited a unique hermeneutics distinct from that of the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Reformed churches. Only by a united and a conscientious effort will Lutherans be able to hang on to their hermeneutical and theological heritage and pass it on to the next generation of Bible students.

The Crisis Today

Poor and sloppy hermeneutics is very often the result of a poor attitude
toward the sacred Scriptures. – Preus (*Biblical Hermeneutics* 113)

Certainly a crisis exists within the Christian community over the discipline of hermeneutics. Rare, indeed, is the American seminary professor who has not accepted the presuppositions and methods of higher-criticism. This results in seminary graduates trained to deny the basic doctrines of the Bible. Bible studies are further complicated with disciplines that include philology, archeology, philosophy, and history which are often used to deny Scripture truths. Robert Preus states: "We must face with judgment and knowledge all attacks against Scripture and its proper interpretation and refute them. Our life as a Lutheran Church depends upon this" (*Biblical Hermeneutics* 81).[xiii] Since hermeneutics has become the focal point of all theology, John Montgomery notes, "a misstep here may well find the church fatally committed to heresy or irrelevance" (I:45).

But the more important issue for Lutherans today is: Does a crisis exist in the understanding and practice of hermeneutics and homiletics among the orthodox Lutherans? While this question may sound alarmist, there are good reasons for raising it.

In a much quoted book which Walter C. Kaiser wrote, and titles *Toward An Exegetical Theology* (1981), he answered the question this way: "...the most 'basic crisis in biblical studies' must be placed in the discipline of exegesis"(17). This crisis exists, he says, because "grammatical-historical exegesis has failed to map the route between the actual determination of the authentic meaning and the delivery of the Word to modern men and women who ask that that meaning be translated into some kind of normative application or significance for their lives" (Kaiser 88). As proof of this, Kaiser cites the lack of textbooks which would instruct the preacher to move from the text to the sermon without losing the text's message or the needs of modern people (18).[xiv]

While most homiletic books offer steps the preacher should take to arrive at the central meaning of their text, rarely do the authors present practical aids for studying the text. Gerlach and Balge in *Preach the Gospel* have done more than other authors to help the preacher find the message of the text (pages17-23), but they devote only one paragraph directly to hermeneutics (pages 19-20).

In a survey for this paper, seven Lutheran seminaries in America reported that they felt hermeneutics was important in their curricula and important to the study of homiletics. Most seminaries required at least four hours of class work in hermeneutics, with larger seminaries offering more than 20 hours of classes.

The most serious problem which the survey identified was the lack of any Lutheran textbook on hermeneutics outside of Ralph Bohlmann's *Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions*. Some of the seminaries published their own hermeneutics class notes – Ft. Wayne, Mequon, and Tacoma – but otherwise the text books are Reformed. While Reformed textbooks contain important hermeneutical material, they also present a false hermeneutical approach to many texts. The next section of this paper attempts to show the need for a Lutheran hermeneutics textbook by calling attention to the unique hermeneutical heritage which Lutherans have received from the past.

Does a hermeneutical crisis exist within the Evangelical Lutheran Synod? If one exists, it is not found in the understanding of the Bible as God's inerrant Word or in the desire to proclaim faithfully that Word to the world. The crisis might exist in the extent to which pastors have not studied hermeneutical principles and put them into practice in their sermon preparation. This each pastor will have to judge individually.

However, there is evidence which shows that a greater effort is needed in the area of hermeneutical studies. First, the June, 1988 issue of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* contains the first lengthy article on hermeneutics by anyone from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in the last ten years. Other articles on hermeneutics in the *Quarterly* were the result of presentations at the Bethany Reformation Lectures by people outside of the Synod. Second, exegetical papers rarely presented hermeneutical principles in their exposition of Scripture. Nor does one find the results of words studies, the identification of figures of speech, syntactical analysis of phrases, or Law-Gospel analysis to a great extent. And third, whenever hermeneutical issues arose in doctrinal discussions, the statements about hermeneutics were sometimes off the mark. For example, D. A Carson calls it an exegetical fallacy to state that κεφαλή ("head") means "source" (36). While calling for more careful hermeneutical studies of the Role of Women passages, Wayne Dobratz, in his 1982 and 1983 Conference papers on the subject, injected philosophical definitions of the word "subordination" into the discussion and did not deal with the way Scripture uses the term "authority." Ralph Bohlmann gives important advice to those who interpret the Bible:

> In employing non-traditional techniques or advancing non-traditional interpretations the Lutheran interpreter, out of love for the people he serves, should clearly demonstrate that he has not violated either the *sola Scriptura* or the *solus Christus* principle. (165)

Clearly, the purpose of this paper is not to condemn, but rather to point out areas where Lutherans need to pay further attention to hermeneutics. To that end, a few remarks about sermon preparation are in order. A failure to practice hermeneutics in sermon preparation will be self-evident in the sermon itself. Piety and the Holy Spirit will not guarantee infallible interpretation of the text (Carson 13), wisdom and cleverness will not prevent pastors from perverting Scripture in their sermons (Mennicke 45), talking about the Bible and mouthing orthodox expressions will not fulfill the pastor's calling in the pulpit (Preus, *Biblical Hermeneutics* 119), and

reliance upon personal talent and human skill to supply the material of preaching will tend to dishonor God (Kidder 132).[xv] Robert Preus declares: We must go to the Bible again and again, searching out its message, knowing that it carries with it God's power, it is its own best defender, it will surely authenticate itself to us. Therein we meet our Lord Jesus Christ. We must never forget that the only reason for any discussion of Scripture or hermeneutics is that the Christ of Scripture might be made more real to poor sinners. (*Biblical Hermeneutics* 119)

An improper study of the text may produce some of the following results. Foremost, preachers will not preach their text. One idea may be pulled from the text, but the subordinate concepts will remain untouched. Ralph Moellering says that a second result is a sterile "flight into 'litergicism'(*Liturgismus* as distinguished from *Liturgie*)" (101).[xvi] Third, improper study habits result in an avoidance of preaching the Old Testament and turning to "moralizing, allegorizing, psychologizing, spiritualizing, or subjectively editorializing on a selected Biblical text" (Kaiser 132). Fourth, preachers may turn to "pompous and dogmatic answer sessions, emotional binges, poetic declamations, object lessons, clown suits, etc." (Wedel 21, 8).[xvii] A fifth result of not studying the text is a spiritually undernourished congregation which cannot weather the storm of catastrophe or the burden of doctrinal controversy. Jerry Vines says, "The lack of moral strength and convictions that plagues our day is due, to a large degree, to a lack of Bible preaching in the pulpits in recent years" (22-23).

Therefore, Daniel Kidder maintains that "no preacher of the Gospel should content himself with limited and fragmentary studies of God's Word" (133). To this end, and to help overcome any future crises that may arise in either hermeneutics or homiletics, the next section of the paper will review the discipline of hermeneutics and show how the preacher may use it to prepare his sermons.

The Principles of Hermeneutics

God has joined Gospel and Scripture together in an inseparable unity. What God
has joined together, Lutheran theology does not put asunder. – CICR of the LC-MS (21)

Hermeneutics means different things to different people. To the orthodox scholar, hermeneutics deals with principles one uses to draw meaning out of the Bible text. To the higher-critical scholar it means the methods one uses to determine the historical and authentic importance of the text. Robert Preus noted that "...for Luther exegesis was seen essentially as a philological discipline, for modern historical-critics exegesis is an historical discipline"(*How To Interpret* 39).

Even among those committed to the Bible as God's inerrant Word, the discipline of hermeneutics has been variously described. The more hermeneutical books one reads, the more confused one can become as to what are the basic principles of hermeneutics (see Appendix B).

Hermeneutics has usually been divided into general and special hermeneutics. More precision is needed, however, to deal with the added concerns of the higher critics and related disciplines which are now included with hermeneutics. This paper will work with a three-part division of hermeneutics. Area I deals with the *presuppositions* which people bring into their interpretation of Scripture. Area II deals with the basic *principles* of biblical interpretation which control the questions one brings to the text and which tests the results of interpretation. Area III describes the specific *rules* and concerns by which hermeneutical investigation is done and the special concerns of different types of literature in the Bible.

Area I: Presuppositions

The debate between the proponents of the grammatical-historical method and the historical-critical method demonstrates how important presuppositions are to the study of Scripture. Rudolf Bultmann insisted that each interpreter approaches the Bible with presuppositions which influence his results – a hermeneutical

circle.[xviii] Should an interpreter believe that God did not write the Bible, that miracles did not occur, that the scientific method determines what is true, and that the Bible contains internal and external contradictions, he will be led to demythologize the Bible, seek moral lessons from miracle stories, look for evidence of divergent sources and theologies, and reject everything contrary to human wisdom or experience (Ramm, *Protestant* 64-67).[xix]

A totally different set of presuppositions governs the hermeneutics of those who believe that the Bible is God's inerrant Word. The fundamental presupposition declares that God has acted in history and has revealed to man His Son and His Word. From this presupposition flows many others. The whole subject of *Prolegomena* in the discipline of Dogmatics contains vital presuppositions for hermeneutical studies about the nature of Scripture. Dr. Raymond Surburg lists the following presuppositions used by the historical-grammatical method as summarized:

1. The Bible in its entirety is the inspired, inerrant Word of God.
2. Only those canonical books which were employed as Scripture by the Jewish synagogue and are also reflected in the New Testament are to be recognized as God's Word.
3. Only the text in the original languages is the determinative one.
4. The Bible is the supreme and final authority in all theological matters.
5. The literal meaning is the usual and normal one.
6. The autographic text is the authoritative one and since errors have crept into the transmission of the text, it is necessary to practice textual criticism.
7. As literary documents, the Bible is a proper place for literary criticism to answer isogogical questions about individual books.
8. The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments are one complete revelation of God and are not to be separated.
9. The Scriptures are to be used to interpret Scripture.
10. The autographic texts are inerrant and do not contain errors or contradictions.
11. The centrality of justification by faith is the chief article of biblical revelation.
12. The entire Bible is christocentric – the O.T. is fulfilled in the N.T.
13. In the Holy Scriptures God speaks a word of Law and a word of Gospel.
14. The Holy Spirit is the true interpreter of the Bible.
15. The Holy Scriptures are profitable "for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness." (*Presuppositions* 280-287)[xx]

Those who hold such presuppositions will be properly equipped to interpret the words God has placed in Scripture. These presuppositions are the result of analyzing Scripture to see what it says about itself. That some of these presuppositions also become hermeneutical principles demonstrates the unity that exists between one's approach to Scripture and one's interpretation of God's Word.

The attributes of Scripture which form a part of the hermeneutical presuppositions also have important aspects and influences upon sermonizing. Since the Bible is inerrant, preachers can be confident that what they proclaim from Scripture is true, vital for their listeners to hear, and correct in all matters pertaining to God and humans. Because the Bible is clear, many passages "need no further interpretation, and any attempt to interpret them would only make them doubtful and uncertain" (Mennicke 47). Preachers can use these clear passages as proofs without explanation.[xxi] Paul's epistles and the Lutheran Confessions often cite Scripture this way. Scripture is a unity, which means that "Scripture does not teach contradictory theologies, but one Gospel. The articles of faith may not agree with each other according to our logic, but neither do they contradict each other" (Preus, *How To Interpret* 15). Preachers who believe in this unity of Scripture can quote from both Testaments to show that God has spoken the same way throughout the Bible. If the Bible is sufficient to bring people to salvation, then the preacher will concentrate on his text as the source and foundation of his message. Human logic, quotations from the classics, illustrations from daily life will not accomplish the goal of guiding people to

know God's promises. Other books and disciplines are important tools of homiletics, but the text is always of primary concern.

The proper understanding of Scripture is absolutely necessary to a proper interpretation of the Bible. The higher-critical method is destructive to the Christian faith, for "the no of Biblical criticism to the risen Christ is not an historical position, but a meta-physical one..." (Munde 397). Eugene Klug states that "by this time, after the historical-critical method has virtually destroyed the Bible, its content, and its authority, it should be recognized as totally naive to insist that it is a harmless or neutral technique..." (216). In short, the Bible cannot be truly understood unless a person has a true faith in Jesus as his Savior from sin. Proper presuppositions about Scripture are vital to hermeneutical study of the Bible, as Ralph Bohlmann shows:

> In subscribing to the Lutheran Confessions we bind ourselves to the Confessional doctrine of the nature, content, and purpose of Holy Scripture, (namely, that Holy Scripture is God's literary Word about Jesus Christ for man's salvation) and to all hermeneutical presuppositions and principles implicit in this doctrine. Agreement on proper hermeneutical principles cannot be expected without prior agreement on the nature of Holy Scripture as God's own Word. (165)[xxii]

Area II: Principles

Presuppositions reflect the qualities people attribute to Scripture – what they expect to find in the Bible. Principles govern how Scripture is to be dealt with and they form a corrective on the results of exegesis. As important as these principles are, a definitive list or comprehensive set of principles on which all authors agree is not easy to make (see Appendix B). The following set of hermeneutical principles serves for this discussion:

1. The Bible is the supreme authority in matters of faith and doctrine.
2. Every word should be interpreted literally.
3. Scripture interprets Scripture – the analogy of Scripture.
4. Scripture is to be interpreted by the Analogy of Faith.
5. Christ is the center of the Bible and of all interpretation.
6. The Bible shall be divided into Law and Gospel.

Two things must be noted before these principles are discussed. First, Victor Mennicke states: "It must be clearly understood that our Church never evolved a set of rules for Bible interpretation. Those which the Lord established are all-sufficient and of such a perfect nature that all human attempts lead only to confusion" (36). However, these principles are not to be considered as laws or rules ordained by God. Principles are derived from the way Jesus and the apostles used the Old Testament and they serve to guide the interpreter in the manner in which he handles the text of Scripture.

Second, Robert Preus reminds the pastor:

> ...every biblical hermeneutical principle recognized and used by the Lutheran Confessions has the force of doctrine, for these principles (e.g., the unity principle, the divine origin principle) are drawn exegetically from Scripture. The rejection of these principles is therefore false doctrine. (*How To Interpret* 28)

All six principles have important implications for sermon preparation. The last three principles listed above will be discussed at greater length because they are in dispute today even among conservative Christians and because they present evidence that Lutherans have a unique hermeneutical perspective.

Principle No. 1: Jesus' ministry demonstrated His belief that *the Bible is the supreme authority*. He quoted Scripture to the devil in the wilderness to respond to temptations (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10), He defended Himself with the Scripture "you are gods" (John 10:34-36), and He expounded Moses and the prophets to the disciples to show that He was supposed to rise from the dead (Luke 24:27,45-47). Peter's Pentecost sermon relied on the authority of Joel 2:28 (Acts 2:16-18).When preachers use this principle, they make their text the center of their sermon and support doctrines and assertions by other Scripture passages.

Principle No. 2: The *literal principle* is so fundamental a principle that no true interpretation can be carried on without it. In general, this rule should apply: "The literal language of Scripture is to be preferred unless otherwise demanded by the context, parallel passages, or analogy" (Evans 40). As Chemnitz shows, this principle is especially important when considering the Gospel and the Sacraments. Yet much of the Bible is written in figurative language which require special rules to properly interpret the God-intended meaning (for such rules, see Appendix C). Jesus' teaching was filled with figures of speech, both His parables and the "I am..." passages in John. Yet Jesus did not take figuratively the passage "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," as the Sadducees wanted to do (Luke 20:37-38).[xxiii] Preachers need to identify figurative expressions in the Psalms, prophecies, and apocalyptic books so that the people will not be swayed by the arguments of the cults who misuse figures of speech.

Principle No. 3: The *Analogy of Scripture*, or the concept that Scripture interprets Scripture, is an important and valid principle recognized by most teachers of hermeneutics and homiletics. Passages in both Testaments which speak about the same subject must be considered as being in full agreement with one another. This analogy also requires that the less clear passages be understood by the more clear passages. Preachers use this principle in their application of parallel passages to the text they are preaching.[xxiv]

Principle No. 4: The *Analogy of Faith* principle "is clearly laid down in the Bible," according to Victor Mennicke (42), who cites 2 Timothy 1:13, and1 Timothy 4:6 and 6:3 as proof. The phrase itself is taken from Romans 12:6 where Paul exhorts: "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophesy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith" (κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως). Many Lutherans interpret this phrase to refer to a body of doctrine. Louis Berkhof objects, saying that it means the "measure of your subjective faith" (164).[xxv] Lenski, however, refers to the context of verse six to show that "prophesy" requires an objective content of what is preached, not subjective faith (*Romans* 761).

This principle has been misused in the past to impose an interpretation on Scripture – such as oral tradition, the decrees of the Pope, Zwingli's use of reason, or the philosopher's use of the moral law. Others claimed that reading Scripture made one absorb a biblical impression of the Word which could be used to interpret the Bible. But all this is an "...analogy of human pride and self conceit" (Mennicke 43).

In contrast to the Church Father's analogy of faith definition of "a compendium of true Biblical teaching," Luther's *sola Scriptura* emphasis placed exegesis in harmony with the rest of the Scriptures (Johnson 69-70). Not creeds, but the clear passages of Scripture form the analogy of faith, so that the whole of Scripture be kept in mind when interpreting any of its parts (Bohlmann 153, footnote 26). The Apology (XXVII:60) defines the analogy of faith this way: "Besides, examples ought to be interpreted according to the rule, i.e., according to certain and clear passages of Scripture, not contrary to the rule, that is, contrary to the Scripture!"(Triglot 441). For Luther, the Analogy of Faith means "the form of Scripture is such that the whole of the Christian faith is revealed in passages which call for no explanation" *(*quoted in Carter 137-138).[xxvi]

The Analogy of Faith principle has come under sharp criticism of late. Karl Holl complained that Luther interpreted the Psalms according to Pauline Gospel. "He (Luther) does not notice that he does the greatest violence to the text by doing so, since the Psalms, like the entire Old Testament, preach self righteousness" (quoted in Surburg, *Luther* 24).[xxvii] Wayne Johnson criticized Luther for using the centrality of Christ and *sola fide* as the overriding issues which moved Luther to abandon the natural meaning of the text if the analogy of faith necessitated it (71). And Walter Kaiser states his objection:

> The church at large (since the time of the Reformers especially) is in error when she uses the analogy of faith (*analogia fidei*) as an exegetical device for extracting meaning from or imparting meaning to texts that appeared earlier than the passage where the teaching is set forth most clearly or perhaps even for the first time. (82)

D. A. Carson, a student of Kaiser, also rejects the indiscriminant citation of Scripture from all parts of the Bible. He uses Kaiser's "analogy of antecedent Scripture" principle, where the discipline of Biblical Theology (the study of the development of doctrine within the Bible) would control which passages can be joined with which (134-139). Ramm castigates the orthodox scholastics for citing Scripture as proofs without regard for their location in Scripture (*New Hermeneutics* 22).[xxviii]

Some Lutherans have also been concerned that nothing interfere with the exegetical task. This has led to a separation between exegesis and dogmatics and to the denial of the validity of the Analogy of Faith principle. However, an objective exegesis of the text is not possible, for even the questions one asks of the text reflect a pre-understanding of the Bible (Johnson 76-77).

The Analogy of Faith principle is important in guiding the work of the exegete. Positively, the analogy guides the interpreter to look for Scriptural parallels which speak about the same subject. John 6:6 cannot be used to interpret the Words of Institution. When the Psalms speak about the righteous, interpreters are justified in citing the doctrine of justification by faith to show how one becomes righteous. Negatively, the Analogy of Faith helps the interpreter to test his exegetical results by bringing to bear the clear passages of the Bible where a specific doctrine is taught.[xxix]

For the preacher, the Analogy of Faith principle means that he will look for doctrine in the text. Reu says, "It is taken for granted, further, that he will compare the result of his exegetical investigation of a passage with the fundamental teachings of Scripture, in order to discover any possible deviation from them" (Reu 358). A text which refers to a doctrine will not have been properly studied until the preacher looks at the *sedes doctrinae* of that doctrine.

Working from the Analogy of Faith after the text has been studied, the preacher may also make inferences based on his exegesis. For example, Christ the propitiator leads one to conclude that man's works cannot appease God's wrath; or, since all nations are to be baptized, children are to be baptized. Preus states that such inferences have the force of doctrine as long as they are drawn according to the analogy of Scripture (*How To Interpret* 13-14).[xxx]

By applying this principle preachers will remain consistent with Scripture as they proclaim God's Word. W. A. Poovey stated:

> (The Analogy of Faith) ...means that the uniqueness of a text must not be stressed to a point where it denies the basic truths of the Bible. We must not preach salvation by grace one Sunday and salvation by works the next. We cannot make God a cruel judge in one sermon and then turn around and picture Him as a loving father a few weeks later. (35)[xxxi]

Principle No. 5: The *Christological principle* of Luther constitutes his most important contribution to hermeneutics. Luther declared, "If you will interpret well and securely, take Christ with you, for he is the man whom everything concerns" (quoted in Ramm, *Protestant* 56). Luther shows that Christ portrayed Himself as the center of Scripture, as he discussed John 3:14 (Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness):

> Christ thereby gives us real ability to explain Moses and all the Prophets. He tells us clearly that Moses with all his stories and figures (Bildern) points to Him, refers to Him, and means Him, in the sense that He is the Center from which the entire circle has been drawn and towards which it looked and that whoever directs himself to this Center belongs in the circle. For Christ is the

central spot of the circle, and when viewed aright, all stories in Holy Scripture refer to Christ. (quoted in Surburg, *Luther* 14)[xxxii]

This principle has been attacked by many people. Bernard Ramm declares: "This is Luther's method of making the entire Bible a Christian book. The Fathers did it with their allegorical method. Luther does it with his christological principle" (*Protestant* 56). Walter Kaiser rejects any attempt to read Jesus back into the Old Testament unless the author explicitly intended to refer to Christ. Kaiser fears that Luther's method destroys objective hermeneutical and exegetical analysis (82; Oss 109).

Surburg answers Ramm's attack by saying: "The Fathers did it with a dubious method which the Reformer did on Biblical grounds. The latter employed a Biblical principle of interpretation inspired by the Holy Ghost Himself" (*Luther* 13). Douglas Oss answers Kaiser by saying that absolute objectivity in interpretation is impossible to achieve (122). Since Calvin rejected the christological principle in denying a rectilinear fulfillment by Jesus of many Old Testament prophesies, it becomes vital for Lutherans to maintain that principle today.[xxxiii]

Preaching christologically from Scripture, the pastor will speak about faith in relation to the person and work of Christ. With Luther, he can declare Adam to be a Christian on the basis of Genesis 3:15 (Carter 137). Alton Wedel wrote:

> It is Christ who opens to us the Scriptures. He is the Word humanity must see and hear.... One does not preach the Bible unless one preaches Jesus Christ, the foolishness of God and the wisdom of God. He is the Way, the Truth, the Life. (21)

Principle No. 6: The *Law and Gospel principle* is another unique and distinctive Lutheran hermeneutical principle, as Ramm demonstrates:

> Lutheran theologians make a distinction between Law and Gospel which the Reformed and Anglican theologians do not make .... The differentiation of Law and Gospel is an important working tool for the Lutheran theologian or interpreter and at this point Lutheran and Reformed hermeneutics divide.
> Reformed theologians look at Law as something contained within the Gospel. It expresses the moral seriousness of faith in God and the absolute necessity for repentance in salvation...they do not believe that the distinction is of such a nature that it becomes a major hermeneutical principle. (*Protestant* 147-148)

However, Melanchthon shows that the Law-Gospel principle is derived from Scripture: "It is necessary to divide these things aright, as Paul says (2 Tim.2:15). We must see what Scripture ascribes to the Law and what it promises. For it praises works in such a way as not to remove the free promise" (Apology III:67, Triglot 173). Since salvation by works or by grace formed the center of the dispute between Lutherans and Rome, through the use of this christological principle the Lutherans could show that they did not abuse Scripture as their opponents did (*LC-MS* 13).

A question has been raised as to whether the Law-Gospel distinction is a presupposition or a working principle of hermeneutics. Ralph Bohlmann calls it a vital presupposition which controls the interpretation of Scripture, but not a principle of interpretation since Law and Gospel are the messages of Scripture. He says that the Confessions do not impose the doctrine of justification on passages where it is not taught, nor do they use the Law-Gospel principle to discuss James 2:24 (158-164).

Ralph Surburg and Robert Preus do not completely agree with this. They quote Melanchthon as saying: "All Scripture ought to be distributed into these two principle topics, the Law and the promises" (Apology IV:5, Triglot 121). Both authors show that the Confessions repeatedly deal with what the Scripture teaches about Law

and Gospel and they declare that this distinction is an important hermeneutical principle (Surburg, *Luther* 22; Preus, *How To Interpret* 28).[xxxiv]

The Law-Gospel principle has important consequences for preaching. For no sermon should be preached without a proper balance of Law and Gospel in it. Also, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) will be seen primarily as Law, contrary to contemporary Protestantism. (Spitz 23) The Law will be used to drive people to the saving grace of Christ, and afterwards as a guide for Christian works of love flowing from grace. The Gospel will proclaim how people are saved from the condemnation of the Law by the merits and grace of Jesus Christ.

While Bernard Ramm may snidely comment that "It (the Law-Gospel distinction)is a very complicated subject with nuances that escape those who do not come out of Lutheran tradition" (*Protestant* 146, footnote 6), C. F. W. Walther declares: "The value of a sermon depends not only on this, that every statement in it be taken from the Word of God and be in agreement with the same, but also in this, whether Law and Gospel have been rightly divided" (32).

Since all six hermeneutical principles discussed above are disputed within the Christian community, orthodox Lutherans need to know these principles, to employ them in their sermon preparation, and to teach them to their hearers so that they can also read the Scriptures with understanding. Lutherans have a unique approach to Scripture because their principles of interpretation are drawn from those Scriptures. Mennicke declares:

> We are to observe most carefully how the Prophets and Apostles, and especially Jesus Himself, explained and interpreted the Bible. The observance of these principles removes all doubt; it presents to us a firm foundation for our faith. (36)

Preus observes that these principles are uniquely Lutheran and that they should totally determine the interpreter's attitude and approach to the Bible. (*Biblical Hermeneutics* 82)

Area III: Rules

The field of hermeneutics also has many specialized areas of study both internal and external to the Bible. Prof. W. M. H. Petersen has given specific rules for determining the literal and figurative interpretation of passages (see Appendix C). Interpreting either Hebrew or Greek presents special concerns since the grammar and cultures are different. Poetry, prophecy, and apocalyptic literature in the Bible have their own rules whereby symbolism and figurative language are to be understood. The interpretation of parables requires that the interpreter determine the single point of comparison and not allegorize the details of the parable. The types and allegories in the Scriptures also needs special rules of interpretation. Linguistics is an area of study that is recently being applied to grammar which is changing the way Greek and Hebrew are classified.[xxxv]

Externally the interpreter will also need to be acquainted with several other important disciplines. The problems of biblical chronology, geography, archaeology, ancient languages, ancient history, cultures, agriculture, warfare, all need to be dealt with in order to understand better the times in which the biblical characters were living. These studies dare not change the interpretation of the text itself since interpretation is based upon grammatical studies and hermeneutical principles. But such studies will help the interpreter to understand why certain things were done and said the way they were. Ramm stated the need for these studies: "The greater the cultural, historical, and geographical divergences are, the more difficult is the task of interpretation" (*Protestant* 4).[xxxvi]

The preacher needs to be concerned with two other vital areas of study if he is to draw meaning from the text – the context and grammatical studies.

The context is important in determining both the meaning of the text and the meaning of individual words. Reu declares, "That the literal sense cannot be found without a careful study of the context, is a principle

generally recognized, but not so generally practiced" (Reu 349). Herbert T. Mayer identifies four circles of context:

1. The immediately preceding and following verses.
2. The entire book or letter of the passage.
3. All the books written by a given writer.
4. The entire Bible. (57)

R. C. H. Lenski instructs the homilete to catechize the text to identify the writer, the times written, etc.[xxxvii] The answers to these contextual questions can be found in Bible handbooks and isogogical textbooks. The study of context helps the preacher identify the unique place a certain text has in the Scriptures so that he preaches that text and not the whole Bible.

Walter Kaiser has discussed some of the tools needed for the contextual study of a text. He suggests that not only should the preacher make an outline of the chapter in which the text resides, but also make an outline of the entire book. The study of Romans requires such an outline,, for Paul presents a precise argumentation concerning sin, justification, and sanctification. By an outline, interpreters should be able to see Paul's logic and use of Law and Gospel.

An outline also helps the preacher identify those parts of the book where the author speaks on the same subject, enabling the homilete to identify the uniqueness of the text as well as the parallel passages and thoughts, and help determine why the text is important for the present day. Context is especially important for the study of the four Gospels. For example, Arthur Pink, a dispensationalist, interprets John 1:35-43 to mean that John the Baptist' work had ended. But John 3:23 declares that John was still baptizing (Mickelsen 99). A. Berkeley Mickelsen also suggests using a wide-margin Bible so that the outlines and summaries of paragraphs can be written in the margins (100-102).[xxxviii]

The second major concern is the grammatical study of the text in the original language. While translations do convey the God-intended meaning to the reader, only the study of the original language can give the preacher precision of meaning and confidence in understanding the text.

Words are symbols which convey meaning. Meaning should be determined by the context in which it is used. Kaiser says, "The author has the right to define his own words as he wishes to do so – and context is a key to unlocking part of that meaning" (85). And H. P. Hamann declares: "Common sense suggests that we give the search into the origin of the term and into the reason for its use a rest...and concentrate on the sentence, where the real meaning resides after all" (122).

Writers in hermeneutics have promoted two tools which they deem essential to finding the meaning of a word. One tool is the dictionary of phrases. The preacher should take two or three important words from each text and by use of a concordance list the various meanings by their use in context. The passages should be grouped by author to show whether the author uses the word in the same way as other authors. Then the preacher can check his results with the dictionaries and word studies that are available (Mayer 56-57).[xxxix]

The second tool for the grammatical analysis of a text is a diagram of the words and phrases in the original language. Kaiser calls this a "syntactical display." He describes it as follows:

> I try to determine the core of the sentence: that is, the main subject, the main verb, and the main object of each sentence. I do this for each of the sentences in my preaching paragraph. For this I do what is called a textual recreation. In visual form the entire paragraph is laid out. Each sentence is diagrammed. This enables me to readily see the structure of each sentence. Such clues as repetitions, comparisons, and progressions are indented, underlined, or circled and tied together by lines drawn. (76-77)

Making a syntactical display forces the interpreter to identify the various words, parts of speech, phrases, and thoughts of the text. Enough room can remain on the left margin to write the main thoughts of the

text. The preacher can then work from those main thoughts towards determining the central thought of the text, using the other textual thoughts for the subdivisions. This tool not only helps the preacher study the text thoroughly, but it keeps the sermon textual in both content and application.

For the preacher, learning the hermeneutical rules and tools helps gain a fuller appreciation of what was written, to understand exactly what God intended to reveal, and to be able to state God's Word exactly in the preacher's native language. However, Victor Mennicke raises an important caveat:

> No new doctrines are found by the use of the original text. Regardless of whether the Bible is studied in Hebrew or Greek, in English or German, in Chinese or Swahili, the truths remain the same. Doctrines do not change with language. Nor is it possible to find new doctrines in one language which are not contained in another. (54)

The Goals of Hermeneutical Sermon Preparation

Evangelical Christians, who have the highest doctrine of Scripture in the Church, should be conspicuously the most conscientious preachers. – Stott (99)

The use of hermeneutical principles and tools in sermon preparation is not an end in itself – simply to make the preacher wiser in the Scriptures. Hermeneutics, exegesis, and homiletics unite in the common goal of presenting the Word of God clearly with its message of salvation. The preacher is to "...hide behind his message, and to receive it equally with those he addresses." "The preacher is a proclaimer, a herald, not a college professor, or an originator of theories. He has the Word given him, and that he is to proclaim" (Crosby 105). When the preacher reads a portion of Scripture for a text he makes a promise on the Lord's behalf to the people in the pew. "One cannot keep that promise until one has learned what the text means .... That requires reverent, careful, honest study"(Gerlach and Balge 17).

A second goal of hermeneutics is that of "bridge-building." This concept comes from John Stott in his book *Between Two Worlds*. He says that the preacher needs to bring the message of the Bible into the modern world. Stott pictures this problem of communication as two sides of a gulf – the Bible and the modern world. He says that the conservative feels comfortable on the Bible side of the gulf studying and preaching the Bible, while feeling uncomfortable in the modern world and unable to apply the Word to that side of the gulf. The liberals, on the other hand, are sensitive to current moods, modern science, and present needs, but they are not biblical. Stott declares: "The type of bridge must be determined by the biblical revelation rather than by the *Zeitgeist* or spirit of the age" (139, 140-143). Reu also described the type of bridge-building when he wrote:

> The preacher must take the Word of God, whose meaning in the past he has ascertained, set it unaltered and unabridged, with all its winsomeness and all its severity in the midst of the present, and let it say to men of today what it said to men of the past. (361-362)[xl]

A direct result of hermeneutical study is the preaching of expository sermons, a third goal. This type of sermonizing has been especially emphasized by Walter Kaiser. John Stott, Jerry Vines, and Haddon Robinson. (Rev. Paul Petersen's 1981General Pastoral Conference paper also called for expository preaching.) Robinson defined expository preaching as "the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers" (20). Expository sermonizing does not require a verse-by-verse treatment of the text, but refers to "the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary)" (Stott 126).[xli]

Fourth, hermeneutical study should be done with the goal of affecting the hearers of the sermon. When the Word of God is clearly presented with sin and grace, when Christ is shown to be the source of salvation, and

when the hearers are called upon to believe this message, the sermon should bring grace to the hearers and lead them to rejoice in the salvation of God.

Expository preaching can make a difference in the lives of the people. First, it encourages the hearer to do more private Bible study (P. Petersen 72). Second, the expository preacher show how to teach the Word to others, thus developing many fine Sunday School teachers (Vines 23). Third, the preacher will teach his people to handle the Word at home – following him in his readings and expounding, studying the lessons of Scripture at home, praying the blessed truths into their hearts in order that they might be mighty in their knowledge of the Scriptures (Crosby 106).

These goals of expository preaching are precisely what are needed in the Lutheran church of today if it is to remain faithful to the Lord and His Word. Both the preacher and his hearers need to be thoroughly grounded in the Word of God. Through the exegetical analysis of the text, using the hermeneutical principles and tools at hand, the preacher can best be faithful to the Lord and to his hearers.

Given these principles, tools, and goals, the preacher can now commence his journey through the Bible a Sunday at a time. Gerlach and Balge list the various steps the preacher should take on that journey in working through the text, as summarized:

1. Begin with prayer.
2. Read the text in English first, note the truths of the text.
3. Compare a number of translations, note significant differences.
4. Look at the context – scan the whole book of the text.
5. Discover where the message of sin and grace is implicit in the text.
6. Study the text in the original language.
7. Write your own translation of the original text.
8. Parse or diagram the sentences of the text.
9. Look for the grammatical sense of the original text.
10. Consult the commentaries.
11. Use the scriptural indices for the Book of Concord, the works of the dogmaticians, and the catechism.
12. Search for "preaching values," that is, doctrinal concepts.
13. Make notes on the practical values (applications) in the text.
14. Look for the parallel or illustrative passages in the Bible.
15. Analyze the coordinate and subordinate thoughts of the text.[xlii]

At this point, the preacher is ready to begin work on the sermon outline. If this sounds like a lot of work, the preacher can help himself by looking at the text weeks in advance so that the message can be absorbed and illustrations can be looked for.[xliii]

Hermeneutical Dangers

No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. (2 Peter 1:20)

In urging that hermeneutical studies become a major part of sermon preparation, the writer of this paper recognizes that several dangers exist that people need to be aware of.

The preacher has a call to be a student of the Word all his life. When he becomes proficient in the interpretation of Scripture, confident in his understanding of Bible doctrines, and skillful in proclaiming the text to the people in words they can relate to, the danger of human pride may lurk nearby. Such pride may cause one to refuse to listen to the biblical studies of others, or he may declare that everyone must heed his expertise, or he may develop a contentious spirit. For example, Matthias Flacius Illyricus wrote a valuable book on

hermeneutics called *Clavis Scripturae* in 1567, but his contentious spirit almost divided the Lutheran Church (Reu 380).[xliv]

An even greater danger to the pastor occurs when he uses Scripture as a tool "without ever once having it reverberate through the soul with 'Thus saith the Lord'" (Buege 41-42). Each Communion Sunday the Formula of Absolution reminds pastors that they are the "called and ordained *servants* of the *Word*" (Krieger 12). No true interpretation or proclamation of Scripture can occur without a spirit of humility which submits to the Word.

After all the hard work involved and the time spent in understanding the literal meaning of the text, the preacher may fall into another danger of bringing his study tools into the sermon itself. Reu has said, "Only the positive results of exegetical investigation have a place in the pulpit, and even these should not carry with them the smell of the lamp" (360).[xlv] The goal of sermonizing is not to find the intended meaning of the text and its central thought. These are the means to the goal of faithful preaching (T. Franzmann 175).[xlvi] Kidder says, "The idea of preaching is only realized in the delivery" (129).

On the other hand, the preacher may be so overwhelmed by the magnitude of sermon preparation and his other duties that the preacher fails to do any deep study, or he fears that he will fall into exegetical fallacies. Part of the answer is that the preacher does not have to use every tool the first time he treats a text. By saving his study sheets he can build on earlier work. The methods and tools like words studies, outlining the book, syntactical analysis, and the study sheet may seem to be difficult at first and the results uncertain, but by weekly use of these methods the preacher will become more proficient and more knowledgeable as time goes on.[xlvii]

The greatest danger to the Church lies in the preacher making no attempt at hermeneutical/exegetical studies of the text. For then, the text will not be preached, the people will not be fed, and the preacher will not become knowledgeable in the Scriptures.

Conclusion

A study of the facts shows that wherever the Church has prospered spiritually,
stress has fallen upon the work of the pulpit. - Blackwood (14)

The discipline of hermeneutics is both a science and an art. As a science, pastors use the principles and rules of hermeneutics to analyze the passages of Scripture and to judge their results. Hermeneutics is also an art because "good exegesis depends on the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit" (Mayer 10). Homiletics is also "...the art and science of 'saying the same thing' that the text of Scripture says" (Kaiser 193). When the two disciplines are closely united in sermon preparation, then God's Word will be proclaimed with understanding and His truths will be correctly applied to the people living in the modern world.

The principles of hermeneutics help the preacher show that the meaning he has discovered in the text is the right one and they demonstrate why meanings which others have found are false (W. M. H. Petersen 8). From hermeneutical principles proceed exegesis, homiletics and dogmatics.

The Hindu guru, the Jewish rabbi, and the Moslem mullah "are essentially the expositors of an ancient tradition," Stott declares. "Only Christian preachers claim to be heralds of good news from God, and dare to think of themselves as His ambassadors or representatives who actually utter 'oracles of God' (1 Peter 4:11)" (15-16). Because preachers are ambassadors for Christ, "What you are after is not that people shall say at the end of it all, 'What an excellent sermon!' That is to fail in preaching. What you are after is to have them say with deep thanksgiving, 'What a wonderful Savior:'" (Krieger 44).

God grant that everyone "Hold fast the form of sound words" (2 Timothy 1:13), "study to show yourself approved unto God...rightly dividing the word of truth"(2 Timothy 2:15), "continue in the things which you have learned and have been assured of" (2 Timothy 3:14), and "preach the Word in season and out of season"(2 Timothy 4:2). By doing these things, pastors will be found to be faithful servants to God and to His Word.

Sola Deo Gloria

ⁱ The doctrinal discussions of the Reformers and the Confessors involved hermeneutical and exegetical questions. Since doctrine was to be decided by the clear words of Scripture – a hermeneutical principle – and since God was capable of speaking clearly – a hermeneutical presupposition – then one sentence from Jesus carried more weight than all human philosophical speculations.

Hermeneutical considerations also play a vital part in the present discussion on the Lord's Supper. Charges have been made about taking comments out of context. Both sides might take Chemnitz's words on page 96 of his book to support their position. However, Chemnitz does not talk about the time when the Real Presence comes and so it is not proper to use his words to support a proposition that was not considered in that context. Chemnitz repeatedly calls for the Reformed to deal with the Words of Institution where they are plainly stated and not in other places in the Bible.

Since the Bible is the only source of doctrine and it has nothing to say about the *reliqua* of the Lord's Supper either directly or by inference, whatever is said about the matter can only be considered pious opinion.
One can assume that the call by some people to get back to the Bible instead of dealing with the Confessions or Luther arises from the misuse of context within the argumentation.

ⁱⁱ A quote from the *Theological Quarterly*,1898, pages 30-32, cited in Victor Mennicke (58). Mennicke also writes:"[Bible interpretation]...should not be a mere pastime or academic exercise. The linguist, the philosopher, the jurist, will all find the work of interpreting the Scripture fascinating, but its real objective is far greater. The chief purpose of the layman as well as the theologians in searching the Scripture should be to find therein eternal life" (58).

ⁱⁱⁱ The modern New Hermeneutic has questioned whether human language has anything to say about God or religion, or whether God can say anything to humans. Kant and Hume declared that since knowledge is the result of experience, man cannot know anything about God. Kant defined religion as the moral imperative. Hume denied cause and effect in the universe existed. Barth echoed these ideas by saying: "We cannot conceive God because we cannot contemplate him. He cannot be the object of one of those perceptions to which our concepts, our thought forms, and finally our words and sentences are related" (*Church Dogmatics* II, 1:186, quoted. in Barentsen 25). Heidegger goes one step further and says that all language is mystical and that things cannot be known as "in-themselves." This means that no knowledge can be the organization of empirical data into true propositions. He calls the text of Scripture only one part of our environment and says its meaning depends on the needs of human existence (Barentsen 28-29). Quanbeck declares: "Since human language is always relative, being conditioned by its historical development and usage, there can be no absolute expression of the truth even in the language of theology" (quoted. in Montgomery I: 55).

This attack of Satan has been answered in a variety of ways. Evangelicals declare that God can talk to man because man is made in the image of God and therefore man is able to communicate with God (Barentsen 31-32). Others point to God's majesty: "...the kind of speaker God is places the necessity of being unreservedly true and good upon all his word to man" (Friberg 171). Friberg adds, "He who can speak exclusively over the heads of angels would be a poor father of men and a poor communicator to them if ...not a single assertion could be captured by man for exact retention and repetition" (171). Peter gives a better answer: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). Since God spoke through human writers in human languages, His concepts can be understood by men. The discipline of hermeneutics is needed because of the difficulties of translating God's revelation from one language into another and understanding words separated by time and culture.

^{iv} By "literal meaning" LaSor means that "which the author intended his hearers or readers to understand" (98). When Joel wrote that "The moon shall be turned into blood" (Joel 2:31), "Interpreted literally, means that the moon's color shall become blood-red, and not that the moon actually becomes blood" (LaSor 99). He adds, "Every sect and schismatic group calling itself Biblical is able to find Biblical support for its doctrines. It is the hermeneutic used, the method of Biblical interpretation which they apply, that makes such confusing and contradictory claims possible" (99-100). Unfortunately, LaSor applies this principle errantly when dealing with Genesis 3:15: "God is saying that there will be hostility between human beings (the seed of the woman) and serpents (the seed of the serpent), in the course of which human beings will be hurt (bruising of the heel) and serpents will be killed (bruising of the head)." He continues by saying that there must be a deeper meaning: The spiritual crisis of the fall was brought about by a being hostile to God who will

hurt humans by this hostility. But Jesus will destroy the tempter (both identified by later revelation) (109). But LaSor's literal meaning is not what God intended to say. If Adam had interpreted God's words as LaSor did, he would have had no comfort for his sins. God intended Genesis 3:15 to be a direct promise of the Savior, just as Eve understood, though she misapplied the promise to her first son. Here is a good example of how the Christological principle of Luther applies to a passage.

^v See also Reu's quotation concerning Luther: "Luther talks about why preachers should study the text in the original. A simple preacher who does not know the languages can do well. 'But,' he continues, 'to interpret and treat the Scripture for himself, to oppose false teachers, this is a task beyond his powers. It cannot be done without a knowledge of languages.'" Again Luther: "Now we certainly need such prophets in the Christian Church who are able to treat and expound the Scriptures, as well as to defend them; it is not sufficient to lead a holy life and to teach aright" (345).

^{vi}Louis Berkhof declares that hermeneutics is very important for future pastors:
1) The intelligent study of the Bible only will furnish them with the material which they need for the construction of their theology.
2) Every sermon they preach ought to rest on a solid exegetical foundation. This is one of the greatest *desiderata* of the present day.
3) In instructing the young people of the Church, and in family visitations, they are often called upon unexpectedly to interpret passages of Scripture. On such occasions, a fair understanding of the laws of interpretation will aid them materially.
It will be a part of their duty to defend the truth against the assaults of higher criticism. But in order to do this effectively they must know how to handle it. (12)

^{vii} For example, the English word "nice" comes from the Latin *niscius*, meaning "ignorant." Pastors have to explain what "conversation" and "prevent" mean when dealing with the King James Version. Present usage has altered the etymological meaning of many words. D. A. Carson says that it is an error to pre-suppose that every word has a meaning bound up with its shape, root, or etymology. He cites as examples "ἀπόστολος" where some claim it means "one who is sent" as a cognate with ἀποστέλλω. Carson argues that the New Testament usage means "messenger" or "one who represents another." Also see his discussion on μονογενής, and ἀγαπάω. (26-32)

^{viii} ἑρμηνεύω
    John 1:42   – Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.
    John 9:7   – pool of Siloam (which is translated, Sent).
    Heb. 7:2   – Melchizedek ...first being translated "king of righteousness."

ἑρμηνεία
    I Cor 12:10   – to another the interpretation of tongues.
    I Cor 14:26   – each of you has...a revelation, has an interpretation.

μεθερμηνευόμενον
    Matt 1:23   – Immanuel, which is translated, "God with us."
    Mark 5:41   – "Talitha cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise."
    Mark 15:22   – Golgotha, which is translated, "Place of a skull."
    Mark 15:34   – which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"
    John 1:38   – Rabbi' (which is to say, when translated, "Teacher").
    John 1:41   – Messiah, (which is translated, "the Christ").
    Acts 4:36   – Barnabus (which is translated "Son of Encouragement").
    Acts 13:8   – Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated).

διερμηνεύῃ
    Luke 24:27   – And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.
    Acts 9:36   – Tabitha, which is translated "Dorcas."

I Cor 12:30	– Do all interpret?
I Cor 14:5	– He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless he interprets."
I Cor 14:13	– Let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.
I Cor 14:27	– and let one interpret.

1. The Gospels primarily use these related words as "to translate."
2. One usage (Luke) as "to explain, expound."
3. Paul uses ἑρμηνεύω and διερμηνεύω as synonyms in reference to interpreting/translating those who speak other languages by the Spirit.
4. Hebrews combines the concepts of translation and interpretation in its usage.
5. Semantic field: translate – interpret – expound. Never used in the sense of the principles of interpretation or seeking meaning from a text.
6.

[ix] Two others define the relationship between hermeneutics and exegesis. Walter Kaiser: "While hermeneutics will seek to describe the general and special principles and rules which are useful in approaching the Biblical text, exegesis will seek to identify the single truth intention of individual phrases, classes, and sentences as they make up the thought of the paragraphs, sections, and ultimately, entire books. Accordingly, hermeneutics may be regarded as the *theory* that guides exegesis; exegesis may be understood in this work to be the *practice* of and set of *procedures* for discovering the author's intended meaning" (47). D. A. Carson: "Exegesis is concerned with actually interpreting the text, whereas hermeneutics is concerned with the nature of the interpretive process. Exegesis concludes by saying, 'This passage means such and such'; hermeneutics ends by saying 'This interpretive process is constituted by the following techniques and pre-understandings'" (22-23).

[x] Robert Preus describes the two-fold division of hermeneutics as follows: "The basic rules for such interpretation fall into two classes: 1) those rules which are common to the interpretation of any and all literature (e.g., grammatical and historical analysis, clarity, analogy, etc.), and 2) those principles derived exegetically from Scripture itself, but at the same time unique to Scripture as the Word of God (e.g., the necessity of the Spirit's guidance to the exegetical task, the Christocentricity of Scripture, the Law-Gospel motif, etc.)" (*How To Interpret* 5).

[xi] Luther's hermeneutical understanding of Scripture was demonstrated at three main events in his life. At Worms, Luther would be convinced only by clear Scripture before he would recant. Against Erasmus, he confessed that Scripture speaks with absolute authority and clarity. And against Zwingli, Luther centered his defense of the Lord's Supper on five short words (τοῦτὸ ἐστιν τὸ σῶμὰ μου) (Montgomery I: 63-67).

Some have taught that Luther granted absolute freedom of interpreting the Scriptures. But E. Klug said: "Luther certainly did not suggest that 'freedom in the Gospel' lets every man find whatever meaning he can in Scripture. That would be to reintroduce the allegorizing, or (modern-day) demythologizing, technique which makes interpretation a highly subjective enterprise and often ends by making tales out of historical facts" (215).

[xii] Ramm's judgment of Calvin is even more explicit: "Is there any other man in the history of the Christian Church who has turned out such a scientific, able, and valuable commentary on almost the entire Scriptures and also made one of the greatest contributions to theology in his Institutes?" (*Protestant* 57). Reu says that Luther's sermons use the allegorical method a lot. However, Luther never based a doctrine on that method, read into his text only what was biblically true elsewhere, and insisted that the literal sense was the principle thing (277-278).

[xiii] 0rthodox Lutherans dare not become complacent about higher-criticism. To remain orthodox, Lutherans need to be engaged in the discipline of hermeneutics. Montgomery reminds us: "...more powerful churches than ours have in an unbelievingly short time and in our own experience passed doctrinally into a 'golden age of Pooh' through hermeneutic contamination" (I: 76). Robert Preus notes that the present crisis is more serious than the one in the 1880s. First, the debate is not confined to the Lutheran Church; second, the present debate strikes at every doctrine of Scripture; and third, the debate has become very complicated (*Biblical Hermeneutics* 81). He also pointed out three dangers that have arisen in the Missouri Synod: 1) a certain embarrassment against past deeds and criticism of great theologians; 2) a "servile attitude towards what is called scholarship and a reluctance, even fear, of questioning the 'assured results' of what is called

modern scholarship," and 3) a subtle unionism through reading books of liberal theologians (*Biblical Hermeneutics* 118-119). D. A. Carson declares: "Make a mistake in the interpretation of one of Shakespeare's plays, falsely scan a piece of Spenserian verse, and there is unlikely to be an entailment of eternal consequence; but we cannot lightly accept a similar laxity in the interpretation of Scripture" (12).

[xiv] Kaiser continues his definition of the crisis: "No one has charted the path between preparatory studies and the completed sermon. Mastery of Bible languages is important, but it needs to be properly aimed" (48-49). Again: "The Achilles' heel for many among the trained clergy is the failure to bring the Biblical text from its BC or first century AD context and to relate it directly and legitimately to the present day" (131).

[xv] The qualifications of the interpreter: H. H. Rowley states: "...not every interpreter can have the ideal equipment. Indeed, nor can attain to the ideal, and all that any can hope to do is to attain a reasonable balance of the qualities and varieties of equipment his task demands. To as that every interpreter of the Bible should possess a wide linguistic equipment would be to deny the task of its interpretation to all but a handful of specialists...." (quoted in Ramm, *Protestant* 15). Robert Preus lists some other qualifications: "That the exegete is a poor sinner with an habitual inclination toward evil, that he is in constant need of the Spirit's enlightenment to believe what he reads and studies, that every thought even of the regenerate reason must be totally subjected to the words and revelation of God, these too are assumptions of sweeping consequence for the exegete as he goes about his task" (*Biblical Hermeneutics* 82). M. Franzmann also notes: "The life of the interpreter is therefore a life of repentance, a radical aversion from self and denial of self. It is a life in Christ, a life of faith in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us in a ministry carried out to the utmost. It is a life in the Spirit, who is given for ministry (1 Cor 12)" (161). Bernard Ramm states that "...a good liberal arts education is the basis for good interpretation, especially a course that has been rich in literature, history, and philosophy" (*Protestant* 15).

Finally, Crosby declares: "Success is not to be reckoned by full houses and popular applause, but by convicted and converted hearts, and by the strengthening of the faith and piety of God's people" (106).

[xvi] Luther's restoration of preaching as the central part of worship had more than one result. When the Word was being proclaimed, there was less of a need for religious festivals and medieval "divine dramas." Furthermore, the best liturgy in the world is no substitute for the preaching of the Word. The true "divine drama" is proclaiming Law and Gospel, Satan defeated by Jesus Christ on the cross, the resurrection of Jesus from the grave, and the hope of eternal life. However, the Scriptural sermon ought to be surrounded by the "best clothes" that the Church can produce, that is, a liturgy which points to and reaffirms these truths, so that hearts can be directed to hearing the preached Word and be given opportunity to respond to that Word.

[xvii] Alton Wedel continues his critique: "We have abused Scripture as we sought excuse from Scripture to promote our favorite cause or ride our favorite steed. Jonathon and David offer an excuse to preach on "Just a Perfect Friendship." Hannah lends an inspiration for a Mother's Day address. Abraham and Isaac on a mountain climbing expedition might be stretched to cover Father's Day or Boy Scout Sunday. Nehemiah serves us well (4:6) if we are trying to promote the building fund, and Malachi can spice the steward ship campaign and make it Biblical. But we have not preached the Word of Moses and the Prophets" (15).

[xviii] The term "hermeneutical circle" comes from Bultmann and his followers. Before Bultmann, critical scholars tried to obtain a totally objective interpretation apart from any presuppositions. Bultmann insisted that the interpreter cannot be divorced from his pre-understandings and that they govern how one approaches and questions Scripture. Montgomery describes Bultmann's position as follows: "Though exegesis must not presuppose its results, it can never dispense with the method of historical-critical research...or with an existential 'life relation' between Scriptural text and the interpreter himself; thus all Biblical interpretation involves a necessary circularity (the so-called 'hermeneutical circle' embracing text and exegete), and no exegesis can properly be regarded as objective" (I: 47).

D. A. Carson praised Bultmann for this concept and said: "...as one approaches the text the kinds of answers the text will give will in some measure be determined by the pre-understanding brought by the interpreter. However, the answers will to some degree affect the understanding of the questioner, so as he approaches the text for further reflection and study his

new 'pre-understanding' inevitably elicits fresh answers from the text. Thus a hermeneutical circle is set up. In conservative thought, this is seen rather as a hermeneutical spiral than a circle: it is argued that it is possible in substantial measure to fuse the horizon of understanding of the interpreter with the horizon of understanding of the text so that true communication across the ages or from text to interpreter is possible" (16).

This leads us to ask about the source of presuppositions. The Bible speaks of two sources: 1) from the sinful nature of man which opposes God's revelation (1 Cor 2:14); and 2) from the testimony and work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:9-10). Though the Gospel is the power of God to bring people to faith from unbelief, faith is the prerequisite for being able to understand what God has revealed. This and all presuppositions do not skew interpretation, but the interpreter needs to be aware of his presuppositions so that he does not read into a text what is not already there (Mickelsen 7-9).

[xix] Liberal presuppositions destroy all attempts to deal with Scripture as it is written. Robert Thomas describes the impact of redaction criticism on hermeneutics:

1. Historicity: every text is "suspect."
2. Harmonization of the Gospels: Any discrepancy is seen as a change from the original event.
3. Allegorization to explain difficulties: Difficulties are due to a preconceived theme of the Bible author.
4. Denial of perspicuity: signals which mark the unhistorical sections - i.e., two accounts put together, etc.
5. Other principles:
   a. The author is the principle source for what is said, not the historical persons he writes about.
   b. Ignore the historical setting of original statements.
   c. De-emphasize the role of the eyewitnesses.
   d. The interpreter is not to be limited to one interpretation of a given passage.
   e. Unwillingness to allow Jesus to have repeated Himself on different occasions. (Thomas 449-458)

For other descriptions of the liberal hermeneutical principles, see John W. Montgomery (I:100-101), and Bernard Ramm (*Protestant* 64-69). Ramm lists the following criticisms of the New Hermeneutic of Bultmann's disciples:

1. It is still in the liberal tradition in its critical methodology.
2. In so restricting its understanding of the supernatural it destroys prophecy and any real significance of the Old Testament.
3. In so stressing the purely existential and kerygmatic elements in interpretation it eliminates most of the traditional topics of systematic theology.
4. In its notion of faith being a pure existential decision it rejects all external props to faith.
5. It has a defective anthropology in that it interprets man in an excessively existential manner and thereby losses the fullness of human nature.
6. Its concept of the Word of God is so opaque and empty that it looses real significance. (Ramm, *New Hermeneutic* 138-139).
7.
   [xx] Herbert Mayer adds three more presuppositions to hermeneutics:

   A) *sola gratia*: "The central teaching and unifying theme of the entire Bible is that God declares the sinner to be righteous solely and alone for the sake of Jesus Christ. Romans 4 and 5. According to this principle any Bible interpretation which gives to man any credit for salvation is wrong or incomplete."
   B) *sola fide*: "The Bible student judges as incorrect any interpretation which speaks favorably of man's works and efforts toward saving himself."
   C) *sola scriptura*: "[It] simply affirms that the Bible tells Christians all they need to know about God's grace and saving faith and is the source and only norm or standard of Christian faith and life" (Mayer 40).

These presuppositions do not just arrive from thin air. John Stott states: "We should also seek increasingly to ensure that the presuppositions with which we approach the Bible are not drawn from outside it (e.g., those of the humanist, the capitalist, the Marxist, or the scientific secularist) but are Christian presuppositions supplied by the Bible itself" (185).

xxi Robert Preus defines "clear passages" as "those passages, verses, pericopes which present no problems in a) their historical setting, or b) their grammatical construction" (*Biblical Hermeneutics* 85). Victor Mennicke says that "the perspicuity of a passage of Scripture is its own proof" of its clarity. "It would be nothing short of the sophistry and mockery of agnosticism to demand that the clearness of a passage of Scripture be proved by others still more clear" (44). Montgomery declared: "For Luther is so convinced of the verbal soundness and objective perspicuity of the original text of the Bible that he is willing to center his whole defense of his Lord's Supper doctrine on the five words τοῦτὸ ἐστιν τὸ σῶμὰ μου." (67) .

xxii Ralph Bohlmann lists the following presuppositions for the interpreter as suggested by the Lutheran Confessions:
1. He regards the Scriptures as the Word spoken by God Himself; he knows that _God is addressing him in every word of the Bible.
2. He knows that God Himself must enlighten his understanding in order for him to believe what God is saying in Holy Scripture; he reads the Scriptures as one who has the Spirit and expects the Spirit.
3. He knows that in Holy Scripture God speaks a condemnatory word (Law) and a forgiving word (Gospel), the former for the sake of the latter; he therefore seeks to distinguish rightly between the two words of God lest the word of Gospel become a word of Law.
4. He reads the Scripture as one who has been justified by God's grace for Christ's sake through faith; he knows that Jesus Christ is the center of all the Scripture.

"But we are here involved in a circle! The above statements are not merely *presuppositions for* Biblical interpretation but *products of* Biblical interpretation" (139).

xxiii Dealing with figures of speech is an important part of hermeneutical and exegetical work, because the Bible is full of them, because many are unfamiliar to modern people, because people are culturally separated from the author, and because it is easy to make something a figure of speech just because people cannot understand it literally.

The cults and millenialists so misuse figures of speech that it is difficult to unravel their arguments. A recent book by Edgar Whisenant entitled *88 Reasons Why The Rapture Could Be In 1988*, (Nashville: World Bible Society, 1988), referred in Reason No. 1 to Matthew 24:36 – "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Whisenant's comment is that people cannot know the hour of Jesus' coming because many will live in different times zones when He arrives. "However, this does not preclude or prevent the faithful from knowing the year, the month, and the week of the Lord's return" (3).

In order to help the interpreter with this most difficult subject, two books should be a part of every pastor's library. Prof. W. H. M. Petersen's book *Hermeneutics: The Lectures* (1916) lays down the rules for identifying literal and figurative language, giving many examples in his work (see Appendix D for the rules). E. W. Bullinger's book *Figures of Speech Used In The Bible* (1898), recently reprinted by Baker Book House, lists 191 categories of figures of speech which occur in the Scriptures.

Chemnitz states a rule about figures of speech which is important for all to consider. "There is a rule which is correct and of long standing which Jerome deals with, namely, that dogmas cannot be established or corroborated purely on the basis of figures of speech and allegories" (79).

xxiv Robert Preus states: "The unity principle is observed in the Confessions chiefly in the persistent use of the so-called *analogia scripturae* (the agreement of Scripture with itself): The New Testament sheds light on the Old, and the Old on the New, and the entire Scriptures must be brought to bear on any theme, motif, or article of faith" (*How To Interpret* 10).

However, Bernard Ramm and Walter Kaiser reject such a practice. Ramm states: "There is no uniformity of importance in the Scriptures. It is true that in so-called scholastic orthodoxy, Scriptures were cited as proofs without regard to their location in Scripture (hence a passing reference in the Psalms was given as much weight as a verse in Romans). But this kind of exegesis is no longer defensible and has all but disappeared in contemporary theology" (Biblical Interpretation

22). Kaiser declares: "It is a mark of *Leisegesis*, not exegesis', to borrow freight that appears chronologically later in the text and to transport it back and unload it on an earlier passage simply because both or all the passages share the same canon" (82).

But Victor Mennicke replies: "While the method of basing a teaching on specific proof texts finds little favor today it is the method approved by Scripture, and it is at the same time the only certain guarantee against false teaching" (49).

[xxv] Mayer interprets Romans 12:6 this way: "'Analogy' means the correct relation or agreement between two or more items. 'Faith' is this phrase means the body of Christian doctrine, that which the Christians confess" (44).

Berkhof rejects this interpretation: "Some commentators mistakenly interpreted 'faith' objectively here, in the sense of 'doctrine', and looked upon ἀναλογίαν as the designation of an external standard. Correctly interpreted, however, the whole expression simply means, 'according to the measure of our subjective faith.' Hence the term, as derived from this passage, is based on a misunderstanding." Berkhof's bias against Lutheran teaching is even more evident: "It is perfectly ridiculous to raise the Confessions of the Church to the dignity of *regulae veritatis*, for it makes that which is derived from Scriptures a test of the truth of Scripture" (164, emphases are the author's). G. Kittel agrees with Berkhof's analysis of Romans 12:6. He cites the context of Romans 12:3 to show that "faith" refers to the subjective gift of God (Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1964, Vol. 1: 347-348).

Lenski responds by saying that what Paul means by "prophesy" in verse 6 is not a supernatural gift of God, but the gift of proclaiming the Word which all pastors have. The measure or standard they are to be judged by is not their personal faith, but the doctrine derived from the word of God (*Romans* 761).

[xxvi] In several places the Formula of Concord uses a formula which calls for settling the controversy "...in conformity with God's Word, according to the guidance of our simple faith ...." (Formula of Concord, SD, VIII:5, Triglot 1017). The German *Anleitung* (guidance) is translated in Latin by *analogiam* as in *verbi dei et fidei nostrae analogiam*. For other instances of this formula, see FC, SD, I:4, Triglot 861; and FC, SD, IV: 6, Triglot 939. Chemnitz also speaks about the analogy of faith: "...Scripture uses a peculiar and specific method or analogy of interpretation in those places in which the dogma or the articles of faith have their particular location, where the fundamentals of the dogma are treated or explained. In other, more obscure and difficult passages, the words need not be so meticulously noted nor their natural force and meaning so rigidly adhered to, but rather it suffices if a meaning which is in accord with other, clearer passages of Scripture be drawn from it" (77).

[xxvii] Holl's criticism is unwarranted. Robert Preus notes: "Luther refused to allow any ideal of the analogy of faith which would mitigate or alter the understanding of any article of faith drawn from Scripture. One must simply be bound by the sense and meaning of the text upon which the article is based" (*How To Interpret* 17). Douglas Carter says, "It was his (Luther's) conviction that the form of Scripture is such that the whole of the Christian faith is revealed in passages which call for no explanation, and that the dark areas of Scripture are to be interpreted in the light of these clear passages" (137-138). Preus adds, "Luther merely reads the Old Testament Scriptures often in the light of their New Testament fulfillment, finding there a deeper meaning than one would otherwise find if one ignored the New Testament. This is a simple application of the hermeneutical principle of analogy. And a crucial, necessary application of that principle" (*How To Interpret* 30). H. Wayne Johnson declares: "Luther advanced the cause of Scriptural authority immensely. Yet he felt so strongly about the importance of the analogy of faith that it often dictated his methods of exegesis. For him, 'every word (of Scripture) should be allowed to stand in its natural meaning, and that should not be abandoned unless faith forces us to it.' Luther here reveals that there might be occasions when the natural meaning of the text must be abandoned, and this only because the analogy of faith necessitates it" (71).

[xxviii] Douglas Oss replies to these criticisms of Kaiser and Carson. "...If the Bible is indeed a literary unity, then comparison of conceptually related texts as a part of the exegetical process is a valuable method when determining meaning. If conceptual relationships within the canon may not be used as a source of meaning for texts, then the proposed unity of Scripture is vacuous" (109). Kaiser's critic is dangerous for another reason, Oss notes: "Although it is clear from his writings that Kaiser would never want man to be the autonomous authority over the text, his principle of antecedent Scripture does, in one respect establish man's autonomy over the text. Man, rather than God, assumes the role of deciding

to which areas of life the various canonical portions apply. Did not the divine author intend that each text become an integrated part of the canon (2 Tim 3:16)? Thus, Kaiser, by excluding parts of the canon from the exegetical process for any given text, seems to establish man as the autonomous authority over the text. Man determines which Scriptures are in the 'hermeneutical canon' and which are not" (110). Again: "Since absolute objectivity is impossible to achieve, the exegete should strive for self-awareness and continually engage in self-critical reflection" (122).

[xxix] While the Analogy of Faith consists of the clear passages where a doctrine is presented, that analogy will also test the results of interpretation. For it may well be the case that one's exegetical study differs from the Confessions or from other dogmatics works. The Confessions and dogmatics works form a check upon the results of exegesis. One should not set aside 2,000 years of exegetical work on the basis of one's own studies. Exegesis dare not be separated from doctrine, for "exegesis yields and must yield doctrine" (Preus, *How To Interpret* 8). Reu states: "It is taken for granted, further, that he will compare the results of his exegetical investigation of a passage with the fundamental teachings of Scripture, in order to discover any possible deviation from them" (358). Caemerer adds, "Doctrinal study is not pursued in order to clothe preaching in the language of dogmatics. Rather it is the purpose to clarify the concepts and correct the impressions of the preacher to the end that his statements will be clear and solid, and that he will recognize the areas of faith and life in which he must make the application of his text" (9).

[xxx] Robert Preus presents four rules of analogical exegesis:
1. "Analogy can actually shed light on unclear passages of Scripture by applying grammatically and historically clear passages dealing with the same subject matter or article of faith, or it can add to our understanding of Scripture passages (Apology IV:87-101; Tractate 23; Large Catechism I, 64)"
2. "Analogical and thematic exegesis can mitigate what seems to be the force (but is not) of biblical assertions and injunctions." (e.g., swearing Matt 5:33)
3. "Analogical exegesis may produce a total thematic summary of a biblical subject."
4. "The analogical reading of Scripture results often in relating the articles of faith (of Law and Gospel) organically. The thought here is that all Christian theology is a unit, and therefore the articles of faith, drawn inductively from Scripture, are organically related" (*How To Interpret* 11-13).

Johnson lists four benefits from analogical exegesis:
1. "...with due caution we are allowed to make use of parallels from other authors and passages that occur at later points in redemptive history, as long as the exegetical evidence warrants that they are true theological parallels."
2. ":..viewing the analogy of faith as one element of the exegetical process keeps it from arbitrarily dictating the meaning of other passages."
3. "...this approach appreciates the subjective aspects of the analogy of faith as pre-understanding without falling into subjectivism. It allows the analogy of faith to contribute to the 'hermeneutical spiral' rather than use it to produce a vicious hermeneutical circle."
4. "...the suggested understanding of the analogy of faith allows us to treat it as a model or paradigm of Biblical revelation rather than as a dogma set in concrete" (78-79).
5.
[xxxi] Poovey continues: "But how do we avoid this? How can we maintain the uniqueness of a text and still keep it in harmony with all Scripture? Perhaps the first thing that must be done is to make sure that we understand what is being said.

"It is also important that we understand the gradual unfolding of Biblical truth. Progressive revelation has often been used to explain the Bible in such a way that it all seems the work of man who grows wiser down the centuries. This is nonsense. But there is a growth in understanding in the Scriptures. The Old Testament often stresses physical rewards while the New Testament places the emphasis on spiritual matters and warns that we may even lose the physical things by the very fact that we are Christian" (35-36).

[xxxii] Prof. M. Reu adds that the Christological principle was employed by Luther already in his first Psalm Lectures (1513-1516). How far Luther is willing to proceed with this principle is seen in the following quote: "In Moses, he says, there are three kinds of material. There is, first, the divine preaching of the Law, which preaching, however, is binding upon Christians only in so far as it agrees with the natural law. Secondly, there is 'that which I have not by nature,

viz., the predictions and promises of God concerning Christ; and this is by far the best thing in the whole book.' In the third place, we read Moses for the sake of the fine examples of faith, love, and the cross in the good holy fathers Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and so on to the end, by which examples we are to learn to trust and love God" (Reu 278).

Victor Mennicke also shows that the christological principle is biblical: "Philip introduced the Savior by saying: 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth' (John 1:45). Preaching in the home of Cornelius, Peter said of Jesus: 'To Him give all the prophets witness' (Acts 10:13). And Jesus emphasized the necessity of the centrality of His person and work in Scripture by saying: 'Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me; for he wrote of Me. But if ye believed not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?' (John 5:46, 47)." (Mennicke 50).

Surburg concludes: "Therefore for Luther there was no part of the Bible which did not impel towards Christ, for he declared: 'The whole Scripture exists for the Son'" (*Luther* 17).

[xxxiii] Roger Nicole states that Jesus and His apostles "...did not narrowly confine their interpretation and use of the Old Testament in terms of the immediate historic context in which any particular passage was uttered or written. On the contrary, they saw throughout one pervasive unity of purpose in terms of God's plan which provides for a recurrent relevancy of particular texts. Moreover, in not infrequent cases they deemed that the complete meaning or effectuation of certain Old Testament texts may come to the fore only in the redemptive revelation connected with the incarnation and mediatorial ministry of Jesus Christ." They used words like "fulfill," "type," and "shadow" to show that Jesus fulfilled those prophesies. (47).

[xxxiv] Robert Preus calls attention to the Apology quotation in Latin: "*universa Scriptura in hos duos locus praecipuos distribui debet: in legem et promissiones.*" Preus says: "1) Clearly the statement deals with the interpretation of Scripture, with a necessary (*debet*) application (*distribui*) of all Scripture (*universa Scriptura*);" 2) but Melanchthon does not say *omnis Scriptura*, only *universa Scriptura*, that is, "Scripture as a whole, Scripture in its entire sweep as the history of God's acts and dealings with men in terms of judgment and promise"; 3) these two doctrines pervade all the Scriptures; 4) we must understand that "Law and Gospel cannot be distinguished in Scripture unless they are already there, taught in Scripture;" and 5) *universa scriptura*"...very definitely includes the Old Testament," for the Gospel concerning Jesus Christ is taught there (*How To Interpret* 26-28).

The Formula of Concord. Solid Declaration, V:1 also states: "As the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is a special brilliant light, which serves to the end that God's Word may be rightly divided, and the Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles may be properly explained and understood, we must guard it with especial care, in order that these two doctrines may not be mingled with one another, or a law be made out of the Gospel..." (Triglot 951).

[xxxv] The following books may be helpful to the interpreter in dealing with these specialized studies in hermeneutics:
A.   Figures of speech: 1. Petersen., W. M. H., *Hermeneutics: The Lectures* (1898)
                                     2. Bullinger, E. W., *Figures of Speech Used In The Bible*

B.   Parables: Trench, R. C., *The Parables of the New Testament*.

C.   Linguistics: 1. Black, David Allen. *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988, 172 pages.
                                     2. Carson, D. A., *Exegetical Fallacies*. Grand Rapids: Baker,   1984.
                                     3. Mueller, Theodore, *New Testament Greek: A Case Grammar Approach*. Fort Wayne: Concordia Seminary Press, 1978.

[xxxvi] W. A. Poovey lists several items which the interpreter should know in order to bridge the gap between the biblical world and the modern era:
1.   The size of the land of Israel: between 12,000 to 60,000 square miles of land.

2. The position of the land: no oil, no way to hide from warlike neighbors. The Israelites were forced to choose God's care.
3. The land itself: rocky hill country, the sea alien to the Israelites, the plains held enemies with chariots, dry wilderness to the south.
4. The customs of Israel: marriage customs which changed over the centuries.
5. The writing styles of the Bible: poems, figures of speech, the Gospels are not biographies only, but calls to faith in Jesus.
6. The world view of the Bible: Not that of modern astronomy, but of the creator God. At the center between several empires.
7. The problem of hindsight: Helps the interpreter appreciate how people felt at the time with their limited knowledge.
8. The characters of the stories: the Bible does not tell all people may want to know, but what needs to be known to understand the central message of salvation. (Poovey 26-30).
9.

[xxxvii] Lenski says the interpreter should catechize the text for: the speaker, the person spoken to, the person spoken of, the place involved, the time indicated, the occasion dealt with, the scope of the text, the emotions running through the text, and the context and connection with Scripture as a whole (*The Sermon* 50). (Also see Mickelsen 176).

[xxxviii] Mickelsen offers the following principles for interpreting from the context:
1. Observe carefully the immediate context – that which precedes and follows.
2. Observe carefully any parallels in the same book to the materials in the passage being interpreted. Be aware of the purpose and development of thought in the book.
3. Observe carefully any parallel in another book by the same author or in other books by different authors. Take into account the purpose and development of thought in these books.
4. Where the immediate context is of little or no value, try to find genuine parallels which come from the same period of time.
5. Bear in mind that the smaller the quantity of material to be interpreted, the greater the danger of ignoring context. No axiom is better known and more frequently disobeyed than the oft quoted: "Text without a context is only a pretext." Somehow, to discern this kind of error in someone else is easy but to recognize this same fault in ourselves is most difficult.
6. Faithful adherence to context will create in the interpreter a genuine appreciation for the authority of Scripture. (Mickelsen 113).
7.

[xxxix] Mayer gives an example of using a dictionary of meanings: "Take the important word 'kingdom' as an example. Begin with a good concordance which lists the verses in which the word is found. Select the passages which appear to be most helpful. Write the key phrase on the left side of a sheet of paper and your own brief summary statement (50-500 words) of the meaning of the word 'kingdom' in the Bible on the basis of your own analysis. It's a good idea to group the passages according to individual authors, for often one author's usage of a word will differ from that of another" (56-57).

D. A. Carson warns against using some of the grammatical books available to the interpreter. Books written before the 1900s are often in error by applying classical usage to Koine Greek (68-69). Trench's *Synonyms of the New Testament* is often in error because he deals with the total semantic range of each word, either to show the unity of meaning or to show how the word is distinguished while New Testament usage may not have such a wide semantic range (54). He also criticizes Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* for the error of thinking that Hebrew thought forms constrained the thinking of those who spoke in Greek (44-45). One helpful tool for the pastor's work on a dictionary of meanings is: Dr. Alfred Schmoller, *Handkonkordanz zum griechischen Neuen Testament*. Stuttgart: Privilegierte Wurttembergishe Bibelanstalt (1869). Though in Latin, this book lists the words in the Greek according to the Nestle text. Very helpful as opposed to the Young's *Concordance*.

[xl] Other voices have been raised concerning the same theme: T. Franzmann, "It's not enough that the preacher understand the Word; he must transfer that understanding to the people. It is his responsibility to so wield the tool that he works his way through the stubborn knots of the people's preoccupations. It is his task to guide the tool through the crooked grain of their ignorance. It is his calling to apply the tool at the points in their lives which will result in a shaping

and building up of the material that God has entrusted to him" (175). And Krueger says: "If people are to be edified by God's Word, the preacher had better make the connection between text and sermon clear beyond all doubt" (93).

Stott declares that many do not think Christianity is relevant: "We have men on the moon in the seventies, and shall have men of Mars in the eighties, transplant surgery today and genetic engineering tomorrow. What possible relevance can a primitive Palistinian religion have for us?" (138-139). Reu replies: "That the word spoken or written in the past has a meaning for today, follows from the fact that it has become under divine guidance a part of Holy Scripture and is thus perpetuated for all time....Because is in His nature and works the same now as He has in the past, His Word is still valid today..." (361).

[xli] Pau1 Petersen quotes Farris Whitewell in *Power of Expository Preaching*: "An expository sermon is based on a Bible passage, usually longer than a verse or two, the theme, the thesis, and the major and minor divisions derive from the passage; the whole sermon being an honest attempt to unfold the grammatical historical-contextual meaning of the passage, making it relevant to today by proper organization, argument, illustration, application, and appeal" (70). Jerry Vines has a more concise definition: "An expository sermon is one that expounds a passage of Scripture, organizes it around a central theme and main points, and then decisively applies its message to the listeners" (7).

[xlii] Other suggestions for the study of the text may be helpful. Lenski lists the following for mastery of the text:
1. Begin with prayer – more than half the study.
2. Let the text act directly on the heart and mind – read the text.
3. Work through the text exegetically.
4. Catichize the text (see footnote 37).
5. Uncover the truths in the text – classify them.
6. Study the arguments in the text.
7. Last of all, glance at other men's sermons.(Lenski 45-57).

Jerry Vines has summarized seven steps in analyzing a passage from Walter Kaiser:
1. Formulate the main points of a passage.
2. Note what is problematical in the passage and compare with translations.
3. Identify the key words or concepts.
4. List any historical, literary, or theological problems.
5. Prepare a tentative outline in keeping with the context.
6. Record in note form whatever wider implications the passage may contain. (Kaiser quoted in Vines 65-66).

Rosenau lists the following twelve exegetical commandments for interpreters:
1. Thou shalt *translate* thy text accurately into the tongue of thy father; yea, faithful to the original and idiomatic shall it be.
2. Thou shalt *compare* diligently with one or more versions and make careful note of thy divergences, but thou shalt not yet consult the commentaries lest thou frustrate the growth of thine own brain cells.
3. Thou shalt note the *context*, both that which goeth before and that which followeth after.
4. Thou shalt determine the natural *units* of thy text.
5. Thou shalt *dissect* thoroughly the words and phrases and sentences of thy text; yea, let grammars and lexicons be thy kinsmen and parallel passages the apple of thine eye. Thou shalt not despise the Septuagint, nor yet separate the critical apparatus from thine affections.
6. Thou shalt in no wise be puffed up with thy findings without *questioning* thy text further.
7. Thou shalt not divorce thy text from its *context*.
8. Thou shalt *enumerate* thy theological discoveries.
9. Thou shalt articulate the *central thought* of thy text; yea, its chief purpose thou shalt express clearly.
10. Thou shalt discover the *relevancy* of thy text, for through it the Spirit speaketh to the sons of thine own aeon.
11. Thou shalt in no wise leave thy text until thou hast established thine interpolations by taking counsel with those who know more than thou knowest; yea, the *commentators* thou shalt not despise after thou hast exhausted thine own resources.

12. Thou shalt remain humble and know that thou knowest not all that thou mightest know concerning thy text. (Rosenau 583-584).

13.

[xliii] Wedel describes the preacher's week of preparation: "With the text selected…he can begin his task on Monday morning." "The point is that if he expects to pull the trigger on that text, he cannot wait until next Saturday to load the gun. He reads that text, dissects it, 'exegetizes' it, finds its theme and unity, its reason for selection for that given Sunday of the church year. He absorbs a background and foundation for his thinking as he goes to other ministerial objectives later in the day..."
"Tuesday is the day for checking out the scholarship that specialists provide.
"Wednesday is the day the preacher can begin to hear God speak to him, the most essential element in any sermon preparation."
"Thursday thought begins to crystallize, the aim God has taken in that Word begins to focus, and things start falling into place in outline form.
"Friday is the day to write. Communication forms. And writing is important. Writing clarifies thinking.
"On Saturday the preacher may be in for a surprise. As he reads his masterpiece once more, he discovers that he didn't do what he intended. He didn't say it clearly. He discovers morsels of false doctrine that slipped in somehow. He may have to throw it out completely. If not, two hours more of work." (29-31).

[xliv] Crosby notes: "One of the saddest sights in the Church of Christ is the yielding to this spirit of pride on the part of the ordained preachers of the Word. Many modern Timothys use the pulpit for discourses on art and literature; others take the opportunity for the display of rhetoric and oratory; others proclaim an ethics of expediency; while still others seek only to tickle the ears of an audience that desires to be amused. In all this you look in vain for the Gospel" (101).

[xlv] Poovey declares: "We must still say a word about the use of this language study in the sermon itself. It should be obvious that all of this is preparation. It is not material to be lugged into the pulpit. Someone has said that a good sermon is like a good dinner. You don't need to know all the processes that have been carried out in the kitchen; or in the study, but you want to know that something happened there" (24).

[xlvi] The whole quote is noteworthy: "But notice that the Word of God is the tool – the means to our goal in all our sermons – not the goal itself. Here we can easily go astray in the pursuit of our goal. We take a text and apply to it careful exegesis and painstaking hermeneutics. We wrestle with the text until we pin it to the mat. Finally the stubborn truth gives itself up; we breathe a sigh of relief and imagine that we are now ready to preach God's Word to His people. We think the goal is won. It is not: We have only understood the *means* to the goal. That understanding is a necessary preparation for valid Christian preaching, but it does not make the preaching. What so challenged us in the study may come off dull in the pulpit" (T. Franzmann 175).

[xlvii] D. A. Carson states: "We will not go far astray if we approach the Bible with a humble mind and then resolve to focus on central truths. Gradually we will build up our exegetical skills by evenhanded study and a reverent, prayerful determination to become like the workman 'who correctly handles the word of truth' (1 Tim. 2:15 NIV)" (144). Moellering adds: "Indeed, overwhelmed by the magnitude of the assignment to preach, baffled by its intricacy, blinded by the majesty of God and yet seeing his own imperfections the more clearly, the distraught contemporary preacher asks with Paul: 'Who is sufficient for these things?' (2 Cor 2:16) But he also learns to answer with Paul: 'Our sufficiency is from God' (2 Cor 3:5)" (106).

Hermeneutics Historical Outline

1. 4th and 5th Centuries B.C.   – Greeks allegorized their religious books – Homer and Hesiod – to fit them into their time.

2. Philo (20 B.C. – A.D. 54)   – He developed 20 rules for allegorizing the Old Testament. He was influenced by Greek philosophy.

3. A.D. 30-100   – The New Testament interpreted the Old literally, as in Matthew and Paul; and typologically, as in Hebrews.

4. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215)   – Found five senses to a text: 1) historical, 2) doctrinal, 3) prophetic, 4) philosophical, and 5) mystical.

5. Origen (185-254)   – He wished to eliminate absurdities and contradictions in the Bible by allegory. He used 1) the literal sense, 2) Christ as the inner principle, 3) the spiritual sense (allegory), and 4) typological exegesis.

6. The Antiochian School   – It rejected the allegorical hermeneutics of Alexandria. It interpreted the Scriptures literally, but lost influence to Origen. Leading fathers: Lucian, Dorotheus, Diodorus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and John Chrysostum.

7. Jerome (340-420)   – translated the Vulgate, was influenced by the literal Antiochian School, but he practiced allegorization in exegesis.

8. Augustine (354-430)   – He developed an handbook of hermeneutics and homiletics (*De Doctrina Christiana*). He developed a theory of language that words are signs representing a concept. Yet he promoted allegorization.

9. Pope Gregory I (504-590)   – He wrote a commentary on Job which influenced many later writers towards allegorization of the text of the Bible.

10. A.D. 800-1500   – Exegesis was dominated by allegory, creeds, church fathers, council pronouncements, and tradition. Little hermeneutical work done.

11. Abby of St. Victor in Paris   – Hugo, Richard, and Andrew were literal interpreters first, then they allowed for allegorization to be used.

12. Peter Abelard (1079-1142)   – He reacted against those church traditions which contradicted the Bible.

13. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) – He tried to wed Aristotle to doctrine and he permitted the moral sense to dominate his interpretations.

14. Laurentius Valla (1406-1457) – Attached Aquinas' interpretations. He turned to the Greek text and was in the forefront of the Renaissance humanistic scholarship which studied ancient Greek.

15. Erasmus (1469-1536) – He published Valla's notes in 1505 and the Greek text in 1516 and was a leading humanist light in northern Europe.

16. Luther, Melanchton, Confessors – They developed new principles of hermeneutics from their study of Scripture which emphasized the literal interpretation of God's Word and rejected allegorization.

17. Calvin (1509-1564) – He followed Luther's hermeneutics mostly, but imposed reason on Scripture. He exegeted most of the books of the Bible.

18. Flacius Illyricus (1520-1575) – He first attempted a scientific treatment of hermeneutics as a discipline, he wrote *Clavis scripturae* in 1567.

19. Lutheran orthodox theologians – they expanded the dogmatic understanding of the inerrancy of the Bible and wrote many hermeneutical works.

20. Pietists – They ignored hermeneutical exegesis for emotionalism and the voice of the Spirit coming immediately. Leaders – Spener, Franke

21. Johann Ernesti (1707-1781) – He said that grammatical exegesis had priority over theological exegesis. Developed a set of hermeneutical rules.

22. Johann Semler (1725-1791) – He reduced hermeneutics to knowing the Bible's use of language and he emphasized being able to speak to the changing times of the world.

23. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) – He said hermeneutics only dealt with grammar and sentences. He proposed a psychological interpretation of the Bible to reconstruct the mental process of the biblical authors.

24. von Hofmann of Erlangen (1810-1877) – he added the notion of "salvation history" where texts have roots in the past, meaning in the present, and portent for the future. He developed the organic view of Scripture.

25. Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) – He developed the existential principle where the text encounters the interpreter. He proposed a dialectic theology of paradoxes.

26. Karl A.G. Keil – He first used the term "grammatical-historical exegesis."

27. Karl Barth (1886-1968) – He wrote *Römerbrief*, began neo-orthodoxy movement, and denied infallibility of the Scriptures. Said revelation is God speaking and our response of faith. (See Appendix C-2 for his principles.)

28. Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) – He made hermeneutics central to his Bible study, that is, a hermeneutics of demythologizing, form criticism, and existential encounter. (See Appendix C-2 for his principles.)

29. New Hermeneutic School — A movement of people like Ebeling, Fuchs, and Gadamer which speaks of how man sees or understands his world as the hermeneutic (interpretation) of his world.

The Historical Outline in taken from the following sources:
- Mayer 23-25
- Anderson 81-91
- Ramm, *Protestant* 23-92
- Kaiser 31-34
- Berkhof 14

For a more complete discussion of this history please refer to:

F.W. Farrer, *History of Interpretation*.
F.W. Farrer, Interpretation of the Bible: A Short History.

Various Lutheran Hermeneutical Principles

Luther (by Ramm, PBI 53-57)	**Montgomery** (Mongomery, p. 103-104)	**Mennicke** (Mennicke, p. 38)	**R. Preus** (Preus, p. 9-35)
1. Psychological Principle: Faith and illumination are prerequisites for the interpreter. 2. Authority Principle: The Bible is the supreme and final authority for faith. 3. Literal Principle: Every word is taken in its natural meaning a. Reject allegory b. The original language is primary c. Use grammar and context 4. Sufficiency principle: a. Scripture interprets Scripture b. Analogy of faith 5. Christological Principle: All interpretation must find Christ in every text. 6. Law-Gospel Principle: The fusing of the two is wrong. The Bible must be divided between law and gospel.	1. Take the passages in the native sense unless context shows otherwise. 2. The prime article of faith is Christ's attitude toward Scripture. 3. Harmonization of difficulties should be done within reasonable limits. 4. Extra-biblical linguistic and cultural considerations must be employed ministerially, never matisterially. 5. Not all literary forms are consistent with Scripture, e.g., myth. 6. Employ all the scholarly research tools that do not involve rationalistic or subjectivistic commitments.	1. Scripture interprets itself: a. Holy Spirit is the only interpreter of the Bible. b. Church accepts the Holy Spirit's meaning. 16. All Scripture to be interpreted by analogy of faith. 17. Scripture is to shed light on the dark passages: a. OT interpreted by the NT b. Difficult passages interpreted by the clear passages c. Passages which touch on a doctrine to be interpreted by passages where the doctrine is plainly taught d. Observe the purpose and content e. Central thought is to present Christ as Savior 18. Observe the common usage of human language: a. Scripture is given in human language b. Grammatical usage of language is to be observed 5. Each passage has only one intended meaning.	1. Principle of Divine Origin of Scripture. 2. Unity Principle: Bible is one book, has one author, and one Gospel message. 3. Hauptartikel Principle: Justification by faith alone in Jesus is the chief principle of interpretation. 4. Realist Principle: History occurs as it was written in the Bible. 5. Spirit Principle: Holy Spirit is the primary author of Scripture. The gift of the Spirit is necessary to understand spiritual things. 6. Eschatological Principle: Scripture was written for our learning and to give us hope for eternal life.

Other Principles of Hermeneutics

Calvin's (by Ramm, PBI, p. 58)	**Barth's** (by Ramm, PBI, p. 70-79)	**Bultmann's** (by Ramm, PBI, p. 84-92)
1. Insisted on the illumination of the Spirit for interpretation.	1. Revelation Principle: Denied infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible – God speaks to people through Jesus.	1. Scientific Principle: All matters of fact are to be decided by the scientific method.
2. Rejected allegorical interpretation as satanic.	2. Christological Principle: What is in harmony with Jesus alone is binding on one's faith.	2. Critical Principle: Words and concepts are determined by a study of the historical, literary, sociological and religious background of the words.
3. Scripture interprets Scripture: a. Literalism in exegesis b. Emphasis on grammatical exegesis c. Compare passages treating of a common subject	3. Totality Principle: Bible teaching is determined by the totality of its teaching.	a. Form-criticism b. Content-criticism
4. A marked independence in exegesis from the Roman Catholic tradition.	4. Mythological Principle: Truth is presented in historical form, but it is not historically real.	3. Mythological Principle: Myths are defined as a. Faith stated in a worldly way b. What is contrary to science c. Doctrine that is not acceptable to modern man
5. Showed caution by saying one should investigate the historical settings of Messianic prophesies, anticipating the modern spirit towards prophecy.	5. Existential Principle: Read the Bible with eager expectation that it will lead to sublime moments and decisions.	4. Demythological-existential Principle: The NT grew out of existential encounters, but were put in mythical form.
	6. Paradoxical Principle: All doctrines must have assertions and counter-assertions.	5. Dialectical Principle: What is historical in the Bible is not existential.
		6. Revelational Principle: An existential encounter is not an imparting of information.
		7. Law Principle: The OT is a book of law. The NT has the positive message for the modern man.

Professor W.M.H. Peterson's Hermeneutics

Rules relating to the *literal* sense, pages 36-75:

Canon 1:   To every word, or phrase, in Scripture there always answers a certain idea, or notion, of a thing which we call the sense.

Canon 2:   The significance of words depend upon the usage of language.

Canon 3:   Language is to be understood according to its grammatical import, and the sense of any expression is to be determined by the words.

Canon 4:   A word is always to be taken in its most common signification, unless there is something to forbid its being taken so.

Canon 5:   Though a word, or phrase, may in itself have several meanings, it cannot have more than one of them in each occurrence.

Canon 6:   If every word must have a meaning of its own, then two words, when they are combined, must unite their meanings, the compound word cannot merely be equivalent to one of its parts.

Canon 7:   When two or more meanings of a word are in proof, which one of them is the true meaning in a given case, must be determined by the context, connection, and other circumstances.

Canon 8:   If a word has only one meaning that meaning will translate it in all its occurrences.

Canon 9:   In certain situations two or even several words may with equal propriety fill the same place, though they are not perfectly synonymous, but somewhat different in their signification.

Canon 10:   If a word of phrase is to be limited, it must be limited by the context and connection, and by the nature of the subject. It is not lawful to suppose any arbitrary limitation.

Canon 11:   When words are appropriated, they receive a peculiar application, but do not lose their former meaning.

Rules related to the *figurative* sense, pages 81-98

Canon 1:   A word or phrase is always to be taken in its proper and literal signification, unless there is something to show that it must be taken in a figurative sense.

Canon 2:   A word or phrase capable of a figurative signification, and which on some occasions is used figuratively, is not thereby incapacitated to serve in its proper meaning.

Canon 3:   When the figurative sense of a word becomes one of its meanings, it ceases to be a figure.

Canon 4:   The figurative use of a word must be founded on the literal, and a word in its literal sense must guide all its figurative applications.

Canon 5:   A figurative phrase is never used in defining and founding an article of faith.

Canon 6: A figure never changes the signification and meaning of a word.

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