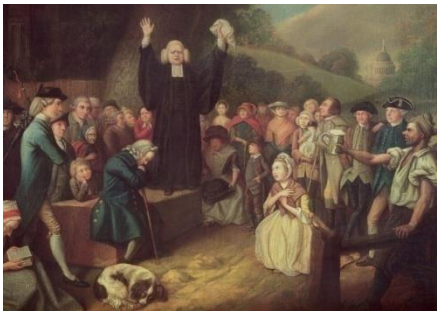
WHITEFIELD COLLEGE & THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

1605 E. Gary Road
Lakeland, Florida 33801
(863) 683-7899



****

THE WHITEFIELD PAPERS

By

Roderick O. Ford, J.D., D.D., Litt.D., Th.D. (Candidate)

_____

"Reformed Church Hermeneutics"

NOTES

on

Louis Berkhof's *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*

_____

Vol. 1, No. 1

Whitefield Theological Seminary

Paper # 1

****

DISCLAIMER: The following research paper is prepared in preparation for a dissertation on Reformed Church Theology for the degree of Doctor of Theology (Th.D.) at Whitefield Theological Seminary. This is an original work of the author's own design and conception; and, as such, this paper does not reflect the dogma of a specific church denomination. It is, however, a study in the history of Reformed Church Theology, including both Calvinism and Reformed Anglicanism (Puritanism). This paper is not simply a defense of Reformed Church Theology, but it is also a comparison of that branch of theology to other traditions such as the Lutheran tradition, the Wesleyan or Methodist Church traditions, American Evangelical traditions, Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Church theology, and the African and African American church traditions. The conclusions reached in this paper do not reflect the official position of the Whitefield Theological Seminary and are subject to change as a result of the author's own mistakes or attainment of new knowledge on the subject matter expressed therein.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This paper reflects the notes of the author regarding the work by Professor Louis Berkhof, titled *Principles of Theological Interpretation*, which is written in the finest tradition of the Reformed Church. But first, I would be remiss if I did not speak a word as to my motivations and objectives for enrolling in Whitefield Theological Seminary.

Throughout the past ten centuries or more, many men and women have entered Christian theological seminaries for a variety of reasons. In my case, I entered the Whitefield Theological Seminary, after twenty-four years of practicing law as a civil rights and labor and employment law litigator, because I believed that it was clearly the right thing to do: the Whitefield Theological Seminary is named after one of great evangelists of the eighteenth century, George Whitefield (1714-1770), who helped to lead a great spiritual revival in England and North America in what became known as the Great Awakening. This Great Awakening, I believe, was a mass educational and moral movement that was designed to open the hearts and minds of men and women during a day of decline in moral values; of public drunkenness; of materialism and money-getting; of lasciviousness, human trafficking and slavery; and of predatory capitalism and empire-building on the backs of the poor. The Church of England is reported to have sustained great losses to its credibility during the period, because its clergy tended to be worldly, unspiritual, and turned a blind eye to the plight of the poor. Under these conditions, George Whitefield and the Wesley brothers entered upon the world stage with their unconventional methods of spreading God's Word. For this reason, it was not hard for me, as a practicing member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, to take a serious look at Whitefield College and Theological Seminary as an institution, as well as to take a second look at George Whitefield the man. I soon learned that George Whitefield had been a part of the Holy Club at Christ Church, Oxford and was close friends with the Wesley brothers. See, below, Appendix A. It was not difficult for me to then appreciate the rich theological tradition that is reflected in the Whitefield Theological Seminary.

My decision to join the Whitefield Theological Seminary as a post-doctoral fellow was motivated by other very important concerns regarding the spiritual, social, political, and economic state of affairs in the United States, and the world. Given America's steady spiritual deterioration as manifested in its public life and public discourse, I no longer could ignore, as a civil rights advocate, the role of the Christian church in public life. The doctrine of separation of "Church and State" is today most abused, taken out of historical context,

and appears to have been utilized largely to suppress the Christian foundations of American constitutional law and jurisprudence—such that churches and pastors can only hardly function in America's public life. Simultaneously, the moral foundations of law and procedure have all but completely corroded in America's court systems—especially as it relates to court access for the poor. As a consequence, the question of the church's historic role in government and the administration of justice have often commanded my attention, ever since my days as a law student at the University of Illinois College of Law, during the early 1990s. The Methodist Law Centre, which I have led now for three years, and which has the full support of the Whitefield Theological Seminary, is committed to enabling America's churches to bring to bear the fundamental moral "law of Christ" [1] upon America's public policy forums, courts, and in the administration of justice generally.

The Calvinist and Reformed standard of biblical hermeneutics eventually percolated up through the stacks of books and articles which I had read on the Protestant Reformation, Roman Catholic theological doctrine, and the topic of "law and religion," over more than thirty years. But first, I must admit that since the 1990s, I witnessed first what appeared to be a crisis in the Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church, and in the various African Methodist churches in the United States. This crisis, at least in my mind, eventually manifested itself, first, in the authorization of same-sex marriages; and, second, in the ordination to the priesthood of "openly-gay" homosexuals who were in same-sex unions. (Though I wavered with uncertainty, I had not felt so opposed to the ordination to the pastoral ministry of women, having understood that the Bible had made some room for the institution and consecration of holy women to ecclesiastical offices, such as the offices of deaconess and prophetess. The opening for women, in my theological view, centered largely upon Luther's and Calvin's conception of the "priesthood of all believers.")[2] The other

---

[1] The central message of Jesus of Nazareth (i.e., the **"law of Christ"**) was to love ye one another (John 15:12); to do justice and judgment (Genesis 18:18-19; Proverbs 21:1-3); to judge not according to appearance but to judge righteous judgments (John 7:24); and to do justice, judgment, and equity (Proverbs 1:2-3), and that message was sown into the English common law through the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England, the English Inns of Court, and the law faculty of Oxford and Cambridge universities.

[2] The theology of the "priesthood of all believers" originated during the 16-century Protestant Reformation: "**Priesthood of all believers**, cardinal doctrinal principle of the churches of the 16th-century Reformation, both Lutheran and Reformed, and the Protestant Free churches that arose from the Reformation churches. The doctrine asserts that all humans have access to God through Christ, the true high priest, and thus do not need a priestly mediator. This introduced a democratic element in the functioning of the church that meant all Christians were equal. The ordained clergy thus were representatives of the entire congregation, preaching and administering the sacraments." https://www.britannica.com/topic/priesthood-of-all-believers One theological deduction, here, is that Jesus of Nazareth is the only high priest and Mediator of the New Covenant, thereby making all holy persons, including women, a part of this "royal priesthood" of all believers (i.e., the Christian church; see, e.g., 1 Peter 2:9). Under this theological viewpoint, the all-male "sacerdotal" priesthood was consummated and rests in the person of

component of the crisis had to deal with the practice of law itself. I had since law school felt that the "Two-Tables" theory of civil government (which Calvin and the English-speaking Puritans had adopted) had been the standard of natural-law doctrine within Anglo-American constitutional law, and that this theory undergird the United States Constitution, particularly when that document is read in light of the *Declaration of Independence*. Likewise, within

---

Jesus Christ himself; thereby rendering the "royal priesthood" of the New Testament (i.e., elders, bishops, pastors, and lay persons) as simply "administrative" in nature.

in nature. The "sacrament" of baptism and the Lord's Supper may be performed by any lay person in the New Testament Church—and not exclusively the pastor. Hence, under this view of the New Testament Church, there can be no female "priests" or male "priests," since the function of priests within the Temple died under the Old Covenant, when Christ instituted the New Covenant of "justification by faith." Hence, within the New Testament Church, there are no "priests" at all; and for this reason, females can be ordained as church "administrators" (i.e., deaconesses, pastors, sisters, mothers, etc., who may justly be called "reverend.") Of course, there are some Protestant denominations that hold to the "priesthood of all believers" but still will not "ordain" women as pastors, although they permit women (i.e., deaconesses, sisters, mothers, etc.) to perform senior administrative church functions. In my book, *Jesus Master of Law: A Juridical Science of Christianity and the Law of Equity* (2015), p. 58, I wrote: "Regarding the 'Institution of holy women,' Dr. Hengstenberg writes: 'An Egyptian reference is undeniable in the Israelitish institution of the holy women.' 'That the holy women among the Israelites *had no external service in the tabernacle of testimony*, that *their service was rather a spiritual one*, we have already seen. Just so is it among the Egyptians…. That also among the Israelites, noble women especially were devoted to the service of the temple was previously shown. Just so was it among the Egyptians…. That the holy women among the Israelites were always unmarried, either young women or widows, has been shown in the Contributions. Just so also is it with the holy women among the Egyptians…." This description of "holy women" appears to describe the Prophetess **Anna** in the Book of Luke 2:36-38, to wit: "And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which desparted not from the temple, abut served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." But another prophetess, **Deborah**, in the Book of Judges, Chapt. 4, played a different role: "And **Deborah**, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time…. And she went and called Ba'rak the son of Abinoam out of Kedech-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD GOD of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?... And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.... And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD had delivered Sisera into thine hand…." And Judges, Chap. 5 reads: "Then sang Deborah and Barak… on that day, saying, Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves." Hence, the role of consecrated women in the Bible is precisely defined; but clearly, holy women were permitted to pray or sing in the tabernacle of God; and, as God's voice to the congregation, to prophesy as did Prophetess Deborah. Whether women were ever called "deacons" or "deaconess" in the New Testament is not clear. But the Apostle Paul describes one woman named "Phebe" as "a succourer of many," meaning that she played some sort of leadership and ministerial role in the church. For this reason, Paul instructed the church at Rome to "assist her in whatever business she hath need of you." Romans 2:1-2. Moreover, Paul insisted that this same church receive **Phebe** "in the Lord, as becometh saints," since she was "a servant of the church." Therefore, on the basis of biblical text and example, there appeared in my mind some role for formal consecration or ordination of women for high-level church leadership and service within the church, and to hold office within the church. The title "reverend," "pastor," "mother," "sister," and the like, I leave open: but one thing is clear: in the Bible, God used women for important leadership functions. Thus, the theology of an "all-male" priesthood—as in the Orthodox or Roman Catholic church traditions, which is based upon the theology of the first-born sons of the families of Israel or of the tribe of Levi— does not necessarily prohibit other types of pastoral or ecclesiastical offices, such as the office of *deaconess* or *prophetess*, which may be opened to women. The question of whether "deacon/prophetess" entitles women to be a "pastor" (but not be a "priest") is an open theological question, since the orthodox view is that a "priest" is in nature a male who is the "father of the congregation." But the doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers," which is a Protestant doctrine, certainly leaves open this entire question of the possibility of a female priesthood in the New Testatment

the field of American civil rights, I had likewise reached the conclusion that the natural-law doctrine, which depended upon the "Two-Tables" theory of civil government, undergird the fundamental and essential parameters of the Civil War Amendments to the United States Constitution and the ensuing struggle for civil rights. For it was the Reformed-Calvinist hermeneutical method regarding the "Two-Tables" theory of civil government, together with the writings of Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, that enabled me to find the Christian foundations of Anglo-American constitutional law and of federal civil rights. At the same time, as American jurisprudence became more and more engulfed in a purely secular worldview, the debasement of the working poor as objects—and not human beings—led to mass incarceration, deterioration of the nuclear family structure, and racial insecurities, insensitiveness, and discrimination. My beloved Methodist Church and Episcopal Church—as evidenced by their positions on "same-sex" marriage— no longer appeared equipped theologically to interpret the Bible with fidelity and truth, and with good-faith application to modern conditions. Only the Reformed Church hermeneutical method now appealed to me, and all roads seemed to point to the Whitefield Theological Seminary for repose, reflection, and continuing research.

At the same time, I would be remise if I did not state that I am theologically a Wesleyan-Armenian, with a moderate sense of Calvinist ideological leaning as to the "predestination of the elect," as that phrase was used and defined by Augustine of Hippo in his defenses against Pelagianism.[3] But I am fully on the side of John Wesley in the debate. At the same time, I am a "Reformed Theologian" in the sense that I approach biblical hermeneutics with the standards set forth in John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which I find to be a superior analysis of the Christian faith. It is therefore my personal opinion that, whereas John Wesley had the superior method of practical Christian ministry (planting and building church societies and nourishing holiness of living), John Calvin had the superior approach to biblical hermeneutics. However, I also believe that both of these "reformed" traditions overlap and converge. George Whitefield (1714 -1770), who is the namesake of this great theological institution, was an avowed English Calvinist. Whitefield joined with Methodist founders Charles and John Wesley (two Armenians) to launch the Great Awakening Movement, which won many souls—whites, blacks, freedmen, and slaves alike— for Christ during the eighteenth century. And so, it is my hope, that as a Reformed Armenian studying theology at a Reformed theology school, I might join forces

[3] I am also, fundamentally, an **"Augustinian" theologian** whose roots may be traced to the voluminous writings of Augustine of Hippo, whose theology helped to lay—through the writings of Luther and Calvin— the foundation of the Protestant Reformation.

with my Reformed Calvinist brothers at Whitefield Theological Seminary, in order to launch a new "Great Awakening" in North America and the world. See, Appendix A, below, "Whitefield vs. Wesley."

To that end, I fully endorse the Reformed Church hermeneutical doctrines as set forth in this paper as being fully appropriate for the theological standards in the United Methodist Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, or any other Methodist denomination that follows the Armenian standards, because the hermeneutical techniques are mostly universal, scientific, and provide techniques which any theologian can use regardless of denominational affiliation.

Roderick O. Ford, J.D., D.D., Litt.D., Th.D. (Candidate)
Postdoctoral Fellow
Whitefield Theological Seminary
May 10, 2020

SECTION ONE:

Preface to Louis Berkhof's *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*

The author, Louis Berkhof, points out in the "Preface" section of *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* that the misinterpretation of the Bible is all too common in the Church, amongst Christians, and even within the circles of those who claim to unwaveringly adhere to the infallibility of the Bible.

For this reason, sound biblical hermeneutic principles are necessary in order to prevent misuse and misinterpretation of the Bible (also referenced as "Sacred Scriptures"). These hermeneutic principles, as exemplified throughout *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* , are designed to facilitate the "Spirit of Truth" with leading the church "into all truth."[4]

Like a statute that has been enacted, the Bible is a vast legislative system or law that has a single purpose which is to draw all men to God in His saving justice. God is the author, revealer, and inspirer of the Bible, giving it but one, single sense. As Professor Berkhof has pointed out:

> It is of the greatest importance to understand at the outset that Scripture has but a single sense, and it therefore susceptible to a scientific and logical investigation. This fundamental principle must be placed emphatically in the foreground, in opposition to the tendency, revealed in history and persisting in some quarters even up to the present time, to accept a manifold sense,-- a tendency that makes any science of Hermeneutics impossible, and opens wide the door for all kinds of arbitrary interpretations.
>
> The delusion respecting a multiple sense originated largely in a misunderstanding of some of the important features of Scripture, such as its figurative language, its mysterious and incomprehensible elements, its symbolical facts, rites and actions, its prophecies with a double or triple fulfilment, and its types of coming realities."[5]

[4] Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1950), p. 5.
[5] Ibid., p. 57.

SECTION TWO

CHAPTER ONE:

Notes on Berkhof's *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*

I. Introduction

Hermeneutics is the science that teaches us the principles, laws, and methods of interpretation.[6] It is derived from the Greek word "hermeneutike," and first employed by the philosopher Plato.[7]

Hermeneutics as an organized science in academia began in the year 1567, with Flacius Illyricus.[8] Professor Illyricus devided this science into two types: general hermeneutics and special hermeneutics. *General hermeneutics* applies to all kinds of writings. *Special hermeneutics* applies to certain definite kinds of literary productions, such as laws, history, prophecy, poetry, etc. In *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, the author Professor Berkhof deals with a branch of *special hermeneutics* called "Hermeutica Sacra," which deals with a book that is unique in the realm of literature, viz., with the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

Professor Berkhof believes that, in order to rightly utilize specialized Biblical hermeneutics, it is necessary that the reader *actually believe* in the Word God. He writes, "[i]t is only when we recognize the principle of the divine inspiration of the Bible that we can maintain the theological character of Hermeneutica Sacra." The remaining chapters of *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* then proceeds from the perspective that the reader must first believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible.

To that end, Professor Berkhof states that *hermeneutics* is important for two important reasons:

> First, **sin darkened the understanding of man**, and still exercises a pernicious influence on his conscious mental life.

[6] Ibid., p. 11.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., p. 14.

Second, **men differ from one another in many ways** that naturally cause them to drift apart mentally. (I.e., there are differences as to intellectual capacity, aesthetic taste, culture, education, customs, morals, language, etc.)

Furthermore, in *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, Professor Berkhof defines the word *exegis*[9] as both a science and an art. Hermeneutics is thus a science (i.e., law or set of

---

[9] **Wikipedia On-line Encyclopedia**: "**Exegesis** (/ˌɛksɪˈdʒiːsɪs/; from the Greek ἐξήγησις from ἐξηγεῖσθαι, "to lead out") is a critical explanation or interpretation of a text, particularly a religious text. Traditionally the term was used primarily for work with the Bible; however, in modern usage *biblical exegesis* is used for greater specificity to distinguish it from any other broader critical text explanation. Exegesis includes a wide range of critical disciplines: textual criticism is the investigation into the history and origins of the text, but exegesis may include the study of the historical and cultural backgrounds of the author, text, and original audience. Other analyses include classification of the type of literary genres presented in the text and analysis of grammatical and syntactical features in the text itself. **The terms exegesis and hermeneutics have been used interchangeably**….

One who practices exegesis is called an *exegete* (/ˌɛksɪˈdʒiːt/; from Greek ἐξηγητής). The plural of exegesis is *exegeses* (/ˌɛksɪˈdʒiːsiːz/). Adjectives are exegetic or exegetical (e.g., exegetical commentaries). In biblical exegesis, the opposite of exegesis (to draw out) is eisegesis (to draw in), in the sense of an eisegetic commentator "importing" or "drawing in" his or her own purely subjective interpretations into the text, unsupported by the text itself. Eisegesis is often used as a derogatory term….

A common published form of biblical exegesis is known as a Bible commentary and typically takes the form of a set of books, each of which is devoted to the exposition of one or two books of the Bible. Long books or those that contain much material either for theological or historical-critical speculation, such as Genesis or Psalms, may be split over two or three volumes. Some, such as the Four Gospels, may be multiple- or single-volume, while short books such as the deuterocanonical portions of Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah (i.e. Book of Susanna, Prayer of Azariah, Bel and the Dragon, Additions to Esther, Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah), or the pastoral or Johannine epistles are often condensed into one volume….

The form of each book may be identical or allow for variations in methodology between the many authors who collaborate to write a full commentary. Each book's commentary generally consists of a background and introductory section, followed by detailed commentary of the book pericope-by-pericope or verse-by-verse. Before the 20th century, a commentary would be written by a sole author, but today a publishing board will commission a team of scholars to write a commentary, with each volume being divided out among them….

A single commentary will generally attempt to give a coherent and unified view on the Bible as a whole, for example, from a Catholic or Reformed (Calvinist) perspective, or a commentary that focuses on textual criticism or historical criticism from a secular point of view. However, each volume will inevitably lean toward the personal emphasis of its author, and within any commentaries there may be great variety in the depth, accuracy, and critical or theological strength of each volume….

The main Christian exegetical methods are historical-grammatical, historical criticism, revealed, and rational.

The **historical-grammatical method** is a Christian hermeneutical method that strives to discover the Biblical author's original intended meaning in the text.[3] It is the primary method of interpretation for many conservative Protestant exegetes who reject the historical-critical method to various degrees (from the complete rejection of historical criticism of some fundamentalist Protestants to the moderated acceptance of it in the Catholic Church since Pope Pius XII), in contrast to the overwhelming reliance on historical-critical interpretation, often to the exclusion of all other hermeneutics, in liberal Christianity….

Historical criticism also known as the historical-critical method or higher criticism, is a branch of literary criticism that investigates the origins of ancient texts in order to understand "the world behind the text". This is done to discover the text's primitive or original meaning in its original historical context and its literal sense….

Revealed exegesis considers that the **Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the scriptural texts**,and so **the words of those texts convey a divine revelation**. In this view of exegesis, the principle of ***sensus plenior* applies** — that because of its divine authorship, **the Bible has a "fuller meaning" than its human authors intended or could have foreseen**….

principles and rules) which must first be followed; at that point, hermeneutics may be viewed as an "art" in the form of *exegis* (whether through the preaching (i.e., interpretation) and (or) the teaching (i.e., interpretation) of God's word. "Every sermon [a minister preaches] ought to rest upon a solid exegetical foundation."[10]

Others have divided hermeneutics into two broad categories:

Hermeneutics: the science or law of biblical interpretation; and,

Exegesis: the art (applied science) of biblical interpretation.

- Here, "hermeneutics" and "exegesis" are used interchangeably

Throughout the remaining portions of *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, Professor Berkhoff discusses the three generally methods of hermeneutical interpretations of the Bible:

A. First, there is the Grammatical, including the logical interpretation;

B. Second, there is the Historical, including also the psychological interpretation; and,

C. Third, there is the Theological interpretation.

These three methods may be used interchangeably.

Rational exegesis bases its operation on the idea that **the authors have their own inspiration** (in this sense, synonymous with artistic inspiration), so their works are completely and utterly a product of the social environment and human intelligence of their authors.…")

[10] Ibid., p. 12.

CHAPTER TWO:

Notes on Berkhof's Principles of Biblical Interpretation

II. History of Hermeneutical Principles Among the Jews

In *Principles of Biblical Interpretation,* Professor Berkhof provides us with an overview of the historical development of the art and science of hermeneutics. Here, we are reminded that the Old Testament originated with the ancient Hebrews who wrote in the Hebrew language. Therefore, hermeneutics began with interpretation of the Hebrew tongue and culture. When the King of Egypt arranged to have the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek (i.e., the *Septuagint*), Hellenistic Greek then became a major secondary language of biblical hermeneutics.

The life, death, and resurrection of Christ led to Christian hermeneutics, because the first disciples of Christ, including the Apostle Paul, needed to interpret the events of Christ's life and teachings in light of Old Testament law, history, and prophecy. Thus, hermeneutics (hermeneutical principles) began at the very beginning of the Christian era. The first major schools of Christian theological doctrine and interpretation were at Alexandria and Antioch, established as early as the first century, A.D.

According to Professor Berkhof, the academic science of hermeneutics did not fully take shape until Flacius Illyricus organized its defining principles around the year 1567. According to Illyricus, hermeneutical principles seek to answer three questions:

(1) What was the *prevailing view* respecting the Sacred Scriptures?
(2) What was the most prevalent method of interpretation used to interpret the Sacred Scriptures or particular passage within the Sacred Scriptures?
(3) Does the interpreter of the Sacred Scriptures maintain the authoritative qualifications that one would normally expect him or her to have? For example, does he or she understand Greek or Hebrew? Is he a historian, philosopher, minister, or theologian?

To that end, in *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, the author points out that a historical survey of Jewish hermeneutics—as the original interpreters of the ancient Hebrew Bible—is useful.

A. **The Palestinian Jews**:

The Palestinian Jews emphasized the Mosaic Law as the foundation of the Bible and of theology. The first five books of Moses (i.e., the *Pentateuch*) carried the most weight, followed by the writings of the prophets. "Law in far greater esteem than the *Prophets* and the *Holy Writings*."[11]

The Palestinian Jews also divided their hermeneutical system into "Peshat" and "Midrash." In other words, they distinguished between the literal sense of the Bible (i.e., ***Peshat***), from its symbolic, allegorical, figurative, and expositive modes of expression (i.e., ***Midrash***).

The Midrash was further divided into two separate methods of hermeneutics: (a) law and (b) non-law. In other words, Midrah hermeneutics depended upon whether it was interpreting *a Mosaic statute* or a *non-statutory Mosaic passage* in the Bible. The Palestinian Jews' interpretations of the Mosaic statutes were very legalistic character, and these interpretations were organized in the ***Halakhah***. The Midrash's interpretations of non-statutory Mosaic passages—these had a freer and more edifying tendency, covering the non-legal parts of the Sacred Scriptures— were called the ***Haggadah***.

The Midrash allowed for some art and creativity in interpreting the Scriptures, because this method was designed to allow theologians to investigate and to illuminate. This led to the creation of a supplemental sacred scripture that supported the actual text of the Pentateuch (i.e., the Five Books of Moses). The Midrah thus became the Jewish "Oral Law." Although this "Oral Law" became a necessary support of the Written Law, Professor Berkhof reminds us that this Oral Law also "gave rise to all manner of arbitrary interpretation."[12] Mr. Berkhof points out in *The Principles of Biblical Interpretation* that this Oral Law was sometimes (perhaps more often than not) used to obscure or to evade the actual text of the Pentateuch and the writings of the Prophets.

B. The Alexandrian Jews.

The Jews of Egypt were most influential because they were at the epicenter of ancient empires, learning, and the metropolitan influences of pagan Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman thought. The Egyptian influence must be thought to have been profound

[11] Ibid., p. 15.
[12] Ibid., p. 15.

upon the Alexandrian Jews, because even if one concludes, as does Mr. Berkhof, that Plato's writings influenced the Alexandrian Jews, it must not be forgotten that Plato spent many years in Egypt where he may have read the sacred Hebrew scrolls. According to Professor Berkhof, the Alexandrian Jews "adopted the fundamental principle of Plato that one should not believe anything that is unworthy of God."[13]

Under the influence of Plato and the Greeks, and perhaps even of the pagan Egyptians, the Alexandrian Jews adopted the "allegorical" method of interpretation the Sacred Scriptures. Although the "allegorical" method relies heavily upon using biblical facts as "symbols," "types," and "figurative" significations, later Protestant Reformers would trace many of the errors of the Roman Catholics to having relied upon this "allegorical" method to obscure the actual written texts of the Sacred Scriptures. Hence, Reformed theologians have not outright rejected the "allegorical" method, since it is clear that some passages of the Old Testament require an understanding of various "symbols" and "types" that prefigure future events, most of which were fulfilled in the New Testament. On the other hand, the Reformed Protestant theologians cautioned against overemphasizing the "allegorical" method, particular where that method led to gross deviations from the literal or plain meaning of the text of the Sacred Scriptures. For example, Augustine of Hippo was known for using the "allegorical" method but only in moderate and measured ways, so as not to take away from the "literal" and "plain meaning" of the biblical texts. It may be perhaps appropriate to state that the Protestant Reformers, such as Luther and Calvin, summarily adopted the Augustinian hermeneutical method.

The Alexandrian school perhaps originated during the time of Christ. The Jewish philosopher and theologian **Philo, who was a contemporary of Christ and the first twelve apostles,** was an Alexandrian Jew who became the great master of the "allegorical" method of interpretation the Hebrew Bible. According to Philo, the literal sense of the Hebrew Bible was *a symbol of far deeper things*. This allowed for biblical interpreters to reject the literal text of the Sacred Scriptures if the "literal" interpretation was unworthy of credence. Instead, the "literal" interpretation could be substituted with a "symbolical" interpretation, whenever the "literal" interpretation was incredible or unworthy of divine association. This was the general "allegorical" rule of thumb for biblical exegesis.

In Alexandria, the third-century Christian theologian and philosopher *Origen* may have invented the "allegorical" method of Christian hermeneutics. Origen of Alexandria's

[13] Ibid., p. 16.

influence was wide and far-reaching, but he was not made a saint by the Roman Catholic Church since some of his doctrines were deemed heretical. Origen further developed the "allegorical" method at the theological academy in Alexandria, Egypt.

Next in line to Origen's influence, in Alexandria, was *Clement of Alexandria*. His influential writings also established the "allegorical method" as an established form of Christian hermeneutics, although the "allegorical method" is generally disfavored in the Reformed Church tradition. According to Professor Berkhof, the "allegorical" method is generally used for specific types of interpretation problems, such as the following:

- When there is repetition of facts already known; those two or more sets of similar facts may need to be explained through allegorical "symbolism" or "types" or showing "parallel structure" in theological concepts and ideas.
- When expressions are doubled; those two expressions will need to be dissected and shown how they relate to each other or to similar or even different sets of facts.
- When superfluous words are used; the use of superfluous words sometimes direct the reader to a "figure of speech" or to a symbolic meaning such a future prophecy.
- When an expression is varied; sometimes the meaning of the "variation" can only be explained by showing that it is tied to a symbolic meaning found elsewhere in the Bible.
- When synonyms are employed; the allegorical method allows for the two "synonyms" to be explained by tying them to another figurative expression in the Bible—such as prophecy.
- When a play of words is possible in any of its varieties.
- When words admit of a slight alteration; the allegorical methodis allows for an explanation of that alternation, based upon some other major or figurative expression in the Bible.
- When the expression is unusual; the allegorical method permits for a divine explanation that might not be explained, but never contrary to the will of God or to the organic unity of the Bible.
- When there is anything abnormal in the number or tense; similarly, the allegorical method permits for a divine explanation that might not be

explained, but never contrary to the will of God or to the organic unity of the Bible.

The Reformed Church tradition uses the "allegorical" method very rarely, since it prefers to rely upon the grammatical-historical methods of interpretation as taking precedent over the "allegorical" method.

C. The Karaites ("Sons of Reading")

Of the ancient Jewish traditions, the Lutheran and Reformed Church tradition finds most of its affinities, similarities and common traits with the Karaites or the "Sons of Reading."

Founded by Anan ben David in about 800 A.D., the Karaites were known as the "Protestants of Judaism." They were also called the "spiritual descendants of the Sadducees." They regarded as a fundamental principle that *"Scripture as the sole authority in matters of faith.* This meant, on the one hand, a disregard of oral tradition and of rabbinical interpretation, and, on the other, new and careful study of the text of Scripture."[14]

As a consequence, the Karaites disputed many of the tenents expressed in the Midrah or the Oral Law of the Jews. They disputed and attempted to revised many of the older Oral Traditions and the Rabbinical interpretations, by insisting upon a more literal and conventional interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. They were not unlike Martin Luther or John Calvin who insisted upon the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*. The Karaite's various refutations of the Oral Law and the Oral Traditions were published in the **Massoretic Text**, which became their authoritative publication and theological guide for refuting many of the rabbinical Jews and Alexandrian Jews.

D. The Cabbalists

The Cabbalists were launched by a group of Jewish mystics during the 12th century. They were ultra spiritual, unconventional, and emphasized the mystical interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. They borrowed heavily from the allegorical methods of the Alexandrian Jews. The Cabbalists tried to unlock the divine mysteries of the Bible text by focusing on the number of letters in each word of the Bible. "They proceeded on

[14] Ibid, p. 17.

the assumption that the whole Massorah, even down to the verses, words, letters, vowel-points and accents, was delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai; and that the 'numbers of the letters, every single letter, the transposition, the substitution, had a special, even a supernatural power.'"[15] There is no record that the Cabbalists had any later influence upon the Protestant Reformers or any other major church within the Western church tradition.

E. The Spanish Jews

For some three hundred years, from the 12th century to the 15th century, the Jews of Spain had a very significant influence upon the Roman Catholic Church in Spain. For it may be rightfully said, that, through the influence of Spanish Jews, the Protestant Reformation actually began in Spain—not in Germany or Geneva. The Jews of Spain shed new light on bible-reading and hermeneutical interpretation of Hebrew texts within the Sacred Scriptures, and several Roman Catholic priests in Spain discovered this rich Jewish tradition. Eventually, these Roman Catholic priests borrowed several hermeneutical methods from the Spanish Jews, and these priests inevitably began to revise some Catholic doctrines and theological conclusions that had previously gone un-rebutted and unchallenged. The main idea which these Catholic priests were bringing back into the Roman Catholic Church was the reverence and respect for the text of the original Hebrew Bible, which served as the basis for Jerome's Latin Vulgate. When this process occurred on the Iberian peninsula, the seeds of the Protestant Reformation were being sown. Two of the most influential Spanish priests of the period was **Nicolas de Lyra**[16] and **Reuchlin**.[17] These two men would later influence the men who would influence the Protestant Reformer **Martin Luther**.

---

[15] Ibid., p. 17.

[16] **Wikipedia On-Line Encylopedia**: **Nicholas of Lyra** (French: *Nicolas de Lyre*; c. 1270 – October 1349), or **Nicolaus Lyranus**, a Franciscan teacher, was among the most influential practitioners of biblical exegesis in the Middle Ages. Little is known about his youth, aside from the fact of his birth, around 1270, in Lyre, Normandy. Rumors from the fifteenth century that Nicholas was born into a Jewish family have been dismissed by modern scholars. [1] In 1291 he entered the Franciscan order, in the convent of Verneuil-sur-Avre. He was a doctor at the Sorbonne by 1309 and ten years later was appointed the head of all Franciscans in France. His major work, *Postillae perpetuae in universam S. Scripturam,* was the first printed commentary on the Bible. Printed in Rome in 1471, it was later available in Venice, Basel, and elsewhere. In it, each page of biblical text was printed in the upper center of the page and embedded in a surrounding commentary (*illustration, right*). His *Postilla super totam Bibliam* was published by Johannes Mentelin of Strasbourg in 1472.

Nicolas of Lyra's approach to explicating Scripture was firmly based on the literal sense, which for him is the foundation of all mystical or allegorical or anagogical expositions. He deplored the tortured and elaborated readings being given to Scripture in his time. The textual basis was so important that **he urged that errors be corrected with reference to**

Hebrew texts, an early glimmer of techniques of textual criticism, though Nicholas recognized the authoritative value of the Church's Tradition:

> I protest that I do not intend to assert or determine anything that has not been manifestly determined by Sacred Scripture or by the authority of the Church... Wherefore I submit all I have said or shall say to the correction of Holy Mother Church and of all learned men... (Second Prologue to *Postillae*).

Nicholas utilized all sources available to him, fully mastered Hebrew and drew copiously from Rashi and other rabbinic commentaries, the *Pugio Fidei* of Raymond Martini and of course the commentaries of Thomas Aquinas.

His lucid and concise exposition, his soundly-based observations made ***Postillae*** the most-consulted manual of exegesis until the 16th century. Martin Luther depended upon it. He used his commentaries extensively in his own work on the book of Genesis, "Lectures on Genesis".[2] He also highly praised his works in the Table Talk.[3] When E. A. Gosselin compiled a listing of the printed editions of works by Nicolaus de Lyra, it ran to 27 pages (in *Traditio 26* (1970), pp 399–426).

He was born in the village of La Vieille-Lyre, Normandy, hence his name. Like others in the 14th century, he was occupied by the possibility of the conversion of the Jews, to whom he dedicated hortatory addresses. He wrote *Pulcherrimae quaestiones Iudaicam perfidiam in catholicam fide improbantes*, which was one of the sources Martin Luther used in his *On the Jews and Their Lies*. However, Nicholas showed respect to Jews as well Christians, basically differed from Luther's views.[4]

17 **Johann Reuchlin** (German: [ˈjoːhan ˈʁɔɣçlin]; sometimes called **Johannes**; 29 January 1455 – 30 June 1522) was a German-born Catholic humanist and a scholar of Greek and Hebrew, whose work also took him to modern-day Austria, Switzerland, and Italy and France. **Most of Reuchlin's career centered on advancing German knowledge of Greek and Hebrew.**

Early Life:

Johann Reuchlin was born at Pforzheim in the Black Forest in 1455, where his father was an official of the Dominican monastery. According to the fashion of the time, his name was graecized by his Italian friends into **Capnion** (Καπνίον), a nickname which Reuchlin used as a sort of transparent mask when he introduced himself as an interlocutor in the *De Verbo Mirifico*. He remained fond of his home town; he constantly calls himself **Phorcensis**, and in the *De Verbo* he ascribes to Pforzheim his inclination towards literature.

Here he began his Latin studies in the monastery school, and, though in 1470 he was for a short time at Freiburg, that university seems to have taught him little. Reuchlin's career as a scholar appears to have turned almost on an accident; his fine voice gained him a place in the household of Charles I, Margrave of Baden, and soon, having some reputation as a Latinist, he was chosen to accompany Frederick, the third son of the prince, to the University of Paris.[*citation needed*] Frederick was some years his junior, and was destined for an ecclesiastical career. This new connection did not last long, but it determined the course of Reuchlin's life. He now began to learn Greek, which had been taught in the French capital since 1470, and he also attached himself to the leader of the Paris realists, Jean à Lapide (d. 1496), a worthy and learned man, whom he followed to the vigorous young University of Basel in 1474.

Career and Writings:

At Basel Reuchlin took his master's degree (1477), and began to lecture with success, teaching a more classical Latin than was then common in German schools, and explaining Aristotle in Greek. His studies in this language had been continued at Basel under Andronicus Contoblacas, and here he formed the acquaintance of the bookseller, Johann Amerbach, for whom he prepared a Latin lexicon (*Vocabularius Breviloquus*, 1st ed, 1475–76), which ran through many editions. This first publication, and Reuchlin's account of his teaching at Basel in a letter to Cardinal Adrian (Adriano Castellesi) in February 1518, show that he had already found his life's work. He was a born teacher, and this work was not to be done mainly from the professor's chair.

Reuchlin soon left Basel to seek further Greek training with George Hermonymus at Paris, and to learn to write a fair Greek hand that he might support himself by copying manuscripts. And now he felt that he must choose a profession. **His choice fell on law, and he was thus led to the great school of Orléans (1478), and finally to Poitiers, where he became licentiate in July 1481**. From Poitiers Reuchlin went in December 1481 to Tübingen with the intention of becoming a teacher in the local university, but his friends recommended him to Count Eberhard of Württemberg, who was about to journey to Italy and required an interpreter. Reuchlin was selected for this post, and in February 1482 left Stuttgart for Florence and Rome. The journey lasted

but a few months, but it **brought the German scholar into contact with several learned Italians, especially at the Medicean Academy in Florence**; his connection with the count became permanent, and after his return to Stuttgart he received important posts at Eberhard's court.

About this time he appears to have married, but little is known of his married life. He left no children; but in later years his sister's grandson Philipp Melanchthon was like a son to him till the Reformation estranged them. In 1490 he was again in Italy. Here he saw Pico della Mirandola, to whose Kabbalistic doctrines he afterwards became heir, and made a friend of the pope's secretary, Jakob Questenberg, which was of service to him in his later troubles. Again in 1492 he was employed on an embassy to the emperor Frederick at Linz, and **here he began to read Hebrew with the emperor's Jewish physician Jakob ben Jehiel Loans. Loans's instruction laid the basis of that thorough knowledge which Reuchlin afterwards improved on his third visit to Rome in 1498 by the instruction of Obadja Sforno of Cesena**. In 1494 his rising reputation had been greatly enhanced by the publication of *De Verbo Mirifico*. In 1496 Duke Eberhard I of Württemberg died, and enemies of Reuchlin had the ear of his successor, Duke Heinrich of Württemberg (formerly Heinrich Count of Württemberg-Mömpelgard). He was glad, therefore, hastily to follow the invitation of Johann von Dalberg (1445–1503), the scholarly bishop of Worms, and flee to Heidelberg, which was then the seat of the Rhenish Society In this court of letters Reuchlin's appointed function was to make translations from the Greek authors, in which his reading was already extremely wide. Though Reuchlin had no public office as teacher, he was for much of his life the real centre of all Greek and Hebrew teaching in Germany. To carry out this work he provided a series of aids for beginners and others. He never published a Greek grammar, but he had one in manuscript for use with his pupils, and also published several little elementary Greek books. Reuchlin, it may be noted, pronounced Greek as his native teachers had taught him to do, i.e., in the modern Greek fashion. This pronunciation, which he defends in *De recta Latini Graecique sermonis pronuntiatione* (1528), came to be known, in contrast to that used by Desiderius Erasmus, as the Reuchlinian.[2]

At Heidelberg Reuchlin had many private pupils, among whom Franz von Sickingen is the best known name. With the monks he had never been liked; at Stuttgart also his great enemy was the Augustinian Conrad Holzinger. On this man he took a scholar's revenge in his first Latin comedy *Sergius*, a satire on worthless monks and false relics. Through Dalberg, Reuchlin came into contact with Philip, Count Palatine of the Rhine, who employed him to direct the studies of his sons, and in 1498 gave him the mission to Rome which has been already noticed as fruitful for Reuchlin's progress in Hebrew. He came back laden with Hebrew books, and found when he reached Heidelberg that a change of government had opened the way for his return to Stuttgart, where his wife had remained all along. His friends had now again the upper hand, and knew Reuchlin's value. In 1500, or perhaps in 1502, he was given a very high judicial office in the Swabian League, which he held till 1512, when he retired to a small estate near Stuttgart.

Hebrew Studies:

For many years Reuchlin had been increasingly absorbed in Hebrew studies, which had for him more than a mere philological interest. He was interested in the reform of preaching as shown in his *De Arte Predicandi* (1503)—a book which became a sort of preacher's manual; but above all as a scholar he was eager that the Bible should be better known, and could not tie himself to the authority of the Vulgate.

The key to the *Hebraea veritas* was the grammatical and exegetical tradition of the medieval rabbis, especially of David Kimhi, and when he had mastered this himself he was resolved to open it to others. In 1506 appeared his epoch-making *De Rudimentis Hebraicis*—grammar and lexicon—mainly after Kimhi, yet not a mere copy of one man's teaching. The edition was costly and sold slowly. One great difficulty was that the wars of Maximilian I in Italy prevented Hebrew Bibles coming into Germany. But for this also Reuchlin found help by printing the Penitential Psalms with grammatical explanations (1512), and other helps followed from time to time. But his Greek studies had interested him in those fantastical and mystical systems of later times with which the Kabbala has no small affinity. Following Pico, he seemed to find in the Kabbala a profound theosophy which might be of the greatest service for the defence of Christianity and the reconciliation of science with the mysteries of faith, a common notion at that time. Reuchlin's mystico-cabbalistic ideas and objects were expounded in the *De Verbo Mirifico*, and finally in the *De Arte Cabbalistica* (1517).

Many of his contemporaries thought that the first step to the conversion of the Jews was to take away their books. This view was advocated by Johannes Pfefferkorn, a German Catholic theologian. Pfefferkorn, himself converted from Judaism, actively preached against the Jews and attempted to destroy copies of the *Talmud*, and engaged in what became a long running pamphleteering battle with Reuchlin. He wrote that "The causes which hinder the Jews from becoming Christians are three: first, usury; second, because they are not compelled to attend Christian churches to hear the sermons; and third, because they honor the *Talmud*." Pfefferkorn's plans were backed by the Dominicans of Cologne; and in 1509 he obtained the emperor's authority to confiscate all Jewish books directed against the Christian faith. Armed with this mandate, he visited Stuttgart and

asked Reuchlin's help as a jurist and expert in putting it into execution. Reuchlin evaded the demand, mainly because the mandate lacked certain formalities, but he could no long remain neutral. The execution of Pfefferkorn's schemes led to difficulties and to a new appeal to Maximilian.

In 1510 Reuchlin was appointed by Emperor Maximilian to a commission which was convened to review the matter. His answer is dated from Stuttgart, 6 October 1510; in it he divides the books into six classes — apart from the Bible which no one proposed to destroy — and, going through each class, he shows that the books openly insulting to Christianity are very few and viewed as worthless by most Jews themselves, while the others are either works necessary to the Jewish worship, which was licensed by papal as well as imperial law, or contain matter of value and scholarly interest which ought not to be sacrificed because they are connected with another faith than that of the Christians. He proposed that the emperor should decree that for ten years there should be two Hebrew chairs at every German university, for which the Jews should furnish books.

Maximilian's other experts proposed that all books should be taken from the Jews; and, as the emperor still hesitated, his opponents threw on Reuchlin the whole blame of their ill success. Pfefferkorn circulated at the Frankfurt Fair of 1511 a gross libel (*Handspiegel wider und gegen die Juden*) declaring that Reuchlin had been bribed. Reuchlin defended himself in a pamphlet titled *Augenspiegel* (1511), which the theologians at the University of Cologne attempted to suppress. On 7 October 1512 they, along with the inquisitor Jacob van Hoogstraaten, obtained an imperial order confiscating the *Augenspiegel*.

In 1513 Reuchlin was summoned before a court of the inquisition. He was willing to receive corrections in theology, which was not his subject, but he could not unsay what he had said; and as his enemies tried to press him into a corner he met them with open defiance in a *Defensio contra Calumniatores* (1513). The universities were now appealed to for opinions, and were all against Reuchlin. Even Paris (August 1514) condemned the *Augenspiegel*, and called on Reuchlin to recant. Meantime a formal process had begun at Mainz before the grand inquisitor. But Reuchlin managed to have the jurisdiction changed to the episcopal court of Speyer. The Reuchlin affair caused a wide rift in the church and eventually the case came before the papal court in Rome. Judgment was not finally given till July 1516; and then, though the decision was really for Reuchlin, the trial was simply quashed. The result had cost Reuchlin years of trouble and no small part of his modest fortune, but it was worth the sacrifice. For far above the direct importance of the issue was the great stirring of public opinion which had gone forward.

And while the obscurantists escaped easily at Rome, with only a half condemnation, they received a crushing blow in Germany. In Reuchlin's defense, *Virorum Epistolæ Clarorum ad Reuchlinum Phorcensem* (Letters of famous men to Reuchlin of Pforzheim),[6] had been published. It was closely followed by *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* (Letters of obscure men), a satirical collection purporting to defend his accusers, but actually directed against them. No party could survive the ridicule that was poured on Reuchlin's opponents by this document.

Ulrich von Hutten and Franz von Sickingen did all they could to force Reuchlin's enemies to a restitution of his material damages; they even threatened a feud against the Dominicans of Cologne and Spires. In 1520, a commission met in Frankfurt to investigate the case. It condemned Hoogstraaten. But the final decision of Rome did not indemnify Reuchlin. The contest ended, however; public interest had grown cold, absorbed entirely by the Lutheran question, and Reuchlin had no reason to fear new attacks. When, in 1517, he received the theses propounded by Luther, he exclaimed, “Thanks be to God, at last they have found a man who will give them so much to do that they will be compelled to let my old age end in peace.”

Heinrich Graetz and Francis Yates contended that this affair helped spark the Protestant Reformation. Although suspected of a leaning toward Protestantism, Reuchlin never left the Catholic Church. In 1518 he was appointed professor of Hebrew and Greek at Wittenberg, but instead sent his nephew Melanchthon.

Influence on Luther:

Luther's comment that justification by faith was the "true Cabala" in his *Commentary on Galatians*[10] has been explained as relating to Reuchlin's influence. While Luther had consulted Reuchlin as a Hebrew expert and used *De arte Cabalistica* as support for an argument, Luther took objection to Reuchlin's comment in *De rudimentis hebraicis* that the Hebrew letters for Jesus name meant "the hidden God," which Luther found contrary to Matthew, Chapter 1:21, which describes the meaning as being about "he would save His people from their sins."

End of Life:

Reuchlin did not long enjoy his victory over his accusers in peace. In 1519, Stuttgart was visited by famine, civil war and pestilence. From November of this year to the spring of 1521, the veteran statesman sought refuge in the University of Ingolstadt where he received an appointment as professor from William of Bavaria. He taught Greek and Hebrew there for a year. It was 41 years since at Poitiers he had last spoken from a public chair; but at 65 he retained his gift of teaching, and hundreds of

CHAPTER THREE:

Notes on Berkhof's *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*

III. History of Hermeneutical Principles in the Christian Church

To understand the theology of the Protestant Reformers and their hermeneutical methods, it is important to understand that the Protestant Reformers accepted ***only four of the first nineteen ecumenical councils***[18] which the global (i.e., holy, catholic, apostolic, and ecumenical) Christian Church had held up to through the early sixteenth-century, as follows:

1. **First Council of Nicaea in 325,**
2. **First Council of Constantinople in 381**
3. **Council of Ephesus in 431**
4. **Council of Chalcedon in 451**[19]
5. Second Council of Constantinople in 553
6. Third Council of Constantinople from 680–681
7. Second Council of Nicaea in 787.
8. Fourth Council of Constantinople, 869
9. First Lateran Council, 1123
10. Second Lateran Council, 1139
11. Third Lateran Council, 1179
12. Fourth Lateran Council, 1215
13. First Council of Lyons, 1245
14. Second Council of Lyons, 1274
15. Council of Vienne, 1311-1313
16. Council of Constance, 1414-1418
17. Council of Basle/ Ferrara/ Florence, 1431 -1439
18. Fifth Lateran Council,1512-1517

---

scholars crowded round him. This gleam of autumn sunshine was again broken by the plague; but now he was called to Tübingen and again spent the winter of 1521–22 teaching in his own systematic way. But in the spring he found it necessary to visit the baths of Liebenzell, and there contracted jaundice, of which he died, leaving in the history of the new learning a name only second to that of his younger contemporary Erasmus.

Reuchlin died in Stuttgart, and is buried at St. Leonhard church.

[18] The last ecumenical council which the Protestants accepted was the ***Council of Chalcedon*, 451 A.D.**: "Many **Anglicans and most Protestants consider it to be the last authoritative ecumenical council**. These churches, along with Martin Luther, hold that both conscience and scripture **preempt doctrinal councils** and generally agree that **the conclusions of later councils were unsupported by or contradictory to scripture**." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Chalcedon#cite_note-24

[19] Ibid.

19. Council of Trent, 1545-1563

The Protestant Reformers also adopted the first three major creeds (i.e., the "Ecumenical Creeds")[20] of the Christian Church—the ***Nicene Creed of 325 A.D***.; the ***Apostle's Creed of 341 AD***.; and the ***Athanasian Creed of 4th Century, B.C***. — which were promulgated during the period of the first four ecumenical councils, up through the beginning of the fifth century, A.D. The sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers thus rejected the other remaining fifteen ecumenical councils—from the Second Council of Constantinople up through the Council of Trent.

For this reason, the **Council of Trent (1545-1563)**, which had been held in response to the work and doctrines held by Martin Luther and other Reformers, was designed to formulate a response to the Protestant Reformation, which the Roman Catholics called the "Counter-Reformation." It thus should here be noted that the Protestant Reformers largely embraced only the imminent Western and Eastern Catholic divines who lived before the year 500 A.D.—men such as Jerome, Augustine, Theodore of Mopsuesitia and John Chrysostom— after which period (i.e., the fifth century, A.D.), according to the Protestant Reformers, the Western and Eastern Churches had spiraled out of control, and fallen into a downward spiritual decline of doctrinal heresy and internal corruption. The Protestant Reformers thus sought to extract the historical ancient church of the first five centuries A.D., from the grip of teachings of the Medieval papists. The last ecumenical council which the Protestant churches embraced was the Council of Chalcedon, 451 A.D. (Although Henry VIII's Church of England did not make so clean a break from Roman Catholic rituals and practices as did the Lutherans and the Calvinists.)

A. **The Patristic Period.**

The Patristic Period covers the period from about 200 A.D. to about 500 A.D. During this period, there were two major theological or catechistic schools within the Roman Catholic Church: the School of Alexandria and the School of Antioch. Next came the

[20] **Wikipedia On-Line Encyclopedia**: "**Ecumenical creeds** is an umbrella term used in Lutheran tradition to refer to three creeds: the Nicene Creed, the Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed. These creeds are also known as the catholic or universal creeds. These creeds are accepted by almost all mainstream Christian denominations in the West, including Lutheran, Reformed, Catholic, and Anglican. Many Methodist churches accept the Nicene Creed and Apostles' Creed." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenical_creeds

catechistic schools of Rome and Constantinople (i.e., the "Western Type of Exegesis" which characterized the Medieval Church of the West.)

B. The School of Alexandria

Some scholars have said that Christianity became the religion of the world through the continent of Africa. If this statement is true, then the Christianity religion owes much is content and character to the School of Alexandria. This catechistic school was known for advancing the allegorical method of interpretation. "This city [of Alexandria] was an important seat of learning, where Jewish religion and Greek philosophy met and influenced each other."[21]

Pagan philosophers (Stoics) had great influence in Alexandria. In Alexandria, Clement of Alexandria[22] and Origen[23] conducted their theological experiments and research,

---

[21] Ibid., p. 19.

[22] **Wikipedia On-Line Encyclopedia**: **Titus Flavius Clemens**, also known as **Clement of Alexandria** (Greek: Κλήμης ὁ Ἀλεξανδρεύς; c. 150 – c. 215), was a Christian theologian and philosopher who taught at the Catechetical School of Alexandria. A convert to Christianity, he was an educated man who was familiar with classical Greek philosophy and literature. As his three major works demonstrate, Clement was influenced by Hellenistic philosophy to a greater extent than any other Christian thinker of his time, and in particular by Plato and the Stoics.[5] His secret works, which exist only in fragments, suggest that he was also familiar with pre-Christian Jewish esotericism and Gnosticism. In one of his works he argued that Greek philosophy had its origin among non-Greeks, claiming that both Plato and Pythagoras were taught by Egyptian scholars.[6] Among his pupils were Origen and Alexander of Jerusalem. Clement is usually regarded as a Church Father. He is venerated as a saint in Coptic Christianity, Eastern Catholicism, Ethiopian Christianity and Anglicanism. He was previously revered in Western Catholicism, but his name was removed from the Roman Martyrology in 1586 by Pope Sixtus V on the advice of Baronius. Neither Clement's birthdate or birthplace is known with any degree of certainty. It is conjectured that he was born sometime around 150. According to Epiphanius Scholasticus, he was born in Athens, but there is also a tradition of an Alexandrian birth.[7][8] His parents were pagans, and Clement was a convert to Christianity. In the *Protrepticus* he displays an extensive knowledge of Greek mythology and mystery religions, which could only have arisen from the practice of his family's religion.[7] Having rejected paganism as a young man due to its perceived moral corruption, he travelled in Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine and Egypt. Clement's journeys were primarily a religious undertaking. In Greece, he encountered an Ionian theologian, who has been identified as Athenagoras of Athens; while in the east, he was taught by an Assyrian, sometimes identified with Tatian, and a Jew, who was possibly Theophilus of Caesarea.[9] In arund 180, Clement reached Alexandria,[10] where he met Pantaenus, who taught at the Catechetical School of Alexandria.[11] Eusebius suggests that Pantaenus was the head of the school, but it is controversial whether the institutions of the school were formalized in this way before the time of Origen.[12][13][note 1][15] Clement studied under Pantaenus, and was ordained to the priesthood by Pope Julian before 189. Otherwise, virtually nothing is known of Clement's life in Alexandria. He may have been married, a conjecture supported by his writings.[16] During the Severian persecutions of 202–203, Clement left Alexandria. In 211, Alexander of Jerusalem wrote a letter commending him to the Church of Antioch,[17] which may imply that Clement was living in Cappadocia or Jerusalem at that time. The date and location of his death are unknown. **Writings:** Three of Clement's major works have survived in full, and they are collectively referred to as the trilogy:[18]the ***Protrepticus*** (*Exhortation*) – written c. 195.[19]; the ***Paedagogus*** (*Tutor*) – written c. 198.[19]; and the ***Stromata*** (*Miscellanies*) – written c. 198 – c. 203.[19]

[23] **Wikipedia On-Line**: **Origen of Alexandria**[a] (c. 184 – c. 253), also known as **Origen Adamantius**, was an early Christian scholar, ascetic, and theologian who was born and spent the first half of his career in Alexandria. He was a prolific writer who wrote roughly 2,000 treatises in multiple branches of theology, including textual criticism, biblical exegesis and biblical hermeneutics, homiletics, and spirituality. He was one of the most influential figures in early Christian theology, apologetics, and asceticism. He has been described as "the greatest genius the early church ever produced". Origen sought martyrdom with his father at a young age, but was prevented from turning himself in to the authorities by his mother. When he was eighteen years old, Origen became a catechist at the Catechetical School of Alexandria. He devoted himself to his studies and adopted an ascetic lifestyle as both a vegetarian and teetotaler. He came into conflict with Demetrius, the bishop of Alexandria, in 231 after he was ordained as a presbyter by his friend, the bishop of Caesarea, while on a journey to Athens through Palestine. Demetrius condemned Origen for insubordination and accused him of having castrated himself and of having taught that even Satan would eventually attain salvation, an accusation which Origen himself vehemently denied.[11][12] Origen founded the Christian School of Caesarea, where he aught logic, cosmology, natural history, and theology, and became regarded by the churches of Palestine and Arabia as the ultimate authority on all matters of theology. He was tortured for his faith during the Decian persecution in 250 and died three to four years later from his injuries.

Origen was able to produce a massive quantity of writings due to the patronage of his close friend Ambrose, who provided him with a team of secretaries to copy his works, making him one of the most prolific writers in all of antiquity. His treatise *On the First Principles* systematically laid out the principles of Christian theology and became the foundation for later theological writings. He also authored *Contra Celsum*, the most influential work of early Christian apologetics,[14] in which he defended Christianity against the pagan philosopher Celsus, one of its foremost early critics. Origen produced the *Hexapla*, the first critical edition of the Hebrew Bible, which contained the original Hebrew text as well as five different Greek translations of it, all written in columns, side-by-side. He wrote hundreds of homilies covering almost the entire Bible, interpreting many passages as allegorical. Origen taught that, before the creation of the material universe, God had created the souls of all the intelligent beings. These souls, at first fully devoted to God, fell away from him and were given physical bodies. Origen was the first to propose the ransom theory of atonement in its fully developed form and, though he was probably a Subordinationist, he also significantly contributed to the development of the concept of the Trinity. Origen hoped that all people might eventually attain salvation, but was always careful to maintain that this was only speculation. He defended free will and advocated Christian pacifism. Origen is a Church Father and is widely regarded as one of the most important Christian theologians of all time. His teachings were especially influential in the east, with Athanasius of Alexandria and the three Cappadocian Fathers being among his most devoted followers.[20] Argument over the orthodoxy of Origen's teachings spawned the First Origenist Crisis in the late fourth century AD, in which he was attacked by Epiphanius of Salamis and Jerome, but defended by Tyrannius Rufinus and John of Jerusalem. In 543, the emperor Justinian I condemned him as a heretic and ordered all his writings to be burned. The Second Council of Constantinople in 553 may have anathemized Origen, or it may have only condemned certain heretical teachings which claimed to be derived from Origen. His teachings on the pre-existence of souls were rejected by the Church.

Almost all information about Origen's life comes from a lengthy biography of him in Book VI of the *Ecclesiastical History* written by the later Christian historian Eusebius (c. 260 – c. 340). Eusebius portrays Origen as the perfect Christian scholar and as a literal saint. Eusebius, however, wrote this account almost fifty years after Origen's death and had access to few reliable sources on Origen's life, especially his early years. Anxious for more material about his hero, Eusebius recorded events based on only unreliable hearsay evidence and frequently made speculative inferences about Origen based on the sources he had available. Nonetheless, scholars can reconstruct a general impression of Origen's historical life by sorting out the parts of Eusebius's account that are accurate from those that are inaccurate.

Origen was born in either 185 or 186 AD in Alexandria. According to Eusebius, Origen's father was Leonides of Alexandria, a respected professor of literature and also a devout Christian who practiced his religion openly. Joseph Wilson Trigg deems the details of this report unreliable, but states that Origen's father was certainly "a prosperous and thoroughly Hellenized bourgeois". According to John Anthony McGuckin, Origen's mother, whose name is unknown, may have been a member of the lower class who did not have the right of citizenship. It is likely that, on account of his mother's status, Origen himself was not a Roman citizen. Origen's father taught him about literature and philosophy, and also about the Bible and Christian doctrine. Eusebius states that Origen's father made him memorize passages of scripture daily.[31] Trigg accepts this tradition as possibly genuine, given Origen's ability as an adult to recite extended passages of scripture at will. Eusebius also reports that Origen became so learned about the holy scriptures at an early age that his father was unable to answer his questions.

In 202, when Origen was "not yet seventeen", the Roman emperor Septimius Severus ordered Roman citizens who openly practiced Christianity to be executed. Origen's father Leonides was arrested and thrown in prison. Eusebius reports that

and they developed allegorical theological interpretation of the Bible. This school was represented in the Jewish philosopher Philo[24], who lived about the time of Christ. "And while they recognized the literal sense of the Bible, they wer of the opinion that only the allegorical interpretation contributed to real knowledge."[25] "Clement of Alexandria was the first one to apply the allegorical method to the interpretation of the New Testament as well as to that of the Old. He propounded the principle that all Scriptures must be understood

---

Origen wanted to turn himself in to the authorities so they would execute him as well, but his mother hid all his clothes and he was unable to go to the authorities since he refused to leave the house naked. According to McGuckin, even if Origen had turned himself in, it is unlikely that he would have been punished, since the emperor was only intent on executing Roman citizens. Origen's father was beheaded and the state confiscated the family's entire property, leaving them broken and impoverished. Origen was the eldest of nine children and, as his father's heir, it became his responsibility to provide for the whole family. When he was eighteen years old, Origen was appointed as a catechist at the Catechetical School of Alexandria. Many scholars have assumed that Origen became the head of the school,[32] but, according to McGuckin, this is highly improbable and it is more likely that he was simply given a paid teaching position, perhaps as a "relief effort" for his destitute family. While employed at the school, he adopted the ascetic lifestyle of the Greek Sophists. He spent the whole day teaching and would stay up late at night writing treatises and commentaries. He went barefoot and only owned one cloak. He was a teetotaler and a vegetarian and he often fasted for long periods of time. Although Eusebius goes to great lengths to portray Origen as one of the Christian monastics of his own era, this portrayal is now generally recognized as anachronistic. According to Eusebius, as a young man, Origen was taken in by a wealthy Gnostic woman, who was also the patron of a very influential Gnostic theologian from Antioch, who frequently lectured in her home. Eusebius goes to great lengths to insist that, although Origen studied while in her home, he never once "prayed in common" with her or the Gnostic theologian. Later, Origen succeeded in converting a wealthy man named Ambrose from Valentinian Gnosticism to orthodox Christianity. Ambrose was so impressed by the young scholar that he gave Origen a house, a secretary, seven stenographers, a crew of copyists and calligraphers, and paid for all of his writings to be published.

Sometime when he was in his early twenties, Origen sold the small library of Greek literary works which he had inherited from his father for a sum which netted him a daily income of four obols. He used this money to continue his study of the Bible and philosophy. **Origen studied at numerous schools throughout Alexandria, including the Platonic Academy of Alexandria**, where he was a student of Ammonius Saccas. **Eusebius claims that Origen studied under Clement of Alexandria** (c. 150 – c. 215, but, according to McGuckin, this is almost certainly a retrospective assumption based on the similarity of their teachings. Origen himself rarely mentions Clement in his own writings and, when he does, it is usually to correct him.

[24] **Wikipedia On-Line**: **Philo of Alexandria** (/ˈfaɪloʊ/; Ancient Greek: Φίλων, romanized: *Philōn*; Hebrew: יְדִידְיָה הַכֹּהֵן, romanized: *Yedidia (Jedediah) HaCohen*; c. 20 BCE – c. 50 CE), also called **Philo Judaeus**, was a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher who lived in Alexandria, in the Roman province of Egypt. Philo used philosophical allegory to harmonize Jewish scripture, mainly the Torah, with Greek philosophy. His method followed the practices of both Jewish exegesis and Stoic philosophy. **His allegorical exegesis was important for some Christian Church Fathers, but he had very little reception history within the Rabbinic Judaism. He adopted allegorical instead of literal interpretations of the Hebrew Bible**. Some scholars hold that **his concept of the Logos as God's creative principle influenced early Christology. Other scholars deny direct influence but say that Philo and Early Christianity borrow from a common source**. The only event in Philo's life that can be decisively dated is his participation in the embassy to Rome in 40 CE. He represented the Alexandrian Jews in a delegation to the Roman Emperor Gaius (Caligula) following civil strife between the Alexandrian Jewish and Greek communities. The story of this event, and a few other biographical details, are found in Josephus and in Philo's own works, especially in *Legatio ad Gaium* (*Embassy to Gaius*) of which only two of the original five volumes survive. The thought of Philo was largely inspired by Aristobulus of Paneas and the Alexandrian School, concerning his work "Wisdom of Solomon" and the occupations of the Therapeutæ and the Essenes. Philo has never been claimed as a saint nor Doctor of the Church.

[25] Ibid, p. 20.

allegorically."[26] "Origen… was, no doubt, the greatest theologian of his age… In his exegetical praxis, he rather disparaged the literal sense of Scripture, referred but seldom to the moral sense, and constantly employed allegory—since only it yielded true knowledge."[27]

C. The School of Antioch

The catechistic School of Antioch has a very rich tradition, but it is often overshadowed by the School of Alexandria. Founded towards the end of the 3rd century, A.D. "Farrar regards Diodorus, first presbyter of Antioch, and after 378 A.D. bishop of Tarsus, as the real founder of the school."[28]

> The School of Antioch was one of the two major centers of the study of biblical exegesis and theology during Late Antiquity; the other was the Catechetical School of Alexandria. This group was known by this name because the advocates of this tradition were based in the city of Antioch, one of the major cities of the ancient Roman Empire.
>
> While the Christian intellectuals of Alexandria emphasized the allegorical interpretation of Scriptures and tended toward a Christology that emphasized the union of the human and the divine, those in Antioch held to a more literal and occasionally typological exegesis and a Christology that emphasized the distinction between the human and the divine in the person of Jesus Christ. The school in general tended to what might be called, in a rather loose sense, an Adoptionist Christology.[1] Nestorius, before becoming Patriarch of Constantinople, had been a monk at Antioch and had there become imbued with the principles of the Antiochene theological school.
>
> **The early school (170-early fourth century)**
>
> The earliest author known of this period is Theophilus of Antioch. Then there is a gap of a century and in the first half of the fifth century there are three known antiochene authors: the best known is Eusebius of Emesa; other representatives are Acacius of Caesarea and Theodore bishop of Heraklea.
>
> **The middle school (350-433)**
>
> This period includes at least three different generations: Diodorus of Tarsus, who directed an ἀσκητήριον (school) he may have founded. Among his disciples, the best known are John Chrysostom and Theodorus of Mopsuestia. The main figure of the third generation was Nestorius.

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., p. 21.

The late school (after 433)

After the Council of Ephesus (431), the School of Antioch lost some of its prestige. However, after the Council of Chalcedon (451), the Antiochian school became the sole theological school within Eastern and Western Christianity, where the Far-Eastern Churches adopted the Alexandrian School of Theology. Apparently only two later authors are known: Basil of Seleucia and Gennadius of Constantinople.[29]

In addition to Diodrus, this school also produced Theodore of Mopsuesitia[30] and John Chrysostom.[31] "**Theodore of Mopsuesitia** and **John Chrysostom**… went far towards the

[29] Wikipedia On-Line, "School of Antioch," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_of_Antioch
[30] Wikipedia On-Line: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_of_Mopsuestia

Theodore the Interpreter (c. 350 – 428) was bishop of Mopsuestia (as Theodore II) from 392 to 428 AD.

He is also known as **Theodore of Antioch**, from the place of his birth and presbyterate. He is the best known representative of the middle School of Antioch of hermeneutics. Theodore was born at Antioch, where his father held an official position and the family was wealthy (Chrysostom, *ad Th. Laps.* ii).

Theodore's cousin, Paeanius, to whom several of John Chrysostom's letters are addressed, held an important post of civil government; his brother Polychronius became bishop of the metropolitan see of Apamea. Theodore first appears as the early companion and friend of Chrysostom, his fellow-townsman, his equal in rank, and but two or three years his senior in age. Together with their common friend Maximus,who was later bishop of Isaurian Seleucia, Chrysostom and Theodore attended the lectures of the Greek-speaking teacher of rhetoric Libanius (Socr. vi.3; Soz. viii.1), then at Antioch in the zenith of his fame.

We have the assurance of Sozomen that **he enjoyed a philosophical education**. Chrysostom credits his friend with diligent study, but the luxurious life of polite Antioch seems to have received an equal share of his thoughts. When Chrysostom himself had been converted to the monastic life of Basil of Caesarea, he likewise converted Maximus and Theodore. The three friends left Libanius and sought a retreat in the monastic school of Carterius and Diodorus, to which Basil was already attached. It is unclear whether Theodore had been previously baptized before taking up monastic vows. Yet from the writings of Chrysostom it is clear he found joy in ascetic self-discipline, and he had just assumed a celibate life when he was fascinated by a girl named Hermione (Chrysostom ibid. i.), and contemplated marriage, at the same time returning to his former manner of life (Soz. viii.2). His "fall" spread consternation through the little society, and the anxiety drew forth from Chrysostom the earliest of his literary compositions—two letters "to Theodore upon his fall." These compositions kept Theodore fast to his vows, although the disappointment left traces in his later life.

Chrysostom's connection with Diodore was probably broken off in 374, when he plunged into a more complete monastic seclusion; Theodore's seems to have continued until the elevation of Diodore to the see of Tarsus in 378. During this period doubtless the foundations were laid of Theodore's understanding of the Bible and ecclesiastical doctrine, and he was imbued for life with the principles of scriptural interpretation which Diodore had inherited from an earlier generation of Antiochenes, and with the peculiar views of the Person of Christ into which the master had been led by his antagonism to Apollinaris of Laodicea. The latter years of this decade witnessed Theodore's first appearance as a writer. He began with a commentary on the Psalms, in which the method of Diodore was exaggerated, and which he lived to repent of (Facund. iii.6, x.1; v. infra, §III). The orthodox at Antioch, it seems, resented the loss of the traditional Messianic interpretation, and, according to Hesychius of Jerusalem, Theodore was compelled to promise that he would commit his maiden work to the flames—a promise he contrived to evade (Mansi, ix.284).

Gennadius of Marseilles (*de Vir. Ill.* 12) represents Theodore as a presbyter of the church of Antioch; and from a letter of John of Antioch (Facund. ii.2) we gather that forty-five years elapsed between his ordination and his death. That would mean he was ordained priest at Antioch in 383, in his thirty-third year, the ordaining bishop being doubtless Flavian, Diodore's old friend and fellow-laborer, whose "loving disciple" Theodore now became (John of Antioch, ap. Facund. l.c.). The epithet seems to imply that Theodore was an adherent of the Meletian party, but there is no evidence that he was involved in the feuds which preoccupied the Catholics of Antioch during Flavian's office. Theodore's great treatise on the Incarnation belongs to this period according to Gennadius, and possibly also more than one of his commentaries on the Old Testament. As a preacher he seems to have now

attained some eminence in the field of polemics (Facund. viii.4). Theodore is said by Hesychius to have left Antioch while yet a priest and remained in Tarsus until 392, when he was consecrated to the see of Mopsuestia on the death of Olympius, probably through the influence of Diodore. Theodoret states he spent his remaining thirty-six years of life in this town.

Mopsuestia was a free town (Pliny) upon the Pyramus (Ceyhan) river, between Tarsus and Issus, some forty miles from either, and twelve from the sea. It belonged to Cilicia Secunda, of which the metropolitan see was Anazarbus. In the 4th century it was of some importance, famous for its bridge, thrown over the Pyramus by Constantine I.

Theodore's long episcopate was marked by no striking incidents. His letters, long known to the Assyrians as the *Book of Pearls*, are lost; his followers have left us few personal recollections. In 394 he attended a synod at Constantinople on a question which concerned the see of Bostra in the patriarchate of Antioch. While there, Theodore had the opportunity to preach before the emperor Theodosius I, who was then starting for his last journey to the West. The sermon made a deep impression, and Theodosius, who had sat at the feet of Ambrose and Gregory Nazianzus, declared that he had never met with such a teacher (John of Antioch, ap. Facund. ii.2). Theodosius II inherited his grandfather's respect for Theodore, and often wrote to him. Another glimpse of Theodore's episcopal life is supplied by a letter of Chrysostom to him from Cucusus (AD 404–407) (Chrys. Ep. 212). The exiled patriarch "can never forget the love of Theodore, so genuine and warm, so sincere and guileless, a love maintained from early years, and manifested but now." Chrysostom (Ep. 204) thanks him profoundly for frequent though ineffectual efforts to obtain his release, and praises their friendship in such glowing terms that Theodore's enemies at the fifth Ecumenical Council made unsuccessful efforts to deny the identity of Chrysostom's correspondent with the bishop of Mopsuestia.

Notwithstanding his literary activity, Theodore worked zealously for the good of his diocese. The famous letter of Ibas to Maris testifies that he struggled against extinguished Arianism and other heresies in Mopsuestia. Several of his works are doubtless monuments of these pastoral labors, e.g. the catechetical lectures, the *ecthesis*, and possibly the treatise on "Persian Magic." Yet his episcopal work was by no means simply that of a diocesan bishop. Everywhere he was regarded as "the herald of the truth and the doctor of the church"; "even distant churches received instruction from him." So Ibas explained to Maris, and his letter was read without a dissentient voice at the Council of Chalcedon (Facund. ii.i seq.). Theodore "expounded Scripture in all the churches of the East," says John of Antioch (ibid. ii.2), with some literary license, and adds that in his lifetime Theodore was never arraigned by any of the orthodox. But in a letter to Nestorius (ibid. x.2) John begs him to retract, urging the example of Theodore, who, when in a sermon at Antioch he had said something which gave great and manifest offence, for the sake of peace and to avoid scandal, after a few days publicly corrected himself. Leontius tells us that the cause of offence was a denial to the Virgin Mary of the title Theotokos. So great was the storm that the people threatened to stone the preacher (Cyril of Alexandria Ep. 69). The heretical sects attacked by Theodore showed their resentment in a way less overt, but perhaps more formidable. They tampered with his writings, hoping thus to involve him in heterodox statements (Facund. x.1).

Theodore's last years were complicated by two controversies. When in 418 the Pelagian leaders were deposed and exiled from the West, they sought in the East the sympathy of the chief living representative of the school of Antioch. This fact is recorded by Marius Mercator, who makes the most of it (*Praef. ad Symb. Theod. Mop.* 72). They probably resided with Theodore till 422, when Julian of Eclanum returned to Italy. Julian's visit was doubtless the occasion upon which Theodore wrote his book *Against the Defenders of Original Sin*. Mercator charges Theodore with having turned against Julian as soon as the latter had left Mopsuestia, and anathematized him in a provincial synod. The synod can hardly be a fabrication, since Mercator was a contemporary writer; but it was very possibly convened, as Fritzsche suggests, without any special reference to the Pelagian question. If Theodore then read his ecthesis, the anathema with which that ends might have been represented outside the council as a synodical condemnation of the Pelagian chiefs. Mercator's words, in fact, point to this explanation.

A greater heresiarch than Julian visited Mopsuestia in the last year of his life. It is stated by Evagrius Scholasticus (*H.E.* i.2) that *Nestorius, on his way from Antioch to Constantinople (AD 428), took counsel with Theodore and received from him the seeds of heresy which he shortly afterwards scattered with such disastrous results.* Evagrius makes this statement on the authority of one Theodulus, a person otherwise unknown. We may safely reject it, so far as it derives the Christology of Nestorius from this single interview. Towards the close of 428 (Theodoret, *H.E.* v.39) Theodore died at the age of seventy-eight, having been all his life engaged in controversy, and more than once in conflict with the popular notions of orthodoxy; yet he departed, as Facundus (ii.1) triumphantly points out, in the peace of the church and at the height of a great reputation. The storm was gathering, but did not break until after his death. As the Catholic Encyclopedia points out, during his lifetime, Theodore was considered an orthodox Christian thinker.[1]

Posthumous legacy

The popularity of Theodore increased following his death. Meletius, his successor at Mopsuestia, protested that his life would have been in danger if he had uttered a word against his predecessor (Tillemont, *Mém.* xii. p. 442). "We believe as Theodore believed; long live the faith of Theodore!" was a cry often heard in the churches of the East (Cyril of Alexandria, Ep. 69). "We had rather be burnt than condemn Theodore," was the reply of the bishops of Syria to the party eager for his condemnation (Ep. 72). The flame was fed by leading men who had been disciples of the Interpreter: by Theodoret, who regarded him as a "doctor of the universal church" (H. E. v. 39); by Ibas of Edessa, who in 433 wrote his famous letter to Maris in praise of Theodore; by John I of Antioch, who in 428 succeeded to the see of Antioch.

Shortly after Theodore's death men in other quarters began to hold him up to obloquy. As early perhaps as 431 Marius Mercator denounced him as the real author of the Pelagian heresy (Lib. subnot. *in verba Juliani*, praef); and not long afterwards prefaced his translation of Theodore's ecthesis with a still more violent attack on him as the precursor of Nestorianism. The council of Ephesus, however, while it condemned Nestorius by name, did not mention Theodore. The Nestorian party consequently fell back upon the words of Theodore, and began to circulate them in several languages as affording the best available exposition of their views (*Liberat. Brev.* 10). This circumstance deepened the mistrust of the orthodox, and even in the East there were some who proceeded to condemn the teaching of Theodore. Hesychius of Jerusalem attacked him around 435 in his *Ecclesiastical History*; Rabbula, bishop of Edessa, who at Ephesus had sided with John of Antioch, now publicly anathematized Theodore (Ibas, *Ep. ad Marin.*). Patriarch Proclus of Constantinople demanded from the bishops of Syria a condemnation of certain propositions supposed to have been drawn from the writings of Theodore. Cyril, who had once spoken favourably of some of Theodore's works (Facund. viii.6), now under the influence of Rabbula took a decided attitude of opposition; he wrote to the synod of Antioch (Ep. 67) that the opinions of Diodore, Theodore, and others of the same schools had "borne down with full sail upon the glory of Christ"; to the emperor (Ep. 71), that Diodore and Theodore were the parents of the blasphemy of Nestorius; to Proclus (Ep. 72), that had Theodore been still alive and openly approved of the teaching of Nestorius, he ought undoubtedly to have been anathematized; but as he was dead, it was enough to condemn the errors of his books, having regard to the terrible disturbances more extreme measures would excite in the East. He collected and answered a series of propositions gathered from the writings of Diodore and Theodore, a work to which Theodoret replied shortly afterwards.

The ferment then subsided for a time, but the disciples of Theodore, repulsed in the West, pushed their way from Eastern Syria to Persia. Ibas, who succeeded Rabbula in 435, restored the School of Edessa, and it continued to be a nursery of Theodore's theology till suppressed by Emperor Zeno in 489 and found refuge at Nisibis. Among the Nestorians of Persia the writings of Theodore were regarded as the standard both of doctrine and of interpretation, and the Persian church returned the censures of the orthodox by pronouncing an anathema on all who opposed or rejected them (cf. Assem. iii.i.84; and for a full account of the spread of Theodore's opinions at Edessa and Nisibis see Kihn, *Theodor und Junilius*, pp. 198–209, 333–336).

The 6th century witnessed another and final outbreak of hatred against Theodore. The fifth general council (553), under the influence of the emperor Justinian I, pronounced the anathema which neither Theodosius II nor Cyril thought to issue. This condemnation of Theodore and his two supporters led to the Controversy of the Three Chapters but we may point out one result of Justinian's policy. The African delegation objected not only to a decree which seemed to negate the authority of the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, but also violated the sanctity of the dead; they had no particular interest in Theodore's doctrine or method of interpretation. Bishop Pontian plainly told the emperor that he had asked them to condemn men of whose writings they knew nothing. But the stir about Theodore led to inquiry; his works, or portions of them, were translated and circulated in the West. It is almost certainly to this cause that we owe the preservation in a Latin dress of at least one-half of Theodore's commentaries on Paul. Published under the name of Ambrose of Milan, the work of Theodore passed from Africa into the monastic libraries of the West, was copied into the compilations of Rabanus Maurus and others, and in its fuller and its abridged form supplied the Middle Ages with an accepted interpretation of an important part of the Bible. The name of Theodore, however, disappears almost entirely from Western church literature after the 6th century. It was scarcely before the 19th century that justice was done by Western writers to the importance of the great Antiochene as a theologian, an expositor and a precursor of later thought.

Solomon of Bassora, a thirteenth-century bishop of the Church of the East, quoted Theodore as well as Isaac of Nineveh and Diodorus of Tarsus as authorities to support the contention that the torment of hell will have an end and that the punished sinners will be reformed in the end.

[31] Wikipedia On-Line: "John Chrysostom"

John Chrysostom (/ˈkrɪsəstəm, krɪˈsɒstəm/; Greek: Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος; c. 347 – 14 September 407), Archbishop of Constantinople, was an important Early Church Father. He is known for his preaching and public speaking, his denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders, the *Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, and his ascetic sensibilities. The epithet Χρυσόστομος (*Chrysostomos*, anglicized as Chrysostom) means "golden-mouthed" in Greek and denotes his celebrated eloquence. Chrysostom was among the most prolific authors in the early Christian Church, exceeded only by Augustine of Hippo in the quantity of his surviving writings.

Early life and education

John was born in Antioch in 347 to Greek parents from Syria. Different scholars describe his mother Anthusa as a pagan or as a Christian, and his father was a high-ranking military officer. John's father died soon after his birth and he was raised by his mother. He was baptised in 368 or 373 and tonsured as a reader (one of the minor orders of the Church). It is sometimes said that he was bitten by a snake when he was ten years old, leading to him getting an infection from the bite.

As a result of his mother's influential connections in the city, John began his education under the pagan teacher Libanius. From Libanius, John acquired the skills for a career in rhetoric, as well as a love of the Greek language and literature.

As he grew older, however, John became more deeply committed to Christianity and went on to study theology under Diodore of Tarsus, founder of the re-constituted School of Antioch. According to the Christian historian Sozomen, Libanius was supposed to have said on his deathbed that John would have been his successor "if the Christians had not taken him from us".

John lived in extreme asceticism and became a hermit in about 375; he spent the next two years continually standing, scarcely sleeping, and committing the Bible to memory. As a consequence of these practices, his stomach and kidneys were permanently damaged and poor health forced him to return to Antioch.

Diaconate and service in Antioch

Further information: Meletian schism

John was ordained as a deacon in 381 by Saint Meletius of Antioch who was not then in communion with Alexandria and Rome. After the death of Meletius, John separated himself from the followers of Meletius, without joining Paulinus, the rival of Meletius for the bishopric of Antioch. But after the death of Paulinus he was ordained a presbyter (priest) in 386 by Flavian, the successor of Paulinus. He was destined later to bring about reconciliation between Flavian I of Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome, thus bringing those three sees into communion for the first time in nearly seventy years.

In Antioch, over the course of twelve years (386–397), John gained popularity because of the eloquence of his public speaking at the Golden Church, Antioch's cathedral, especially his insightful expositions of Bible passages and moral teaching. The most valuable of his works from this period are his *Homilies* on various books of the Bible. He emphasised charitable giving and was concerned with the spiritual and temporal needs of the poor. He spoke against abuse of wealth and personal property:

> Do you wish to honour the body of Christ? Do not ignore him when he is naked. Do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk, only then to neglect him outside where he is cold and ill-clad. He who said: "This is my body" is the same who said: "You saw me hungry and you gave me no food", and "Whatever you did to the least of my brothers you did also to me"... What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with golden chalices when your brother is dying of hunger? Start by satisfying his hunger and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well.

His straightforward understanding of the Scriptures – in contrast to the Alexandrian tendency towards allegorical interpretation – meant that the themes of his talks were practical, explaining the Bible's application to everyday life. Such **straightforward preaching helped Chrysostom to garner popular support**. He founded a series of hospitals in Constantinople to care for the poor.

One incident that happened during his service in Antioch illustrates the influence of his homilies. When Chrysostom arrived in Antioch, Flavian, the bishop of the city, had to intervene with Emperor Theodosius I on behalf of citizens who had gone on a rampage mutilating statues of the Emperor and his family. During the weeks of Lent in 387, John preached more than twenty homilies in which he entreated the people to see the error of their ways. These made a lasting impression on the general population of the city: many pagans converted to Christianity as a result of the homilies. As a result, Theodosius' vengeance was not as severe as it might have been.

Archbishop of Constantinople

In the autumn of 397, John was appointed Archbishop of Constantinople, after having been nominated without his knowledge by the eunuch Eutropius. He had to leave Antioch in secret due to fears that the departure of such a popular figure would cause civil unrest.

During his time as Archbishop he adamantly refused to host lavish social gatherings, which made him popular with the common people, but unpopular with wealthy citizens and the clergy. His reforms of the clergy were also unpopular. He told visiting regional preachers to return to the churches they were meant to be serving—without any payout.

His time in Constantinople was more tumultuous than his time in Antioch. Theophilus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, wanted to bring Constantinople under his sway and opposed John's appointment to Constantinople. Theophilus had disciplined four Egyptian monks (known as "the Tall Brothers") over their support of Origen's teachings. They fled to John and were welcomed by him. Theophilus therefore accused John of being too partial to the teaching of Origen. He made another enemy in Aelia Eudoxia, wife of Emperor Arcadius, who assumed that John's denunciations of extravagance in feminine dress were aimed at her. Eudoxia, Theophilus and other of his enemies held a synod in 403 (the Synod of the Oak) to charge John, in which his connection to Origen was used against him. It resulted in his deposition and banishment. He was called back by Arcadius almost immediately, as the people became "tumultuous" over his departure, even threatening to burn the royal palace. There was an earthquake the night of his arrest, which Eudoxia took for a sign of God's anger, prompting her to ask Arcadius for John's reinstatement.

Peace was short-lived. A silver statue of Eudoxia was erected in the Augustaion, near his cathedral. John denounced the dedication ceremonies as pagan and spoke against the Empress in harsh terms: "Again Herodias raves; again she is troubled; she dances again; and again desires to receive John's head in a charger", an allusion to the events surrounding the death of John the Baptist. Once again he was banished, this time to the Caucasus in Abkhazia.

Around 405, John began to lend moral and financial support to Christian monks who were enforcing the emperors' anti-Pagan laws, by destroying temples and shrines in Phoenicia and nearby regions.

Exile and death

The causes of John's exile are not clear, though Jennifer Barry suggests that they have to do with his connections to Arianism. Other historians, including Wendy Mayer and Geoffrey Dunn, have argued that "the surplus of evidence reveals a struggle between Johannite and anti-Johannite camps in Constantinople soon after John's departure and for a few years after his death". Faced with exile, John Chrysostom wrote an appeal for help to three churchmen: Pope Innocent I, Venerius the Bishop of Milan, and the third to Chromatius, the Bishop of Aquileia. In 1872, church historian William Stephens wrote:

The Patriarch of the Eastern Rome appeals to the great bishops of the West, as the champions of an ecclesiastical discipline which he confesses himself unable to enforce, or to see any prospect of establishing. No jealousy is entertained of the Patriarch of the Old Rome by the Patriarch of the New Rome. The interference of Innocent is courted, a certain primacy is accorded him, but at the same time he is not addressed as a supreme arbitrator; assistance and sympathy are solicited from him as from an elder brother, and two other prelates of Italy are joint recipients with him of the appeal.

Pope Innocent I protested John's banishment from Constantinople to the town of Cucusus in Cappadocia, but to no avail. Innocent sent a delegation to intercede on behalf of John in 405. It was led by Gaudentius of Brescia; Gaudentius and his companions, two bishops, encountered many difficulties and never reached their goal of entering Constantinople.

John wrote letters which still held great influence in Constantinople. As a result of this, he was further exiled from Cucusus (where he stayed from 404 to 407) to Pitiunt (Pityus) (in modern Georgia) where his tomb is a shrine for pilgrims. He never reached this destination, as he died at Comana Pontica on 14 September 407 during the journey. His last words are said to have been "δόξα τῷ θεῷ πάντων ἕνεκεν" (Glory be to God for all things).

Veneration and canonization

John came to be venerated as a saint soon after his death. Almost immediately after, an anonymous supporter of John (known as pseudo-Martyrius) wrote a funeral oration to reclaim John as a symbol of Christian orthodoxy. But three decades later, some of his adherents in Constantinople remained in schism. Saint Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople (434–446), hoping to bring about the reconciliation of the Johannites, preached a homily praising his predecessor in the Church of Hagia Sophia. He said, "O John, your life was filled with sorrow, but your death was glorious. Your grave is blessed and reward is great, by the

development of true scientific exegis, recognizing, as they did, the necessity of determining the original sense of the Bible…. They consciously rejected the allegorical method of interpretation."[32]

The Western Type of Exegesis. A contemporary of Theodore of Mopsuesitia (350-428 A.D.) and John Chrysostom (349- 407) was St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.). St. Augustine's theology would represent the "mediating type" between the schools at Alexandria and Antioch. And it was St. Augustine's theology that had the potent influence upon the Western Church, including the Protestant Reformers. Augustine's brand of theology (i.e., the "mediating type" of hermeneutics, which utilized the "allegorical" in tandem with the grammatico-historical methods) also influenced both Luther and Calvin, and through them the Protestant Reformation. With respect to the western type of exegesis, Prof. Berkhof writes:

> This type of exegesis was represented by Hilary and Ambrose; but especially by Jerome and Augustine.[33] Augustine of Hippo stood

---

grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ O graced one, having conquered the bounds of time and place! Love has conquered space, unforgetting memory has annihilated the limits, and place does not hinder the miracles of the saint."

These homilies helped to mobilize public opinion, and the patriarch received permission from the emperor to return Chrysostom's relics to Constantinople, where they were enshrined in the Church of the Holy Apostles on 28 January 438. The Eastern Orthodox Church commemorates him as a "Great Ecumenical Teacher", with Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian. These three saints, in addition to having their own individual commemorations throughout the year, are commemorated together on 30 January, a feast known as the Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs.

There are several feast days dedicated to him:

- 27 January, Translation of the relics of Saint John Chrysostom from Comana to Constantinople
- 30 January, Synaxis of the Three Great Hierarchs
- 14 September, Repose of Saint John Chrysostom
- 13 November, Saint John Chrysostom the Archbishop of Constantinople

He is honoured as a saint in the Oriental Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran churches, as well as in some others. The Eastern Orthodox, together with the Byzantine Catholics, hold him in special regard as one of the Three Holy Hierarchs (alongside Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus). The feast days of John Chrysostom in the Eastern Orthodox Church are 13 November and 27 January. In the Roman Catholic Church he is recognized as a Doctor of the Church. Because the date of his death is occupied by the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (14 September), the General Roman Calendar celebrates him since 1970 on the previous day, 13 September; from the 13th century to 1969 it did so on 27 January, the anniversary of the translation of his body to Constantinople.[10] Of other Western churches, including Anglican provinces and Lutheran churches, some commemorate him on 13 September, others on 27 January. The Coptic Church also recognizes him as a saint (with feast days on 16 Thout and 17 Hathor).

[32] Ibid.

> supreme: 'Augustine also adopted a fourfold sense of Scripture: a historical, an aethiological, an analogical, and an allegorical sense. And it is particularly in this respect that he influenced the interpretation of the Middle Ages.'[34]

St. Augustine of Hippo's influence upon the Western Church cannot here be overstated.

D. The Period of the Middle Ages

From the viewpoint of the Reformed Churches of northern and western Europe and England, the integrity of Bible scholarship significantly deteriorated within the Roman Catholic Church after about 500 A.D. It must be remembered that the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Eastern Orthodox Churches had already split from Rome, in about 451 A.D. and 1054 A.D, respectively. The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestant Reformers expressed no serious criticism of the other major branches of Christianity that had already broken away from Rome. Instead, the Protestant Reformers had zeroed in on Church of Rome itself. Their major concern was that the Roman Catholic Church had since about 500 A.D. drifted afar of correct, sound Biblical doctrine and principles. The seeds of reformation, as previously mentioned, were laid during the thirteenth century, when several Roman Catholic priests, such as Nicholas Lyra, were introduced to Spanish Jews, who taught them the Hebrew language and how to interpret the Hebrew Bible. Hence, the idea of "solo scriptura" had its way slowly from Spain to other parts of Europe, finally culminating in the writings of Protestant Reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546 A.D.). But between St. Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther was St. Thomas Aquinas (1225- 1274), who helped to lay the foundations for the 16th-century cultural Renaissance. The Protestant Reformers generally did not accept St. Thomas Aquinas, but Aquinas' writings were potent and left an idellible mark upon the Western Church that not even Luther or Calvin could completely erase Aquinas' influence. Writing about this period, Professor Berkhof writes:

> [Bible scholarship fell below ancient standards…] 'many, even of the clergy, lived in profound ignorance of the Bible… In this period, the fourfold sense of Scripture (literal, typological, allegorical, and analogical) was generally accepted, and it became an establish principle that the interpretation of the

[33] Ibid., p. 22.
[34] Ibid. p. 22.

> Bible had to adapt itself to tradition and to the doctrine of the Church."[35] "**Thomas Aquinas** seems to have felt it vaguely. It is true, he allegorizes constantly, but he also, at least in theory, regarded the literal sense as the necessary foundation for all exposition of Scripture."[36] "**Nicolas of Lyra** … broke the fetters of his age. Ostensibly he did not abandon current opinion, even in its acceptance of the fourfold sense, but in reality he admitted only two senses, the literal and the mystic, and even so founded the latter exclusively on the former. He urged the necessity of referring to the original, complained about the mystic sense being 'allowed to choke the literal,' and demanded that the latter only should be used in proving doctrine. His work influenced Luther profoundly, and insofar also affected the Reformation."[37]

E. **The Period of Reformation (1520-1650, A.D.)**.

The Reformed churches of Europe and England were born during the Renaissance period. This was the period of the rediscovery of the Greco-Roman classics, Aristotle and Islamic advances in science and mathematics, among other influences. The Renaissance influences encouraged dozens of Catholic theologians to develop more advanced hermeneutical principles. "Reuchlin and Erasmus—called the two eyes of Europe—came under its spell, and urged upon the interpreters of the Bible the duty of studying Scriptures in the languages in which they were written [Hebrew and Greek].[38] The Reformers were originally inside of the Roman Catholic Church, but many of them, like Martin Luther and John Calvin, left the Roman Catholic Church. During this period, the Protestant Reformers revolted against Roman and began to conceive of the Bible as an "organic" whole and as the "inspired word of God," thus leading them to the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*. "At the same time, [The Protestant Reformers] regarded the Bible as the highest authority, and as the final court of appeal in all theological disputes… the Church does not determine what the Scriptures teach, but the Scriptures determine what the Church ought to teach."

Reformed Church Theology began to take shape in the seventeenth-century. The develop certain distinct principles:

First: Let Scripture interpret Scripture;

[35] Ibid., p. 23.
[36] Ibid., p. 25.
[37] Ibid., p. 25.
[38] Ibid., pp. 25-26.

Second: Let all understanding and exposition of Scripture be in conformity with the *analogy of faith*.

Third: Let every Christian read the Bible for his or herself, and the let the Church respect private judgment.[39] Martin Luther, perhaps more than any other, made this a lasting legacy of the Reformation.

Fourth: Let the Scriptures be understood grammatically (i.e., literally) before any other form of interpretation be applied, such as the "allegorical."

Fifth: That the historical sense of the biblical writers (i.e., history) should be applied to hermeneutics.

Sixth: That the Scriptures have only "one sense and meaning." [40]

Seventh: The Bible must be given a rational interpretation and subjected to a law of reason.[41]

Eighth: The Bible is an organism and must be given an organic interpretation.[42]

F. The Period of Confessionalism

The period of Reformation ushered in the "Confession of Faith"[43] movement. This movement was a product of Reformed hermeneutics and the theological conflict between Protestants and Catholics and between Protestants and other Protestants. There was, for example, the Baptist Confessions of Faith of 1611, 1644 and 1689; and the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1648. In other words, Protestants were creating their own identity by

[39] Ibid., pp. 30-31 (**The Pietists.** Relied on practical meditation and praying as a tool for inspired interpretation of the Bible—to be of the same Holy Spirit as the Bible's various authors. They emphasized "promoting true piety of life.").
[40] Ibid., p. 27 (John Calvin: "… the greatest exeget of the Reformation… he reduced the number of Psalms that could be recognized as Messianic. He insisted on it that the prophets should be interpreted in the light of historical circumstances. As he saw it, the chief excellency of an expositor consisted in lucid brevity. Moreover, he regarded it as "the first business of an interpreter to let his author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say.")
[41] For example, the Socinians argued that the Bible must be interpreted in a rational way.

[42] Louis Berkhof, Principles of Biblical Interpretation, p. 27 ("Coccejus: A theologian from Holland. He supported "Scripture as an organism, of which the different parts were typically related to one another." "[H]e rendered good service by calling attention to the organic character of God's revelation.")
[43] Confession of faith, formal statement of doctrinal belief ordinarily intended for public avowal by an individual, a group, a congregation, a synod, or a church; confessions are similar to creeds, although usually more extensive. They are especially associated with the churches of the Protestant Reformation. A brief treatment of confessions of faith follows.

setting forth "Confessions of Faith" which helped to define their own identities as well as their distinctiveness from the Roman Catholic Church. But, as Professor Berkhof points out, these confessions often became rigid and dogmatic. "[T]hey were in danger of leading it into bondage of the Confessional Standards of the Church."[44] Protestantism became divided into several factions. Defense of theological views and opinions "with an appeal to Scripture" became the order of the day.[45]

G. The Historico-Critical Period.

It should be mentioned that a "purely secular view" of the Bible was also promoted during the period of the Protestant Reformation, and this would have been deemed heresy by both the Protestants and the Roman Catholics. But this movement has had an indirect influence upon Biblical hermeneutics, because it forced Christian theologians to carefully consider scientific evidence, archeology, and the facts of secular history when interpreting the Bible. "It was represented as a condition *sine qua non*, that the exegete should be voraussetzungslos, i.e., without prepossessions, and therefore entirely free from the domination of dogmatics and of the Confessional standards of the Church. Moreover, it became an established principle that the Bible must be interpreted like every other book. The special divine element of the Bible was generally disparaged, and the interpreter usually limited himself to the discussion of historical and critical questions."[46]

H. The Grammatical School.

"[The Grammatical] school was founded by Ernesti[47] who wrote an important work on the interpretation of the New Testament, in which he laid down four principles. (a) … only the literal sense retained. (b) Allegorical and typological interpretations must be disapproved… (c) the grammatical sense must be retained…(d) the literal sense may not be determined by a supposed dogmatical sense."[48]

---

[44] Ibid., p. 28.
[45] Ibid., p. 29.
[46] Ibid., p. 32.
[47] **Wikipedia On-Line: Johann August Ernesti** (4 August 1707 – 11 September 1781) was a German Rationalist theologian and philologist. Ernesti was the first who formally separated the hermeneutics of the Old Testament from those of the New.
[48] Ibid., p. 33.

This school promoted establishing the "literal" and "grammatical" sense of the Bible as the sole method of Biblical hermeneutics. The grammatical method treats the Bible as a statute or as a legal document. Within the world of secular jurisprudence, there is no room whatsoever for an "allegorical" or "symbolic" interpretation, but instead words within statutes must be given their "plain meaning." Similarly, the "grammatical" school restricts biblical hermeneutics to providing simply a "literal" or "grammatical" interpretation of the Scriptures, with no reference to history or the "theological" method of interpretation.

I. The Historical School.

Within the Reformed tradition, there is the "historical school." "The historical school originated with Semler[49]…. Semler stressed the fact that the various books of the Bible and the Canon as a whole originated in a historical way, and were therefore historically conditioned."[50] Within this school developed various theories such as "resultant tendencies," including "rank rationalism." **Paulus of Heidleberg**,[51] who was a rank rationalist, "regarded 'practical fidelity to reason' as the source of the Christian religion."[52] There were elements of Catholicism and Anglicanism within the viewpoint, but Calvin may be said to have adhered to this view as well. **David Strauss,**[53] on the other hand, rejected Heidleberg because he could not equate the Christian faith to reason. Instead, Strauss proposed a "mythical" interpretation of the New Testament. "Under the influence of Hegel, he taught that the Messianic idea, with all its accretions of the miraculous, gradually developed in the history of humanity. In the time of Jesus, Messianic expectations were in the air. And his work and teaching left such a deep impression on his disciples, that, after his demise, they ascribed to him all the wonderful words and works, including the resurrection, that were expected of the Messiah."[54] Strauss' conception of Christianity, however, reeked of

---

[49] **Wikipedia On-Line: Johann Salomo Semler** (18 December 1725 – 14 March 1791) was a German church historian, biblical commentator, and critic of ecclesiastical documents and of the history of dogmas. Sometimes known as "the father of German rationalism".

[50] Ibid. p. 33.

[51] **Wikipedia On-Line**: **Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus** (1 September 1761 – 10 August 1851) was a German theologian and critic of the Bible. He is known as a rationalist who offered natural explanations for the biblical miracles of Jesus.

[52] Ibid., p. 34.

[53] **Wikipedia On-Line**: **David Friedrich Strauss** (German: *Strauß* [ʃtʁaʊs]; January 27, 1808 in Ludwigsburg – February 8, 1874 ibid)[1] was a German liberal Protestant theologian and writer, who influenced Christian Europe with his portrayal of the "historical Jesus", whose divine nature he denied. His work was connected to the Tübingen School, which revolutionized study of the New Testament, early Christianity, and ancient religions. Strauss was a pioneer in the historical investigation of Jesus.

[54] Ibid., p. 35

"otherworldliness" and "pagan mythology" and thus was rejected by nearly all of the major Christian denominations. In Germany, the influence of the philosopher Hegel was powerful within the German churches. For instance, **F. C. Baur** [55], who founded the Tuebingen school, taught New Testament in accordance with Hegelian principles, that is to say: "[Thesis ←→ Antithesis ←→ Synthesis]". Dr. Baur taught, for instance, that the conflice between St. Paul and St. Peter resulted in a new "synthesis" of these two, and that the New Testament is, in fact, a reflection that synthesis.

Since the eighteenth century, science and rationalism significantly influence Christian theology. In Germany, for instance, there was the "**Mediating School**," which was founded by Schlieirmacher.[56] Schlieirmacher "ignored the doctrine of inspiration, denied the permanent validity of the Old Testament, and treated the Bible like any other book."[57] This seemed radical and impious, but Schlieirmacher did emphasize true piety of the heart. His views were simultaneously liberal and radical, conservative and conventional. De Wetter, Bleek, Gesenius, and Ewald were some of Schlieirmacher's followers. "They rejected entirely the theory of a verbal inspiration, but at the same time confessed to the deepest reverence for the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures."[58] In the end, Schlieirmacher's views were too radical for orthodoxy and conventional church dogma.

---

[55] Wikipedia On-Line: **Ferdinand Christian Baur** (21 June 1792 – December 1860) was a German Protestant theologian and founder and leader of the (new) **Tübingen School of theology** (named for the University of Tübingen where Baur studied and taught). Following Hegel's theory of dialectic, Baur argued that second century Christianity represented the synthesis of two opposing theses: Jewish Christianity (Petrine Christianity) and Gentile Christianity (Pauline Christianity). This and the rest of Baur's work had a profound impact upon higher criticism of biblical and related texts. Adolf Hilgenfeld followed Baur's lead and edited the Tübingen School's journal, though he was less radical than Baur.[1] A patristic scholar and philosopher at Tübingen, Albert Schwegler, gave the School's theories their most vigorous expression.[2] The School's influence peaked in the 1840s, but was waning by the early twentieth century.[3] Baur's views were revolutionary, but "one thing is certain: New Testament study, since his time, has had a different colour" (H.S. Nash). He had a number of followers, who in many cases modified his positions, and the groundwork laid by Baur continues to be built upon in the twenty-first century.

[56] **Wikipedia On-Line**: **Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher** (German: [ˈfʁiːdʁɪç ˈʃlaɪɐˌmaχɐ]; November 21, 1768 – February 12, 1834) was a German theologian, philosopher, and biblical scholar known for his attempt to reconcile the criticisms of the Enlightenment with traditional Protestant Christianity. He also became influential in the evolution of higher criticism, and his work forms part of the foundation of the modern field of hermeneutics. Because of his profound effect on subsequent Christian thought, he is often called the "Father of Modern Liberal Theology" and is considered an early leader in liberal Christianity. The neo-orthodoxy movement of the twentieth century, typically (though not without challenge) seen to be spearheaded by Karl Barth, was in many ways an attempt to challenge his influence.

[57] Ibid., p. 36.

[58] Ibid., p. 36.

The School of Hengstenberg was another German school, it was founded by Ernst Hengstenberg.[59] Hengstenberg "returned to the principles of the Reformation. He believed in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, and consequently defended its absolute infallibility. He took his stand squarely on the Confessional Standards of the Lutheran Church… . But, on the whole, his exegetical work gives evidence of profound philogical and historical erudition, and of believing insight into the truth of divine revelation."[60] K.F. Keil[61], Havernick[62] and Kurtz[63] were amongst Hengstenberg's followers.

---

[59] **Wikipedia On-Line**: **Ernst Wilhelm Theodor Herrmann Hengstenberg** (20 October 1802, in Fröndenberg – 28 May 1869, in Berlin), was a German Lutheran churchman and neo-Lutheran theologian from an old and important Dortmund family. He was born at Fröndenberg, a Westphalian town, and was educated by his father Johann Heinrich Karl Hengstenberg, who was a famous minister of the Reformed Church and head of the Fröndenberg convent of canonesses (Fräuleinstift). His mother was Wilhelmine then Bergh. Entering the University of Bonn in 1819, Hengstenberg attended the lectures of Georg Wilhelm Freytag for Oriental languages and of Johann Karl Ludwig Gieseler for church history, but his energies were principally devoted to philosophy and philology, and his earliest publication was an edition of the Arabic *Mu'allaqat* of Imru' al-Qais, which gained for him a prize at his graduation in the philosophical faculty. This was followed in 1824 by a German translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.[1] Finding himself without the means to complete his theological studies under Johann August Wilhelm Neander and Friedrich August Tholuck in Berlin, he accepted a post at Basel as tutor in Oriental languages to Johann Jakob Stähelin (1797–1875), later a professor at the university. It was that he began to direct his attention to a study of the Bible, which led him to a conviction, not only of the divine character of evangelical religion, but also of the unapproachable adequacy of its expression in the Augsburg Confession. In 1824 he joined the philosophical faculty of the University of Berlin as a *privatdozent*, and in 1825 he became a licentiate in theology, his theses being remarkable for their evangelical fervour and for their emphatic protest against every form of "rationalism", especially in questions of Old Testament criticism.[1] In 1826 he became professor extraordinarius in theology; and in July 1827 took on the editorship of the *Evangelische Kirchenzeitung*, a strictly orthodox journal, which in his hands acquired an almost unique reputation as a controversial organ. It did not become well known until in 1830 an anonymous article (by Ernst Ludwig von Gerlach) appeared, which openly charged Wilhelm Gesenius and Julius Wegscheider with infidelity and profanity, and on the ground of these accusations advocated the interposition of the civil power, thus giving rise to the prolonged *Hallische Streit*. In 1828 the first volume of Hengstenberg's *Christologie das Alten Testaments* passed through the press; in the autumn of that year he became professor ordinarius in theology, and in 1829 doctor of theology.[1]

[60] Ibid., p. 37.

[61] **Wikipedia On-Line**: **Johann Friedrich Karl Keil** or **Carl Friedrich Keil** (26 February 1807 – 5 May 1888) was a conservative German Lutheran Old Testament commentator.

[62] **Wikipedia On-Line**: **Heinrich Andreas Christoph Havernick** (29 December 1811, Kröpelin – 19 July 1845, Neustrelitz) was a German Protestant theologian known for his conservative views on the biblical Old Testament. He studied theology at the universities of Leipzig and Halle, where he made the acquaintance of August Tholuck and was influenced by proponents of confessional orthodoxy. At Halle, he was involved in the turmoil of 1830 when advocates of orthodoxy demanded the dismissal of "rationalist" professors Wilhelm Gesenius and Julius Wegscheider (Accusations made against the two were partially based on lecture notes taken by Havernick).[1][2] Afterwards, he studied theology in Berlin, where he was a disciple of Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg. He then taught classes in Geneva, and later relocated to the University of Rostock, where in 1837 he became an associate professor of theology. Four years later, he gained a full professorship at the University of Königsberg.

[63] **Wikipedia On-Line: Johann Heinrich Kurtz** (December 13, 1809 – April 26, 1890) was a German Lutheran theologian. Kurtz was born in Monschau near Aachen and educated at Halle and Bonn. Abandoning the idea of a commercial career, he gave himself to the study of theology and became religious instructor at the gymnasium of Mitau in 1835, and ordinary professor of theology (church history, 1850; exegesis, 1859) at Dorpat. He resigned his chair in 1870 and went to live at Marburg. Kurtz was a prolific writer, and many of his books, especially the *Lehrbuch der heiligen Geschichte* (1843), became very popular. In the field of biblical criticism he wrote a *Geschichte des Alten Bundes* (1848–1855), *Zur Theologie der Psalmen* (1865) and *Erklärung des*

Gramatico-Historical School made a lasting impact on the Reformed Church. It reflected a merger between the "grammatical" and "historical" hermeneutic traditions. This merger produced what may be referred to as the "Moral Interpretation" of the Bible. The objective here was "the ethical improvement of man," which became "the controlling principle in the exposition of the Word of God."[64] The Grammatico-Historical philosophy held that the "deeper sense" of the Scriptures required no literal interpretation. Instead, the "deeper sense" of the Scriptures required the moral improvement of human beings: "'the divine revelation in Scripture, and its central point, Christ, in their living unity with God as well as with humanity.'"[65] This might include the "Pan-harmonic interpretation of Scripture."[66] Germar "demands the thorouogh harmony of the meaning in Scripture, insofar as it is to be regarded as a revelation of God, with the utterances of Christ and with all else which is true and certain." T. Beck "advanced the so-called pneumatic or spiritual interpretation. He demanded the *spirit of faith* in the interpreter. This spirit, according to him, would give birth to the conviction that the *various parts of Scripture form an organic whole*. And the separate parts of the Bible should be interpreted *in the light of this general physiognomy*, as it reveals itself in those parts of Scripture whose meaning is not in doubt. This is practically equivalent to saying *that Scripture must be interpreted according to the analogy of faith*."[67]

The doctrine of infallibility of the Sacred Scriptures thus evolved into multiple meanings. There was, for instance, the doctrine of "verbal inspiration," which held that the entire Sacred Scriptures were "infallible." On the other end of the spectrum was the doctrine of "plenary inspiration," which held that some parts of the Bible were not inspired and not infallible, while other parts of the Bible (e.g., the words of Christ) were infallible. This "plenary inspiration" was a form of "partial inspiration" that allowed for the inspired word to pertain to faith and morals, *but allowing for errors in historical and geographical matters*. The plenary-partial approach to hermeneutics resulted in:

- The denial of the supernatural aspects of Christianity;

Briefs an die Hebräer (1869). His chief work was done in church history, among his productions being *Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte für Studierende* (1849), *Abriss der Kirchengeschichte* (1852) and *Handbuch der allgemeinen Kirchengeschichte* (1853–1856). Several of his books have been translated into English. Kurtz was an advocate of gap creationism.[1]

[64] Ibid., p 37.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., p. 38.
[67] Ibid., p. 38.

- Limited the Bible to being a book of moral instruction and faith only, without emphasizing its supernatural elements;
- Held that all men maintained the power to possess virtue in light of human nature; and,
- Considered the doctrine of "inspiration" to be dynamic but without concrete definition, as in the "incoming of supernatural and spiritual energy."

The Reformed Church tradition revolted against Catholic dogmatics and promoted the rights of individuals to interpret the Bible for themselves. For this reason, the Reformed Church tradition believed that individuals could approach biblical hermeneutics without prepossessions that relate to "dogmatics" and the "confessional standards" of the Church. It is possible that persons may read and interpret the Bible without these influences, and thus Bible may and should be read like any other book. However, the Reformed tradition holds that in order to understand the Bible, one must have faith in God.

The doctrine of "accommodation" allowed for Reformed churches to adapt to local communities. This promoted Church unity without Church uniformity. "Accommodationalism" does not mean that heretical doctrines were allowed to enter into the church, but it does allow for the local church to meant the needs of the local community and to embrace local cultural, racial, ethnic, and national traditions. The Reformers held that in the New Testament, there is evidence that Jesus himself "accommodated" his listeners through teaching them in parables and in a language that they could understand. "Accommodationalism" is present in different Church denominations, such as the various churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Within the realm of hermeneutics, the doctrine of "accommodation" allows for the interpreter to look at ancient Hebrew or Jewish traditions and to interpret the Bible in light of changing modern conditions, while not sacrificing the organic view of the Bible.

The Reformed Churches had to deal with the "law of reason" in its approach to biblical hermeneutics. Many believed that the Bible was be read and viewed with a "practical fidelity to reason." This "law of reason," however, rejected "verbal inspiration," because "verbal inspiration" held that the entire scriptures were the infallible, inspired Word of God, who was author. These rationalist rejected "verbal inspiration" but acknowledged "divine authority of the Holy Scriptures." They also used various hermeneutic tools from the "Rational" school, the "Grammatico" school, and the "Historico-Critical" school. The Reformed Church eventually rejected the rational, grammatico, historical, historic-critical, and

grammatico-historical interpretations, because *they each failed to allow for treatment of the Bible as an organic whole* and failed to acknowledge the *theological interpretation* of the Sacred Scriptures. For the Reformed Church, the theological interpretation and the organic treatment of the Sacred Scriptures were sin quo non.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Notes on Berkhof's Principles of Biblical Interpretation

IV. The Proper Conception of the Bible, The Object of Hermeneutica Sacra

A. The Inspiration of the Bible

The Reformed Church tradition holds that the entire sixty-six books of the Protestant canon is the inspired Word of God and the Bible constitutes an organic whole. To understand this theological viewpoint, one must answer the following question, "Is the doctrine of 'inspiration' a conspiracy contrived by conservative theologians to make the bible square with their preconceived notions of the Bible?"

To answer this question, the Reformers believed that one must consult the Bible itself. According to II Timothy 3:16, "[a]ll scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." [68] The Reformed Church tradition considered that the "inspiration" of the Biblical writings be considered in a "comprehensive sense," including "the investigation of documents, the collection of facts, the arrangement of material, the very choice of words, in fact all the processes that enter into the composition of a book."[69] The entire Bible was the inspired word of God, as evidenced in the Pentateuch, the writings of the Prophets, and the New Testament.

[68] [NOTE: this verse refers to the "Old Testament," because verse 15 which precedes it].

[69] Ibid.

The Reformed theologians argued that when one consults the Sacred Scriptures, they will find that the ancient Hebrew prophets themselves claimed to be messengers of God. These prophets "were cognizant of the fact that God filled their minds with a content that did not originate in their own consciousness,"[70] as exemplified below:

> Exodus 7:1 "And the LORD said Moses. See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet."
>
> Deut. 18:18: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."
>
> Jer. 1:9: "Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth."
>
> II Peter 1:21: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."
>
> Isa 8:11: "For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying…."
>
> Jer. 15:17: "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation."
>
> Ezek.: 1:3: "The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him."
>
> Ezek: 3:22: "And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee."
>
> Ezek: 37:1: "The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones."

Next, Reformed Church theologians also looked to the New Testament for support of its position that the Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God. First, the Reformed Church argued that "Christ promised His disciples the Holy Spirit, to teach them all things,

[70] Ibid., p. 42.

and to bring to their rememberance whatsoever He had taught them (John 14:26). This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, and, from that time on, the disciples speak as infallible teachers of the people. They know that their words are the words of God."[71] Other similar New Testament Scriptures include:

I Thess. 2:13: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

I John 5:9-12: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life in his Son. He that hat the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Within the Reformed Church tradition, the words "inspired" and "inspiration" were to be distinguished from "revealed" and "revelation." "Inspiration" meant to be guided and influenced by the Holy Spirit. "Revelation" meant direct communication from God.[72] "Inspiration must be distinguished from revelation in the restricted sense of immediate communication of God in words. The former secures infallibility in teaching, while the latter adds to the store of knowledge."[73] Professor Berkhof writes: "By inspiration we understand ***that supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers*** by the Holy Spirit, by virtue of which their writings are given divine truthfulness, and constitute an infallible and sufficient rule of faith and practice."[74]

The New Testament frequently referenced the Old Testament as authoritative Scripture:[75]

> Rom. 9:17 "For the scripture saith unto Pharoah, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."

[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid, p. 41.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., p. 43.

> Luke 24:27 "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

For Christ and his apostles, "an appeal to *he graphe* [i.e., "the Sacred Scriptures"] was the end of all controversy."[76]

> The Old Testament ("Scriptures") are called "the Oracles of God" Romans 3:2: "Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

God is the Speaker in many passages throughout the Scriptures. The general rule of thumb is, *"What Scripture says, is simply ascribed to God."* In other words, some words of the Scriptures may directly be ascribed to God, but all words of the Scriptures were inspired by God:

> Heb. 1:5-13:
>
> **5** For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?
>
> **6** And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.
>
> **7** And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.
>
> **8** But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.
>
> **9** Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
>
> **10** And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:
>
> **11** They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;
>
> **12** And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

[76] Ibid., p. 44.

13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

Ps. 2:7: "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee."

II Sam. 7:14: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men."

Deut. 32:43: "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people."

Ps 97:7: "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods."

Ps. 104:4 "Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire."

Ps. 45:6,7 "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the scepter of they kingdom is a right scepter. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

Ps. 102:24-27: "I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations."

Ps. 110:1 "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

I Cor. 2:7-13:

> **7** But we speak **the wisdom of God** in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, **which God ordained before the world** unto our glory:
>
> **8** Which **none of the princes of this world knew**: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
>
> **9** But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

> **10** But **God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit**: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.
>
> **11** For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.
>
> **12** Now we have received, **not the spirit of the world**, but **the spirit which is of God**; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.
>
> **13** Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

The Reformed church theologians therefore rejected the doctrine of "partial inspiration" (i.e., only the words of Jesus was inspired) is not supported by the scripture. The Reformed Church tradition holds that the Bible was written by individual human beings, whose personalities and personal experiences were not detracted or diminished, because "[t]he writers often gave expression to their own experiences…."[77] "Many of the biblical books have an occasional character."[78] "The various books are characterized by a striking difference in style."[79] "There is one important limitation, however. The Holy Spirit could not permit their sinful nature to express itself." But the Reformed Church tradition embraced the theological position that "[w]e are not warranted in parceling the Bible out and assigning portions of it to God and man respectively. The Bible is, in all its parts, both in substance and form, down to the least minutiae, a book that comes from God."[80] As Professor Berhof concluded, a Reformed Theologian cannot divest himself of the firm conviction, which is not merely a matter of the mind but of the heart, that the Bible is the infallible Word of God.[81]

B. Unity and Diversity in the Bible

The Reformed Church tradition thus embraces the theological idea that the Bible is an organic whole. "The fact that the Holy Spirit employed prophets and apostles, with their

[77] Ibid., p. 48.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., pp. 48-49.
[81] Ibid., p. 51.

personal idiosyncrasies, with their natural talents and their acquired knowledge, in an organic way, naturally gave rise to great diversity."[82]

The various books of the Bible constitute an "organic unity."[83] This means that "inspiration" and "revelation" leads to one Divine Author—the Word of God is, in essence, Jesus Christ. "All the books of the Bible have their binding center in Jesus Christ."[84]

According to the Reformed Church tradition, the Bible is "the product of a single mind… a single fruitful principle."[85] "It has been one of the marvels of the ages that 66 books, which gradually came into existence in the course of 1600 years, should reveal such remarkable unanimity."[86] "[T]he Holy Spirit is, in the last analysis, the author of the whole Bible, and naturally had the right to quote and apply his own words as He saw fit."

Distinction between Old and New Testaments:

According to the Reformed Church tradition, there is no fundamental or major difference between the Old and New Testaments, because the both constitute one organic whole. Augustine says, "The New Testament lies hid in the Old, the Old lies open in the New." For the Reformed theologian, the Old Testament is prophetical, while the New is apostolical. The Old Testament is written in the Hebrew language, while the New Testament is written in Hellenistic Greek. The Prophets and the Apostles "do not all have the same vocabulary, nor write the same style. Their writings do not have the same historical setting, and do not present the truth from the same point of view. Each book of the Bible has an individual character."[87]

C. The Unity of the Sense of Scripture

According to the Reformed Church tradition, each theme or thesis of each of the sixty-six books of the Bible constitute a "sub-theme" of the entire Holy Bible. The theme or thesis of the entire Holy Bible constitutes a "unity of the sense of the Scriptures." As Professor Berkhof writes: "[i]t is of the greatest importance to understand at the outset that Scripture has but a single sense, and it therefore susceptible to a scientific and logical investigation.

[82] Ibid., p. 55.
[83] Ibid., p. 53.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., p. 56.

This fundamental principle must be placed emphatically in the foreground, in opposition to the tendency, revealed in history and persisting in some quarters even up to the present time, to accept a manifold sense,-- a tendency that makes any science of Hermeneutics impossible, and opens wide the door for all kinds of arbitrary interpretations." [88]

The Reformed Church tradition also promoted the "law of reason" as a legitimate hermeneutic tool. Reformed theologians disdained "other-worldliness" and pure mysticism. As Professor Berhof writes:

> The delusion respecting a multiple sense originated largely in a misunderstanding of some of the important features of Scripture, such as its figurative language, its mysterious and incomprehensible elements, its symbolical facts, rites and actions, its prophecies with a double or triple fulfilment, and its types of coming realities.[89]
>
> It is a settled principle among men that a man of undoubted veracity will habitually express himself in unequivocal language.[90]
>
> In addition, God's revelation, in order to be understood, must be rational. There is no conflict, then, between revelation and reason.[91]
>
> It is necessary to distinguish the real sense of a passage of scripture from the various interpretations ascribed to it by various interpreters.[92]

To this end, there is an element of commonality between the Reformed theologians' and St. Thomas Aquinas' respect for the "law of reason" in hermeneutical interpretations of the Sacred Scriptures.

D. The Style of Scripture: General Characteristics

The Reformed Theologians paid due homage to the early Jewish theologians who interpreted the Hebrew Bible throughout the centuries. Thus, in that sense, ancient Hebrew

[88] Ibid., p. 57.
[89] Ibid., p. 57.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., p. 58
[92] Ibid., p. 59.

is part and parcel of the Reformed tradition. The simplicity of style of the Old Testament is a rreglection evidence of the nature of the ancient Hebrew language.
a reflection of the original Hebrew language. The original Hebrew language frequently represented abstract truth in concrete forms. The Hebrew language capitalizes off of Nature, and uses it to convey divine wisdom and abstract knowledge.[93] The Hebrew Biblical historians "picture" history; they do not simply narrate it.[94] The Hebrew language often uses parallelism of various types: synonymous parallelism; synthetic parallelism; and antithetic parallelism, and introverted or chiastic parallelism. [95] Thus, the ancient Hebrew schools of catechistic hermeneutics have a profound influence upon Reformed theologians.

E. The Exegetical Standpoint of the Interpreter

In distinction from the Church of Rome, the Reformed theologians such as Martin Luther determined that every individual has a divine right to interpret the Sacred Scriptures for himself.[96] In addition, the firm position of the Reformed Church is that "reason" must be the guide, and that the individual must have complete freedom from Church dogma or of any other restraints. The Reformed theologians promoted "sola scriptura," and the idea ecclesiastical dogma must not supersede or nullify the Sacred Scriptures. The Reformers allowed for the "law of reason" to be a hermeneutical guide,[97] but insisted that the entire Bible—including all of the miraculous events stated therein-- is the inspired Word of God. Finally, the Reformed Church's position is that there is no God-ordained *Magisterium* (such as a "College of Bishops") that has the sole power to interpret the Sacred Scriptures on behalf of the entire body of the Church. Luther had promoted the idea of a "priesthood of all believers," which became standard Reformed doctrine.

[93] Ibid., p. 62.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., pp. 63-64.
[96] Ibid., p. 65.
[97] NOTE: John Locke's observation that the "law of reason" must be relied upon as a rule of thumb when interpreting the Scriptures supports the Reformed position.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Notes on Berkhof's *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*

V. Grammatical Interpretation

In Reformed Church theology, the "grammatico" method of hermeneutics has an important role, although it does not define the nature of Reformed hermeneutics. Reformed theologians do pay attention to the meaning of separate words in the Bible.

A. Meaning of the Separate Words

Reformed theologians contend that the Bible is, of course, written in human language and the words must be interpreted in light of sentences and context of the entire text. The etymological meaning of words is important. For example, the word *ekklesia*: "It is a designation of the Church, both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, and points to the fact that this consists of a people that is 'called out,'i.e., out of the world in special devotion to God."[98]

B. The Meaning of the Words in their Connection

Reformed hermeneutics pays close attention to the meaning of words in their connection to their "historical roots" and to words within the Bible. The etymological meaning (i.e., roots) of words are not more significant than the "current signification of a word,"[99] but is nevertheless useful. First, consider the etymological meaning; second, consider the usage of the word in Bible times, or in times in which the author wrote the text; and, third, consider the current usage of the word. The necessity to investigate the use of a word is often needful. Consider the several meaning of the words: some words a literal, other figurative or symbolic. The study of "Hebrew" and "Greek" will often be necessary to investigate the meaning of Biblical text; and so inductive research will be needed and necessary. "[I]t is precarious to assume that a word always has the same meaning in the Word of God."[100] Consider the "antonyms" and the "synonyms" of the words. "If two or more synonymous words or expressions are found in the same passage, it is generally safe to assume that their special signification requires attention."[101] There are "words" in the

[98] Ibid., p. 68.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid., 70.
[101] Ibid. 73.

Biblical text that merge more than one meaning into that same biblical passage. "Sometimes a word is used in its most general sense, so as to include its special meanings, though these are not emphasized."[102] "There are also cases in which one special meaning of a word includes another, which does not conflict with the purpose and connection of the passage in which it is found."[103] "Then again, an author occasionally employs a word in a pregnant sense, so as to indicate far ore than it really expresses."[104]

C. Internal Helps for the Explanation of Words

A tenet of Reformed hermeneutics is that the Bible is its own dictionary. In other words, the Biblical authors themselves sometimes give biblical definitions of key words. Within the biblical text, the subject and predicate of a proposition sometimes mutually explain themselves and other key words within the biblical text. Parallelism within sentences and passages within the biblical passage also sometimes explains the words.[105]

D. The Figurative Use of Words

A tenet of Reformed hermeneutics allows for some exploration as to whether key words within the Bible have a "figurative" or "symbolic" meaning. In other words, the Reformed tradition does not limit the reader to literal, grammatical interpretations only. There are many types of figurative uses of words, and the reader of Scripture is encouraged to investigate many internal and external sources of their meaning. For example, sometimes, "trophs" are used within a biblical text, which changes or modifies the meaning of words or a particular word.[106] Metaphors are a type of "trophs." The "*metonymies*" are also numerous in the Bible. These are "mental relations" such as the law of "cause and effect," are expressed in numerous ways in the Bible. The "synecdoche" is a relation "which it is founded is physical rather than mental."[107] That is, "cause and effect" relations have a physical nexus. Whether the "literal" or "figurative" meaning of a word is meant is determined by looking at what the author said, or how the author himself might have defined the word.[108] Moreover, Interpreting "figurative" meaning of words in biblical texts can be

---

[102] Ibid., p. 76.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid., p77.
[105] Ibid., p. 79-82.
[106] Ibid., p. 83.
[107] Ibid., p. 84.
[108] **NOTE**: legal documents and laws typically do not use "figurative" meaning. Therefore, the Bible, as a book of law, should generally look to the "literal" meaning of words unless the author clearly indicates that he intended a "figurative" meaning.

complicated. "It is of the greatest importance that the interpreter have a clear conception of the things on which the figures are based, or from which they are borrowed, since the tropical use of words is founded on certain resemblances or relations."[109]

Professor Berkhof writes: "[t]he **figurative language of the Bible** is derived especially from (1) the **physical features of the Holy Land**, (2) the **religious institutions of Israel**, (3) the **history of God's ancient people**, and (4) the **daily life and customs of the various peoples** that occupy a prominent place in the Bible. Therefore, *these must be understood, in order to interpret the figures that are derived from them*."[110] In addition, the Bible reader must also be to determine the principle meaning without getting too bogged down into the details. It is important to understand, that even the "figurative" meaning of biblical words have some form of "literal" meaning or translation. As Professor Berkhof writes, "[t]o a certain extent, one can test one's insight into the figures of the Bible by attempting to express the thoughts which they convey in literal language."[111]

E. Interpretation of the Thought

Within Biblical hermeneutics, it is important to remember that key words are connected to phrases and prepositions, which form key thoughts. It is therefore important to focus on the "thought" which the author intended to convey. "From the interpretation of the separate words we proceed to that of *the words in their mutual relation*, or of the thought."[112] As Professor Berhof writes: "[t]he points which call for consideration here are (1) the special idioms and the figures of thought, (2) the order of words in a sentence, (3) the special significance of various cases and prepositions, (4) the logical connection of the different clauses and sentences, and (5) the course of thought in an entire section."[113]

Hence, in Biblical hermeneutics, we go from interpreting "key" words to interpreting "key thoughts," by taking into consideration the "totality of circumstances" including, but not limited to, the following:

---

[109] Ibid., pp. 85-86.
[110] Ibid., p. 86.
[111] Ibid., p. 87.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid., p. 88.

Author—who was the biblical author of the text? What were the circumstances in which he was writing? Who was his audience? What were the surrounding social, economic, or political circumstances?

Idioms—what the Biblical text written in ancient Hebrew or Greek languages? What was the unique idioms characteristic of the culture at the time when the texts were written?

Allegory—this is an extended metaphor, also used in Biblical literature; but here it is important to note that the Old Testament if fulfilled in the New Testament, and so there will be key words and key phrases within the Bible that point the reader to these allegorical interpretations, prophecies, and fulfillments.

In addition, the readers and interpreters of the Bible may be well served in understanding the scientific use of adjectives and prepositions, both in the ancient Biblical languages (i.e., Hebrew and Greek) as well as the modern languages in which Bibles are written (e.g., English, Spanish, French, German, etc.). Such examples of the scientific usages of words, phrases, and sentences, including the following:

1. *Simile*[114]-- become familiar with different types of biblical similes.
2. *Allegory*[115]-- become familiar with different types of biblical allegories.
3. *Ellipsis*[116] (brevity of expression)—become familiar with different types of biblical ellipsis.
4. *Brachylogy* (a concise or abridged form of speech)—be able to recognize biblical colloquial terms that reflect abridged thoughts or expressions.
5. *Zeugma* (consists of 2 nouns used as 1 verb)—be familiar with the unique methods of ancient Hebrew word alignment and syntax.
6. *Euphemism*- substitutes less offensive words, to more accurately convey a meaning
7. *Litotes* (affirms through negation of opposite meaning), a form of "irony" or "metaphor" in the usage of biblical language, especially in the prophetic writings.
8. *Meiosis* (similar to the Litotes)

[114] Ibid., p. 89.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid., pp. 89-90

9. *Irony* (contains censure or ridicule under cover of praise; including the *Litotes* and the *Meiosis*.
10. *Epizeuxis* (strengthens an expression by the repetition of a key word)
11. *Hyperbole* (a rhetorical over-statement)
12. Biblical order of words in sentences— often reflects culture, idiom, and meaning. Biblical word order needs familiarity: i.e., the logical connection of the different clauses and sentences that are unique to the Bible, to ancient Hebrew, etc.[117] Bible readers should pay attention to the relation indicated by the participle, and to the relation indicated by the conjunctions. For example, word order in the Bible often emphasizes a particular point or though, as follows:
    a. Object, predicate, subject—emphasizes the object
    b. Object, subject, predicate—emphasizes the object
    c. Subject, object, predicate—emphasizes the subject
    d. Predicate, object, subject—emphasizes the subject

13. The "Course of Thought" of an entire section of the Bible is also critically important. In the New Testament, Jesus spoke in "Parables" in order to explain his course of thought to his listeners, and so an understanding of the parable is important for Bible readers and interpreters.
    a. Rules of thumb for understanding biblical parables include:
        i. The occasion on which a parable is introduced may illustrate its meaning and bearing;
        ii. The object of the parable may be expressly stated in the introduction;
        iii. Certain expressions at the end of a parable may also indicate its bearing; and,
        iv. Another or similar parable within the Bible may also point out the thing to be illustrated.[118]
        v. Pay attention to the "figurative" meaning of the parables.

[117] Ibid., p. 95.
[118] Ibid., pp. 100-101.

F. Internal Helps for the Interpretation of the Thought

Reformed Church hermeneutics holds that the Bible is its own interpreter and its own dictionary. The prevents the untoward and unjustified reliance upon external sources that have no connection whatsoever to the biblical writers or the times and circumstances in which they lived and wrote. Reformed theologians insist that the Bible contains internal "helps" for the logical interpretation of its contents, and the interpreter should not fail to make the most of these internal "helps." For instance, we should never forget that, when reading the Bible, of paramount importance is the special scope (e.g., the psychological, sociological, historical, cultural, political circumstances) of the biblical author's writings.

G. External Helps for the Grammatical Interpretation

Reformed theologians do not discount or disallow for the use of external sources of biblical interpretation. These sources may shed light on the political, economic, and historical circumstances of the Sacred Scriptures. For example, the *Talmud* and the Apocrypha may be useful biblical tools. Archeology may provide useful information for unlocking the mysteries of ancient world. Finally, standard encyclopedias and dictionaries can be useful, but the reader should first try to secure authoritative dictionaries that specialize in the Bible text, such as:

1. Grammars[119]
2. Lexicons[120]
3. Concordances[121]
4. Special works[122]
5. Commentaries: first, study the original works of the Bible, and then consult the commentaries.[123]

[119] Ibid., p. 110.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid., pp. 111-112.

CHAPTER SIX:

Notes on Berkhof's *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*

VI. Historical Interpretation

In the Reformed Church tradition, the historical interpretation of the Bible is the "real interpretation," because the Bible developed in a "historical way." All other methods of hermeneutics are in some way subservient to the historical interpretation, because the language of the biblical authors, together with the socioeconomic and political circumstances in which they wrote, reflect the history of their times. It must be remembered, therefore, that the Bible is a historical document that purports to convey God's eternal will.

A. Definition and Explanation

Perhaps Professor Berkhof best explains why the "historical" interpretation is superior to all others, where he writes: "Davidson says: 'Grammatical and historical interpretation, when rightly understood, are synonymous. The special laws of grammar, agreeably to which the sacred writers employed language, *were the result of their peculiar circumstances*; and *history alone* throws us back into those circumstances.'"[124]

It should be noted that the Reformed standard of historical interpretation <u>does not</u> included the "evolutionary" theory of history, the "historical-critical" method of interpretation, or an archeological standard of interpretation.[125] The Reformed theological standard, instead, uses the term "historical interpretation" "to denote **the study of Scripture in the light of those historical circumstances that put their stamp on the different books of the Bible**."[126] Reformed theologians thus believe that the "historical" method of interpretation is "the real explanation of the Bible." They hold that the Word of God originated in a historical way, and therefore, can be understood only in the light of history. History is therefore of critical importance to reformed hermeneutics, because the Bible can never be fully understood until it is apprehended as a living word, i.e., as it originated in the soul of the author. And Reformed theologians hold that it is impossible to understand an author and to interpret his words correctly unless he is seen against the proper historical background.

---

[124] Ibid., p. 113.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.

History is therefore of primary importance to the Reformed Theologian, because the place, the time, the circumstances, and the prevailing view of the world and of life in general, will naturally color the writings that are produced under those conditions of time, place, and circumstances. Consequently, the Reformed historical interpretation makes the following demands:

a. The *Reformed exegete* must seek to **know the author** whose work he would explain.
b. It will be incumbent on the *Reformed exegete* to reconstruct, as far as possible, from **the historical data at hand**, and with the aid of historical hypotheses, the environment in which the particular writings under consideration originated; in other words, the author's world.
c. The *Reformed exegete* will find it to be of the utmost importance that he consider the various influences which determined more directly the character of the writings under consideration, such as: **the original readers**, the **purpose which the author** had in mind, the author's age, his frame of mind, and the **special circumstances** under which he composed his book.
d. The *Reformed exegete* will have **to transfer himself mentally** into the first century A.D., and into Oriental conditions.[127]
e. History will determine all the various influences to better determine the character of the writings.

B. Personal Characteristics of the Author or Speaker

As previously stated, the personality, character, life and times of the biblical authors are critical information in Reformed biblical hermeneutics. Thus, the primary question is, *Who is the biblical author?* The Reformed theologian must therefore get to know the background of the writer, to penetrate into the secrets of his inner life. As Professor Berkhof has pointed out:

> "It is highly desirable for him to know something about the author's profession, which may have exercised a powerful influence on the man, his manner and his language."[128]

[127] Ibid., p. 115.

"An intimate acquaintance with the author of a book will facilitate the proper understanding of his words."[129]

C. Social Circumstances of the Author

Biblical authors do not all come in the same size: some were high-ranking civil servants, some were well-to-do, some were fishers and commoners, the Apostle Paul, for instance, was well-educated citizens of the Roman Empire and member of the Jewish sect known as the Pharisees. The peculiar features or circumstances of the author will help to shed light on their writings. "The social circumstances comprehend all those that are not peculiar to the author, but which he shares with his contemporaries. They are naturally of a rather general character." In addition, the geographical circumstances, the political circumstances, and the cultural circumstances of the author's surroundings, shed light on their biblical writings.[130]

D. Circumstances Peculiar to the Writings

Equally important to the thorough understanding of the biblical authors is a thorough understanding of their audience—that is to say, to the people for whom the writings were addressed. And so, a critical question in biblical hermeneutics is this, "*Who were the people for whom this biblical writing was addressed*?" The *Pentateuch* and the historical books of the Old Testament, for instance, appears to have been written for the nation of ancient Israel, in order to preserve their covenant with God and their cultural traditions. The letters of the Apostle Paul, for instance, were directed to various groups of Christian communities throughout the Greco-Roman world. Within certain books of the Bible, certain passages were directed to specific audiences, and therefore it is important to understand those audiences. Therefore, and in conclusion, within the framework of Reformed hermeneutics, besides the general circumstances of the biblical author's life, it is critically important to understand the original readers and hearers of the biblical author.[131]

---

[128] Ibid., p. 116.
[129] Ibid., p. 117.
[130] Ibid., pp. 119-124.
[131] Ibid., 124-128.

E. Helps for the Historical Interpretation

In Reformed theology, there is no limit to the number of external resources which the biblical interpreter may rely upon in interpreting the Sacred Scriptures. Even profane and pagan sources may be consulted; archeology and forensics may be consulted; non-sectarian accounts of ancient history may be consulted. In addition, the sacred scriptures of other faith traditions and the legal codes of non-Christian societies may also shed light to the peoples of the nearby nations, communities, and towns of the biblical authors. When consulting these other external sources, the Reformed theologian must remain mindful that there may be certain unresolved inconsistencies. As Professor Berkhof writes: " It is possible that the expositor, in studying these sources, will occasionally find that they apparently conflict with the Bible. In such cases, he should not hastily conclude that Scripture is mistaken, but must always bear in mind that, while there may be error of transcription, **the Bible is the infallible Word of God**."[132]

[132] Ibid., p. 131.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Notes on Berkhof's *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*

VII. Theological Interpretation

The Reformed theologian must be able to use an analogy of faith that sums up the entire sixty-six books as an *organic whole*, as a *unity*. This can only be done through the "theological" method of interpreting the Bible. In other words, the grammatical and historical interpretations of the Bible are not all: there is also the "theological" method of interpretation that is perhaps most comprehensive and complete. The "theological" interpretation declares "the divine authorship of the Bible."[133] That special "theological" interpretation places God as author of the whole: "(1) that the Bible is the Word of God; (2) that it constitutes an organiz whole, of which each individual book is an integral part; (3) that the Old and New Testament are related to each other as type and antitype, prophecy and fulfillment, germ and perfect development; and (4) that not only the explicit statements of the Bible, but also what may be deduced from it by good and necessary consequence, constitutes the Word of God."[134]

A. The Bible as a Unity

The Reformed theologian sees the Bible as "*organic unity*," since it is the infallible Word of God. In other words, the Old and New Testaments constitute a single unit. "As the New Testament is implicit in the Old, so the Old is explicit in the New."[135] The entire Bible is "an organic production."[136] "The New Testament is a commentary on the Old. While the Old Testament contains but a shadowy representation of spiritual realities, the New Testament presents them in the perfect light of the fullness of time."[137] For these reasons, the Old Testament should not be minimized.[138] The Old Testament's institutions and ceremonies have symbolic meaning for the New Testament. "The difference between the privileges and duties of the Old and the New Testament people of God was purely relative, and not absolute…. The contents of the New Testament are already the fruit of a long previous

[133] Ibid., p. 134.
[134] Ibid., p. 133.
[135] Ibid., p. 135.
[136] Ibid., p. 138.
[137] Ibid., p. 137.
[138] Ibid., 138.

development."[139] "A similar line of development runs through the New Testament. The Gospels and Acts contain the history of the work of redemption in Christ. The Epistles reveal the effect of this work in the life and experience of the churches. And the Apocalypse discloses its final issue in the rays of heavenly light."[140]

B. The Mystical Sense of Scripture

As God has not revealed all knowledge to human beings, and as human beings are still torn away from God through the original Fall of Man, an element of "mystery" persists in the minds and hearts of human beings. That "mystery" is the result of Original Sin, which severed humanities connection to God. Thus, besides the literal sense of the Bible, some Reformed theologians contend that the Bible has a "mystical" sense. Perhaps the "symbols" and "prefiguring" of the Old Testament are "mystical," as is the prophets and the Book of Revelation. The "messianic" interpretations of some of the Old Testament passages are said to be "mystical." The lyric poetry of the Bible lends itself to "mystical" interpretation. Divine revelation abolishes mystery, but fallen humanity has not received all Truth, which is why there are mysteries exist. The Reformed Church tradition thus allows for interpreters to grapple with biblical "symbols," "signs" and "mysteries."

C. The Symbolical and Typical Interpretation of Scripture

The Reformed interpretation of biblical mysteries leads naturally to the interpretation of biblical "symbols" and "types." The "words" of God and the "facts" of God's revelation go hand in hand together, because "the facts give concrete embodiment to the words."[141] The Reformed theologian "must discover the underlying meaning of such facts the call of Abraham, the wrestling of Jacob, Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, the deep humiliation through which David passed before he ascended the throne."[142] Facts often have symbolical significance in the Bible.

For example, "**types**" in the Old Testament are used to prefigure a fulfillment later in the New Testament. "And the high priest entering the inner sanctuary once a year to make

[139] Ibid., pp. 136-137.
[140] Ibidl, p. 139.
[141] Ibid., p. 142.
[142] Ibid.

atonement for the sin of the people pre-figured Him who in the fullness of time entered redemption. In connection with the types, which occupy an important place in the Bible, two questions arise: (a) What is a type? And (b) What rules apply in its interpretation?[143]"In the interpretation of symbols and types, *the same general rules apply that govern the interpretation of parables*."[144] Significantly, "types" are designed by God or "designated by divine appointment to bear a likeness to the anti-type. Accidental similarity between an Old and New Testament person or event does not constitute the one a type of the other."[145] Key point: "There must be some Scriptural evidence that it [i.e., the "type"] was so designated by God."[146] This distinguished the "type" from the "symbol." The Old Testament types were, at the same time, symbols and types; because they were, first of all, symbols expressive of spiritual truth. Professor Berkhof has pointed out a very key point: "*The question must be settled first of all what moral or spiritual truth the Old Testament symbols conveyed to the Israelites.*"[147] He goes on to state that "[b]ut, having learned from a study of their symbolical import the proper limits of the types, the exact truth which they conveyed to the Old Testament people of God, the interpreter will have to turn to the New Testament for a real insight into the truth that was typified."[148] "If the prophecies can be fully understood only in light of their fulfillment, this also applies to the types."[149]

Finally, it is important to understand the essential difference between "type" and "anti-type. The one represents truth on a lower stage (i.e., "type"), the other, the same truth on a higher stage (i.e., "anti-type."). In Reformed hermeneutics, the biblical "type" should never advance to a "lower stage," so that the "figure of Christ" should never devolve into the Apostle Peter or the "Pope," because the neither St. Peter or the Pope are "higher stages" of the figure of Christ. As Professor Berkhof points out, "[t]o pass from type to the antitype it is necessary to ascend from that in which the carnal preponderates to that which is purely spiritual…. Rome loses sight of this when it finds the antitype of the Old Testament sacrifices, in the mass; of the priesthood, in the apostolic succession of priests and bishops; and of the high priest, in the pope."[150]

---

[143] Ibid., p. 144.
[144] Ibid., p. 145.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid., p. 146.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid., p. 147.
[150] Ibid.,

D. The Interpretation of Prophecy

Reformed theological interpretation has special rules of prophetic hermeneutics. Prophecy may simply be defined as the proclamation of that which God revealed. The prophet received special revelations from God, and, in turn, conveyed them to the people.[151] The prophets do not always predict particular facts, but often promulgate general ideas that are gradually realized. Prophets were "watchmen on the walls of Zion, to guide the destinies of ancient people of God, and to guard against the dangers of apostasy."[152] The study of history is very important to the study of prophesy. "The element of time is a rather negligible quantity in the prophets…. The "prophetic perspective" is unique because it rooted in eternity. "He fancies that one mountain-Top rises up right behind the other, when in reality they are miles apart."[153] Some times, as in the Book of Jonah, the prophecy may be "conditional." It is a mistake to assume that a prophecy is not fulfilled, because the "outer details are not realized."[154] Professor Berkhof makes the following critical point: "under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the prophets occasionally transcended their historical and dispensational limitations, and spoke in forms that pointed to a more spiritual dispensation in the future.[155] It is also important to note that Prophets often tried to clothe themselves and others in forms derived from the dispensation to which they belonged—i.e., the Prophets used the colloquial, local languages and customs. "Prophetical actions": sometimes this was used to actually fulfill the words of the prophecy.[156]

A tenet of Reformed hermeneutics is that the prophetical writings should be subject to special rules of approaching the books of Bible prophecy, such as eschatology. Some of these general rules include:

a. Prophetic Interpretation Rule #1: The words of the prophets should be taken in their usual literal sense, unless the context or the manner in which they are fulfilled clearly indicate that they have a symbolical meaning.[157]

[151] Ibid., pp. 148-149.
[152] Ibid., p. 149.
[153] Ibid., . 150.
[154] Ibid, p. 152.
[155] Ibid., p. 152.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.

b. Prophetic Interpretation Rule # 2: In studying the figurative descriptions that are found in the prophets, the interpreter should make it his aim to discover the fundamental idea expressed.[158]
c. Prophetic Interpretation Rule # 3: In the interpretation of the symbolical actions of the prophets, the interpreter must proceed on the assumption of their reality, i.e., of their occurrence in actual life, unless the connection clearly proves the contrary.[159]
d. Prophetic Interpretation Rule # 4: The fulfillment of some of the most important prophecies is germaninant, i.e., they are fulfilled by installments, each fulfillment being a pledge of that which is to follow.[160]
e. Prophetic Interpretation Rule # 5: Prophecies should be read in the light of their fulfillment, for this will often reveal depths that would otherwise have escaped the attention.[161]
f. Prophetic Interpretation Rule # 6: Prophecies are not always fulfilled in the exact form in which they were uttered.[162]

E. The Interpretation of the Psalms

The Book of Psalms reflects the idea that God is a Spirit and the He must be worshiped in spirit and in truth. For this reason, there is not one way to approach the Psalms. The Psalms are the sacred songs of Israel. In a deeper sense, though, the *Psalms* acknowledges the Mosaic law as the law to be desired and contemplated day and night, and incorporated within the heart, as Moses commanded. The *Psalms* also celebrate obedience and the patience that come with faith of God, especially during times of challenge, difficulty, and the rise and triumph of God's declared enemies. Indeed, the *Psalms* speaks numerous times of God's enemies and of their boastful pride, hatred, and rebellion. Difficult and uncertain times are commemorated in the *Psalms*. Here, David is uncertain if he will survive King Saul's attacks, unless God intervenes and saves him, and so in the *Psalms*, David cries and pleas for God's saving justice. The *Psalms* commemorates triumphant moments when God does intervene to save both Israel and his children (especially the widows, the

[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid., p. 153.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.

fatherless, the poor). And, finally, the Psalms is filled with thanksgiving towards God's saving justice: jubilee, song, and praise worship run rampant throughout the *Psalms*.

As Professor Berkhof points out, "[i]n these psalms, the poet gives utterance to his deepest experiences and emotions of joy and sorrow, hope and fear, gladsome expectation and bitter disappointment, childlike confidence and grateful recognition."[163] The poetry of the Psalms contains "an individual element" and a "persona experience" element. "In the inner most recesses of his soul, the poet is conscious of his solidarity with mankind as a whole, and feels the pulse of the communal life of man."[164] "Christ is sometimes heard in the Psalms."[165] Some of the Psalms are "Messianic." "Since the Messianic psalms are prophetic, special attention should be paid to the quotations from them in the New Testament, and to the New Testament realization of their predictions."[166] For instance, "[t]he more thoroughly David is known, the better his Psalms will be understood."[167]

The Implied Sense of Scripture

The Bible is, in essence, a spiritual law—it has one, unified and implied sense, thus comprising an organic whole. For example, the Bible conveys symbols, types, and prophecies; but in addition to these, it uses "*implicit" meaning* in its language to tie all of these items together into a singular whole unit. "Therefore not only the express statements of Scripture, but its implications as well, must be regarded as the Word of God."[168] "In writings of a superior order, it is often found that the language suggests and involves important truths that are embodied in words."[169] These important truths…

F. Helps for the Theological Interpretation

The "analogy of faith" is the primary tool for the "theological" method of Reformed biblical interpretation. The "analogy of faith" is a system of comparing and contrasting various biblical facts, passages, Mosaic laws, the sayings of Christ, etc., with the overall understanding that the Bible constitutes a theological whole. For the Reformed theologian, the Sacred Scriptures interpret Sacred Scriptures; and the Scriptures are superior to

[163] Ibid., p. 154.
[164] Ibid., p. 155.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid., p. 157.
[167] Ibid., p. 156.
[168] Ibid., p. 159.
[169] Ibid., p. 157.

ecclesiastical laws, confessions of faith, creeds, or supplementary theological doctrines. Thus, the doctrine of "analogy of faith" was at the heart of the Protestant Reformation, and today constitutes the chief controversy leading to church schism. And so, by "analogy of faith," we mean the following:

> The phrase analogy of faith is Biblical: Rom 12.6 speaks of the charism of prophecy, along with such similar gifts as ministering, teaching, exhorting. Prophets exercised one of several "offices" within the primitive church (Acts 11.27; 13.1); guided by the Spirit, they gained insight into the faith or recognized tasks to be undertaken. The Pauline injunction is given that this gift of prophecy must be exercised "according to the proportion [ἀναλογίαν] of faith." No prophet is to be accepted who proclaims anything opposed to the "one faith" proper to the "one body in Christ." Such preaching would be out of proportion to, or beyond, the objective truth entrusted to the Christian community.
>
> The **analogy of faith, therefore, has always been associated with the one unchanging faith of the Church; it is closely related to the notion of tradition and soon became a norm for the early Christian writers**. They saw a "proportion" in the manner in which the New Testament complements the Old Testament, and in which each particular truth contributes to the inner unity of the entire Christian revelation.
>
> Thus the **phrase came to indicate a rule or guide for the exegesis of Scripture (see hermeneutics, biblical)**. **In difficult texts, the teachings of tradition and the analogy of faith must lead the way**. The Catholic exegete, conscious of his faith, recognizes the intimate relationship between Scripture and tradition; he strives to explain Scriptural passages in such a way that the sacred writers will not be set in opposition to one another or to the faith and teaching of the Church (cf. Leo XIII, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 3283; Pius X, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 3546; Pius XII, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 3887).
>
> **Karl Barth**'s violent rejection of the ***analogia entis*** "as the invention of Antichrist" and his insistence that in questions of revelation only the ***analogia fidei*** is acceptable occasioned further study of this problem. In its reaction against the extremes of liberal Protestantism, dialectical theology (or crisis

theology) built upon Kierkegaard's notion of God as "completely other" than man, and as totally transcendent. ***Analogia fidei*** **means for Barth that we possess a "theological language" in which God and not man gives meaning to the words. His great fear is that philosophy (represented by *analogia entis*) will sit in judgment on the Word of God**.

Söhngen points out that Barth misunderstands the Catholic notion of *analogia entis,* and that it does not make philosophy master over faith [*Catholica,* three (1934) 113–136, 176–208; four (1935) 38–42]. Though not convinced, Barth admits the pertinence of Söhngen's remarks. **Barth's fear of rationalistic "proofs" for the mysteries of faith may indicate here an identification of the Catholic doctrine with the admittedly too rationalistic theories of faith of the post-Cartesian era**; a clearer grasp of the Thomist-Suarezian approaches might remove this fear. Barth seems to be more concerned here with certitude, so that he looks upon the *analogia entis* as something on the level of knowledge rather than being—noetic rather than ontic. The Catholic will not hesitate to admit that it is God who gives His meaning to the human words used to express the divine; an *analogia fidei* in this sense is essential. The Christian vocabulary has only gradually been formed throughout the life of the divinely guided Church. **To reject the *analogia entis* entirely, however, cuts man off so radically from God that, as Emil Brunner points out, the end result can be nothing but the most advanced form of Nominalism, in which human words take on divine meanings that are purely arbitrary and are in no way reflected in a reality already existing in the midst of creatures**.[170]

Thus, "analogy of faith" is at the heart of the work of Martin Luther, which paved the way for the Protestant Reformation. Reformed Theology is defined by its unique approach, its' "analogy of faith." Therefore, the "helps" that may aid the Reformed expositor in the modern world, in terms of theological interpretation and apologetics, are fivefold: (1) a thorough familiarity with the canon of the sixty-six books of the Bible; (2) a thorough understanding of the history of the Protestant Reformation, the writings of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin; (3) a thorough understanding of the Catholic bible, Catholic thought, Armenian thought, Lutheran thought, Wesleyan thought, Baptist thought, Eastern-Orthodox

[170] Encylopedia.com, "Analogy of Faith," https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/analogy-faith

thought, and other faith-based traditions; (4) a thorough understanding of general history and philosophy; and (5) a thorough understanding of biblical parallelism of facts and ideas.

The Reformed theologian must proceed on the assumption that the Word of God is an organic unity of which all parts are mutually related, and are together subservient to the whole of God's revelation.[171] Parallels of ideas in the Bible may be divided into two classes, ***historical*** and ***didactic parallels***. The "historical parallels" may include stories that are narrated with similar sets of circumstances; or where the same narrative appears a second or third time, but couched in different words with more details, such in the various books of the Four Gospels. The "didactic parallels" include quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament; generally this is shown where the Biblical characters, such as St. Paul, cite the Scripture to prove a point or a theological truth. The "analogy of faith" is determined here: "[t]he analogy of faith, rightly understood, is found in the Bible itself."[172] "Positive analogy of faith" is found explicitly in the Scriptures. The "general analogy of faith," conversely, does not rest upon the explicit statements of the Scriptures.

The "general analogy of faith" is often where the rubber means the road, because the teachings and standards of the Bible must be applied to real-world circumstances and questions such as, "What is the scope of criminal justice?" "What is the best form of civil government?" "What is fornication?" "Should adultery be grounds for divorce?" "Is human slavery justifiable?" For instance, as Professor Berkhof points out: "Thus it is plain that the spirit of the Mosaic law as well as of the New Testament is inimical to human slavery."[173] Here, Professor Berkhoff has construed the terms of the Old and New Testaments and, while using his analogy of faith, determined that "human slavery" is inimical to the Christian faith. Thus, Professor Berkhoff has opined that:

> [w]hen employing the ***analogy of faith*** in the interpretation of the Bible, the interpreter should bear the following rules in mind.
>
> (1). A doctrine that is <u>clearly supported</u> by the analogy of faith cannot be contradicted by a <u>contrary and obscure passage</u>.
>
> (2). A [Bible] passage that is <u>neither supported nor contradicted</u> by the analogy of faith may serve as the positive foundation for a doctrine,

[171] Ibid., p. 160.
[172] Ibid., p. 164.
[173] Ibid., p. 165.

provided it is clear in its teaching. Yet the doctrine so established will not have the same force as one that is founded on the analogy of faith.

(3). When a doctrine is supported by an obscure passage of Scripture only, and finds no support in the analogy of faith, it can only be accepted with great reserve.

(4). In cases where the analogy of Scripture leads to the establishment of two doctrines that appear contradictory, both doctrines should be accepted as Scriptural in the confident belief that they resolve themselves into a higher unity.[174]

These hermeneutical principles represent the Reformed Church standard, but, most importantly, they form a synthesis and build upon the foundations of three thousand years of ancient Hebrew, Jewish, Greek, Latin, Roman Catholic, and Protestant hermeneutics. For this reason, the Reformed hermeneutical standard provide an accurate, reliable, and comprehensive method of bible interpretation of Christian theologians from any denominational affiliation.

CONCLUSION

Biblical hermeneutics is at the heart of the major church schisms in history, including in 451 A.D., at the Council of Chalcedon, when the Oriental Orthodox Churches were severed from the Catholic Church; in 1054 A.D., when the Eastern Orthodox Church was severed from the Roman Catholic Church; and, later, during the 1530s, 1550s and 1640s, when the Anglican, Lutheran and Calvinist churches were severed from the Roman Catholic Church. The Anglican, Lutheran, and Calvinist churches formed the three major wings of the Reformed Church, but within these there churches were several other minor or major differences, which caused the Reformed theological tradition to split even further. Today, it is my firm belief that *the most important modern-day hermeneutical conflict* is that between the Wesleyan-Arminian-Reformed tradition and the Calvinist-Reformed tradition. It is my hope that these two Reformed church traditions can reach what Professor Berkhof has called "a higher unity."[175]

[174] Ibid., p. 166.
[175] Ibid.

Hence, as I close this first Whitefield theological paper, I must say a word about the conflict between Jacobus Arminius (1560- 1609 (i.e. Arminianism) and the Calvinists, which evolved during the early years of Protestant Reformation period.

> Jacobus Arminius… was a Dutch theologian from the Protestant Reformation period whose views became the basis of Arminianism and the Dutch Remonstrant movement. He served from 1603 as professor in theology at the University of Leiden and wrote many books and treatises on theology….
>
> Following his death, his challenge to the Reformed standard, the *Belgic Confession*, provoked ample discussion at the Synod of Dort, which crafted the five points of Calvinism in response to Arminius's teaching.
>
> At Amsterdam, Arminius taught through "a number of sermons on the Epistle of the Romans." **In discussing Romans 7 in 1591, he taught that man, through grace and rebirth, did not have to live in bondage to sin, and that Romans 7:14 was speaking of a man living under the law and convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit, yet not presently regenerated.** This was met with some resistance, and some detractors labeled him Pelagian for teaching that an unregenerate man could feel such conviction and desire for salvation, even with the influence of the Law and the Holy Spirit.
>
> In the same year, responding to Arminius' theological positions, his colleague Petrus Plancius began to openly dispute him. During a gathering of ministers, Arminius insisted he was not teaching anything in contradiction to the Heidelberg Confession and other standards of orthodoxy, that early church theologians held similar views, and that he utterly repudiated the heresy of Pelagianism. **Further, Arminius expressed some astonishment that he was not to be allowed to interpret this passage according to the dictates of his own conscience and within the pattern of historic orthodoxy.** The Amsterdam burgomasters intervened, in an effort to keep the peace and tamp down divisions in the populace, **urging them to peacefully coexist and for Arminius to teach nothing out of accord with the Reformed thought agreed upon at the time unless he had consulted with the church council or other bodies.** During the following years, **controversy emerged as he preached through Romans 9**. **Although he did not directly contradict Calvinist interpretations, he focused on Paul's theme of "justification by faith" in contradiction to works, rather than focusing on God's eternal decrees.** During this time **he**

"gradually developed opinions on grace, predestination and free will that were inconsistent with the doctrine of the Reformed teachers Calvin and Beza". …

In attempting to defend Calvinistic predestination against the teachings of Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert, Arminius began to doubt aspects of Calvinism and modified some parts of his own view.

He attempted to reform Calvinism, and lent his name to a movement—Arminianism—which resisted some of the Calvinist tenets (unconditional election, the nature of the limitation of the atonement, and irresistible grace). The early Dutch followers of his teaching became known as Remonstrants after they issued a document containing five points of disagreement with mainstream Calvinism, entitled *Remonstrantiæ* (1610).

Arminius wrote that he sought to teach only those things which could be proved from the Scriptures and that tended toward edification among Christians (with the exception of Roman Catholics, with whom he said there could be no spiritual accord). His motto was reputed to be "*Bona conscientia paradisus*", meaning, "A good conscience is a paradise."

Arminius taught of a "preventing" (or prevenient) grace that has been conferred upon all by the Holy Spirit and this grace is "sufficient for belief, in spite of our sinful corruption, and thus for salvation."

Arminius stated that "the grace sufficient for salvation is conferred on the Elect, and on the Non-elect; that, if they will, they may believe or not believe, may be saved or not be saved." William Witt states that "Arminius has a very high theology of grace. He insists emphatically that grace is gratuitous because it is obtained through God's redemption in Christ, not through human effort."

The theology of Arminianism did not become fully developed during Arminius' lifetime, but after his death (1609) the ***Five articles of the Remonstrants*** (1610) systematized and formalized the ideas. But the Calvinist Synod of Dort (1618–19), convening for the purpose of condemning Arminius' theology, declared it and its adherents anathemas, defined the five points of Calvinism, and persecuted Arminian pastors who remained in the Netherlands. But in spite of persecution, "the Remonstrants continued in Holland as a distinct church and again and again where Calvinism was taught Arminianism raised its head."

> Publishers in Leiden (1629) and at Frankfurt (1631 and 1635) issued the works of Arminius in Latin. **John Wesley (1703–91), the founder of the Methodist movement, embraced Arminian theology and became its most prominent champion.** Today, the majority of Methodists remain committed to Arminian theology, and Arminianism itself has become one of the dominant theological systems in the United States, thanks in large part to the influence of John and Charles Wesley.[176]

When I met Dr. Kenneth Talbot of the Whitefield Theological Seminary in 2019, I was a staunch apostle of John Wesley and the Arminian doctrine, but, as a consequence of the more liberal leanings of the United Methodist Church, the Episcopal Church, and many liberal churches within the global Anglican Communion, together with my recent reading of John Calvin's four-volume *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I had become an admirer of the Reformed Church and the Calvinist method of biblical hermeneutics. At that time, I had been a frequent guest visitor of the Hyde Park United Methodist Church (Tampa, Florida) for about two years and had become friends with one of its pastors, Rev. Justin La Rosa; and, I had begun informal studies on the theological differences between John Calvin and John Wesley. I have since then began to reevaluate both the "Armininian-Wesleyan" camp and the "Calvinist-Whitefield" camp of the Reformed Anglican theological tradition, which led to the Great Awakening Movement of the 18th century. I believe that the communications and coordination between "Great Awakening" leaders George Whitefield (a Calvinist) and Charles and John Wesley (two Armenians) exemplify what is needed today between the two great wings of the Reformed Church tradition in the United States today.[177]

THE END

[176] Wikipedia On-Line Encyclopedia, "Jacobus Arminius," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacobus_Arminius.
[177] See, Appendix A, "Analogy of Faith-- A Conflict with the Ranks of Reformed Clergy"

APPENDIX A. Analogy of Faith-- A Conflict within the Ranks of Reformed Clergy

---

"Whitefield vs. Wesley"[178]

*"**When George Whitefield left England in 1739, he was the recognized leader of the evangelical awakening, and he entrusted his thousands of followers to John Wesley's care**.*

"WHEN HE RETURNED, in early 1741, he found that "many of my spiritual children . . . will neither hear, see, nor give me the least assistance: Yes, some of them send threatening letters that God will speedily destroy me. "

"What had happened? Wesley had preached and published on two subjects dividing the leaders: predestination (whether God foreordains people's eternal destiny) and perfection (whether sinlessness is attainable in this life).

"Whitefield met with both Charles and John Wesley in early 1741, but they could not find common ground. Wrote Whitefield, "It would have melted any heart to have heard Mr. Charles Wesley and me weeping, after prayer, that if possible the breach might be prevented." The movement had been forever divided between the followers of Wesley and the followers of Whitefield.

"Christian History asked J. D. Walsh to explain how Whitefield and Wesley met, how their conflict began, and how their relationship changed.

"The relationship between George Whitefield and John Wesley, the two great leaders of the eighteenth-century revival, cannot be neatly described. Their association passed through very different stages.

"Deference: Oxford Methodists

"Whitefield arrived at Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1732, a raw, provincial youth with a West Country accent. (He never lost it; accounts of his preaching describe his "twang through the nose" and the way he pronounced "Christ" as "Chroist.") Whitefield had come from the tap—room of the family inn and was working his way through college, waiting on richer students. "As for my quality, I was a poor drawer" [of ale], he wrote.

"Whitefield had heard of the "Holy Club" before he arrived, and after Charles Wesley kindly asked him to breakfast, he was swiftly drawn into the fellowship. It was Charles, open—hearted and emotional, rather than the steely—willed and self-controlled John, who was his chief Oxford mentor.

"Whitefield spoke "with the utmost deference and respect" of the brothers Wesley, who had been to famous boarding schools and were his seniors. During a period of acute distress, Whitefield was sent for advice to John, and thanks to his "excellent advice and management," Whitefield "was delivered from the wiles of Satan." This was a somewhat subservient relationship. Whitefield wrote, "From time to time Mr. Wesley

---

[178] This article, "Whitefield vs. Wesley" is reprinted from the Christian History Institute: https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/wesley-vs-whitefield

permitted me to come to him and instructed me as I was able to bear it." Whitefield deferred to John Wesley as his "spiritual father in Christ" and his letters addressed Wesley as "Honoured sir."

"Partnership: Revival Takes Off

"In 1736 John Wesley entrusted the newly ordained Whitefield with the oversight of the Oxford Methodists, while he was away in Georgia. Whitefield soon soared to national fame as "the boy preacher." Autograph hunters besieged him. A flood of pamphlets attacked him. He was lavishly praised and compared to Moses, to David, and to Wycliffe as the "morning star" of a second Reformation. As Whitefield freely confessed, fame went to his head. He wrote one minister in 1739: "Success, I fear, elated my mind. I did not behave to you, and other ministers of Christ, with that humility which became me."

"Although Whitefield's evangelistic success far outstripped that of his former instructor, he showed Wesley deep respect. "I am but a novice; you are acquainted with the great things of God," he told him in March 1739. Before inviting Wesley to join him in Bristol that year, he told his converts that "there was one coming after him whose shoes' latchett he was not worthy to unloose."

"Yet at this critical phase of the revival, young, exuberant, Whitefield took the lead, dragging behind the older, more cautious Wesley. In spring 1739 Whitefield took the momentous step of preaching outdoors—first to the grimy coalminers around Bristol, and then to the street poor of London. This turned methodism outward, from respectable Anglican societies toward the huge unchurched mass. Whitefield now pushed the reluctant Wesleys into following him as field preachers.

"**In 1739, as vistas of astonishing evangelistic success opened up, Whitefield and the Wesleys worked in the closest harmony, as brothers and equals. When Whitefield won converts through his amazing oratory, he relied on Wesley to help organize and instruct them.**

"Discord: Fight over Grace

"A few months later, however, the two leaders were locked in angry debate. By 1740 the infant Methodist movement was split irrevocably into two camps.

"It was inevitable that the issue of predestination would trouble the movement. The Wesleys were unshakable "Arminians" who denied predestination, yet the revival drew zealous recruits from areas in which Puritan Calvinism was much alive. At first, **Whitefield was no predestinarian, but by the time he sailed to America in the summer of 1739, he was reading Calvinist books. Contact with fervent American Calvinists filled out his knowledge.**

"Even before Whitefield departed, **John Wesley had decided to attack the Calvinist theory of grace.** In March 1739 he not only preached but published a passionately Arminian sermon entitled *Free Grace*. This step was taken with great unease; only after seeking a sign from heaven and drawing lots twice, did Wesley go into battle.

"**John Wesley feared that Calvinism propagated fatalism and discouraged growth in holiness. Charles Wesley feared that predestination (and particularly the idea of reprobation, that God predestined some to damnation) represented a loving God as a God of hate.** In his famous hymn *Wrestling Jacob*, he deliberately capitalized the sentence "Pure Universal Love Thou Art."

"Whitefield, who was always more irenic than John Wesley, demurred before replying. He made it clear he was no follower, but a leader, and in some respects in front of his old adviser: "As God was pleased to send me out first, and to enlighten me first, so I think he still continues to do it." **Even now, however, he recognized Wesley's enormous talent for the nurture of souls: "My business seems to be chiefly in planting; if God sends you to water, I praise his name."**

"Nonetheless, on Christmas Eve 1740 Whitefield wrote his riposte to Wesley, defending the Calvinist doctrine of grace.

"The controversy was fueled when Wesley provocatively published *Free Grace* in America. Whitefield, when invited to preach in Wesley's headquarters at the London Foundery, scandalized the congregation by preaching "the absolute decrees [of election] in the most peremptory and offensive manner," while Charles sat beside him, fuming.

"From 1740 the revival moved along parallel lines. **Wesley's "United Societies"** were matched by the growth of **"Calvinistic Methodist" societies in England and Wales**. In London, **Whitefield's followers set up his Tabernacle in the same street as Wesley's Foundery, and in rivalry with it.**

"Cooling: Agreement to Differ

"By 1742 tempers were beginning to cool. **Open-hearted evangelist Howell Harris worked to reunite the two parties, but he found this impossible, partly because "neither of the sides can submit to . . . the other head—Mr. Wesley or Mr. Whitefield."** Indeed, the followers of both men often proved more partisan than their champions.

"Far more united the antagonists than ever separated them. **Whitefield was a moderate Calvinist; he did not let the doctrine of predestination hinder him from offering grace to all, or from insisting on the need for holiness in believers.** John Wesley allowed (for a time) that some souls might be elected to eternal life. **When not overheated, both men saw such issues as non-essentials**. At the height of the controversy, Whitefield quoted the reformer John Bradford: "Let a man go to the grammar school of faith and repentance, before he goes to the university of election and predestination."

"**No merger of the two camps occurred, but there was at least reconciliation between the leaders.** This "closer union in affection" continued with hiccups, but no serious interruption, to Whitefield's death. **In 1755, Charles Wesley could write happily, "Come on, my Whitefield! (since the strife is past) / And friends at first are friends again at last."**

"The **relationship was described by one of Wesley's preachers as "agreement to differ." Whitefield was welcomed to preach among Wesley's societies. Wesley lent Whitefield one of his best preachers, Joseph Cownley, for work at the Tabernacle. Whitefield refused to build Calvinistic chapels in places that already had a Wesleyan society. Wesley agreed to the reverse.** More than once Whitefield acted as mediator when the Wesley brothers fell out, notably when Charles sabotaged John's marriage prospects to Grace Murray.

"This friendship continued even though the old split was not forgotten. Writing his *Short History of Methodism* in 1765, John Wesley did not conceal his conviction that Whitefield and the Calvinists had made

"the first breach" in the revival. Whitefield felt that the idyllic harmony of early 1739—"heaven on earth" when all were "like little children"—had been broken by Wesley's sermon on *Free Grace*.

"Complementary Gifts

"Ultimately, what eased relations between the two great leaders was **Whitefield's decision, in 1749, to abandon formal leadership of the Calvinistic Methodist societies.** He thus posed no threat to Wesley as chief organizer of the revival.

"**Whitefield** was certainly not inadequate as a pastor and organizer, but he realized his primary calling lay as a "wayfaring witness." **His determination to shuttle continually between England, Scotland, and America meant he could never, like Wesley, provide oversight for a great connection of societies.** "An itinerant pilgrim life is that which I choose," he wrote, **so he cheerfully let other pastors gather the lost sheep he had found.**

"Wesley, in contrast, insisted his converts be organized and built up in the faith. He resolved not to send preachers where he could not form societies, because failure to support new converts was like "begetting children for the murderer." **In Wesley's view, the Great Awakening subsided largely because Whitefield's converts did not receive adequate spiritual oversight.**

"Both **Whitefield and Wesley (and the Moravians) deserve credit as Founding Fathers of the great revival**. What is most striking is the providential complementarity of the two men's gifts. More than any evangelist before him, **Whitefield was given the ability to scatter the seed of God's Word across the world. To Wesley, preeminently, was granted the ability to garner the grain and preserve it.**

"In 1770, the year of his death, Whitefield wrote to Charles as "my very dear old friend" and described John as "your honoured brother." To each he bequeathed a mourning ring, "in token of my indissoluble union with them in heart and Christian affection, notwithstanding our difference in judgment about some particular points of doctrine." On Whitefield's death, Charles penned a noble elegy. **And at Whitefield's request, his funeral sermon was preached by none other than his former opponent, John Wesley."**

THE END

APPENDIX B Analogy of Faith-- Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and the *Apostles' Creed*

The Church Fathers of the fourth century A.D. published the "Apostles' Creed," as an expression of patristic biblical hermeneutics, in order to clearly set forth the dogma and doctrine of the Holy Catholic Church. During the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformers wished to re-establish the "holy catholic church" upon these ancient doctrinal foundations. John Calvin's path breaking *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536) was a four volume set, with each volume designed and patterned after a portion of the Apostles Creed. It should be noted here, that Calvin's Protestant theology did not abandon the name "holy catholic church" as being the appropriate description of the Protestant Church.

The Apostles' Creed (cir. 341 A.D.)	**John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536)**
"I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. _____ "I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. "He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. "The third day he rose again from the dead. "He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead. _____ "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic* church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."	• **Book First:** Of the Knowledge of God the Creator _____ • **Book Second:** Of the knowledge of God the Redeemer, in Christ, as first manifested to the fathers, under the law, and thereafter to us under the gospel. • **Book Third:** The mode of obtaining the grace of Christ. The benefits it confers, and the effects resulting from it. _____ • **Book Fourth:** Of the Holy Catholic Church