

A List of Required Materials for Course in Hermeneutics

By Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen

Books and Tapes:

Gordon Fee, *New Testament Exegesis*, rev. ed.
Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology*
Dan McCartney & Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*
A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*
Greg L. Bahnsen, tape series: "Hermeneutics and Exegesis"
Greg L. Bahnsen, "A Reformed Confession Regarding Hermeneutics"
Greg L. Bahnsen, *No Other Standard* (appendix B)
Walter C. Kaiser & Moises Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*
(to be read *after* the lectures and other section assignments)

Course Reading and Listening Assignments Were as Follows:

SECTION 1

Topic: Language and interpretation; history of hermeneutics

Preparation:

Bahnsen tapes, "Hermeneutics & Exegesis," #1-7
McCartney, *Let the Reader Understand*, pp. 11-111, appendix A
Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, chapters 1-2
Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, chapters 1-4
Bahnsen, "A Reformed Confession Regarding Hermeneutics" (included in this document)

SECTION 2

Topic: Technical practice of textual exegesis

Preparation:

Bahnsen tapes, "Hermeneutics & Exegesis," #8-13a
Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, chapter 6, 8-9
Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, chapters 3-6 & 8 (but excluding pp. 79-83, 131-140)
Fee, *New Testament Exegesis*, chapters: intro, 1.A-C, 2, 3.A, 4
McCartney, *Let the Reader Understand*, chapters 5, 7.1-7.2

SECTION 3

Topic: General principles of hermeneutics

Preparation:

Bahnsen tapes, "Hermeneutics & Exegesis," #13b-17a
Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, chapters 5, 7, 11, 18-19
Bahnsen, *No Other Standard*, appendix B
Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, pp. 79-83, 89-90, 131-140, 161-162; and chapter 7
McCartney, *Let the Reader Understand*, chapter 3.0-3.1, 6, 7.3-7.5

SECTION 4

Topic: genres, applications

Preparation:

Bahnsen tapes, "Hermeneutics & Exegesis," #17b
Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, chapters 9-12
Fee, *New Testament Exegesis*, chapters 1.D; 3.B
McCartney, *Let the Reader Understand*, chapters 8-10
Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, chapters 10, 12-17

HERMENEUTICS AND EXEGESIS LECTURE OUTLINE

Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen

Introduction: urgency, basic terms

Groundwork: General Hermeneutics

I. Language and Meaning

1. adequacy of language
2. assumptions which destroy hermeneutics
3. “the meaning” of linguistic events/tokens
4. kinds of signs
5. linguistic covention
6. personal intentionality
7. sharing ideas
8. social behavior
9. reference
10. texts as isolated tools
11. three key questions answered
12. sentences as bearers of meaning
13. kinds of “the meaning” of a sentence

II. Why Biblical Hermeneutics is Necessary and Proper Interpretation Possible

(summary of general hermeneutics)

1. Scriptural meaning as illocutionary force
2. common theologians’ mistakes about language and meaning
3. perspecuity of Scripture
4. the linguistic focus of man’s sin and rebellion
5. the linguistic character of man’s salvation
6. misinterpretation makes the text our own self-disclosure
7. sources of methodological abuse of the text
8. necessity of the Holy Spirit’s work in hermeneutics
9. Biblical presuppositions about itself

III. Summary: A Reformed Confession Regarding Hermeneutics

1. God’s prerogative to reveal Himself
2. God’s efficacy in revealing Himself
3. God’s non-verbal self-revelation in the created order
4. God’s self-revelation in the canonical Scriptures
5. the relevance of extrabiblical scholarship
6. the historico-grammatical method of interpretation
7. the primary and secondary authors of Scripture
8. the self-interpreting nature of Scripture
9. the clarity of Scripture

Technical Exegesis

IV. Tools for Exegetical Work

V. Grammatical Analysis

1. Hebrew hints
2. Greek guidelines

VI. Semantic Analysis

1. oral form of original
2. history of language among God's people
3. mistakes to beware of
4. clues to an author's meaning
5. figures of speech
6. literary styles-of-presentation
7. special things to notice
8. things to resist

VII. Syntactical Analysis

1. the author's purpose
2. the original text
3. the "textual units"
4. superior-context(s) must be kept in mind
5. syntactical diagramming

VIII. Historical-Cultural Analysis

1. general historical setting
2. specific occasion of the text
3. checking references
4. the text's own history and authorial levels
5. handling cultural terms and practices

IX. Translation

1. necessity of comparisons
2. discernment and subtle artistic skill
3. conventions are not prescriptions
4. the joy of disciplined discovery
5. competing translation ideals
6. necessity of the Holy Spirit's work

Hermeneutical Principles

X. General Guidelines for Interpreting Scripture

1. beware foreign procedures, pre-textual prejudices
2. same literary principles as any other book
3. yet unlike any other book
4. near context and same author are primary
5. didactic passages control
6. originality and uniqueness to be shunned
7. method not susceptible to proving anything

XI. “The Analogy of Faith” and Historico-Grammatical Exegesis

1. broadest context: canonical
2. label comes from misreading of Romans 12:6
3. meaning of the expression as free-floating slogan
4. exposition of Westminster Confession 1.9
5. prooftexts for WCF 1.9 (esp. 2 Peter 1:20-21)
6. Kaiser’s concern: diachronic control
7. exaggeration in rejecting canonical exegesis
8. Kaiser on 1 Peter 1:10-12
9. critique of McCartney’s reaction against Kaiser’s view
10. critique of McCartney’s view that goal dictates method
11. conclusion: control factor without exaggeration

XII. “Principlization” and Expository Preaching

1. characterization of expository preaching and its value
2. summary of Kaiser’s “principlizing” method
3. its inadequacy regarding other factors
4. the competing “redemptive-historical” method
5. its unbiblical, reductionistic character
6. artificial views of declaring a text’s meaning
7. the preacher’s goal and how to accomplish it

XIII. “Sensus Plenior,” Redemptive-Historical Typology, & Allegorizing

1. objectionable character of allegorizing
2. Paul’s *ad hominem* use in Galatians 4:24
3. brief history of seriously intended allegorizing
4. illustrations of main problem: no reproducible method
5. single-meaning and grammatico-historical method
6. is the mischief of allegorizing reintroduced with “fuller sense”?
7. Kaiser’s opposition to multiple-meaning views: unscriptural, not normative
8. McCartney’s endorsement of “fuller sense” than was evident from OT
9. critique of McCartney’s excesses and inadequate control factors

XIV. Resolution of Conflicts and Misconceptions in Disputes Over XI, XII, XIII

1. double-authorship example with open-ended referent
2. later audience realizes expanded referent, yet same original sense
3. later interpreter must “show his work” (based on one of the author’s words)
4. correction of McCartney as well as Kaiser

XV. Continuity and Discontinuity Between the Testaments

1. cultural discontinuity
2. redemptive-historical discontinuity
3. underlying moral continuity
4. critique of Kaiser and McCartney on penal sanctions
5. nature of the disagreement is not hermeneutical

Conclusion: key questions summed up; urgency

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

by Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen

Introduction: title, author, benediction, declaration (1:1-8)

I. THINGS PREVIOUSLY SEEN (1:9-20)

- A. Setting (1:9-11)
- B. Vision of Christ amid seven candlestands (1:12-16)
- C. John devastated, encouraged, commissioned (1:17-19)
- D. Interpretation of the vision (1:20)

II. THINGS PRESENT (2:1-3:22)

- A. Letter to Ephesus (2:1-7)
- B. Letter to Smyrna (2:8-11)
- C. Letter to Pergamos (2:12-17)
- D. Letter to Thyatira (2:18-29)
- E. Letter to Sardis (3:1-6)
- F. Letter to Philadelphia (3:7-13)
- G. Letter to Laodicea (3:14-22)

III. THINGS TO OCCUR HEREAFTER (4:1-22:5)

- A. Prophecy of the Seven-Seals Scroll (4:1-12:17)
 - 1. Background to Judgment upon the first enemy (4:1-8:5)
 - a) setting and main characters
 - (1) the heavenly court of the Creator (4:1-11)
 - (2) God's Redeemer-Lamb and scroll (5:14)
 - b) preview and preparation for the judgment
 - (1) six of the seven seals opened:
 - (a) the four horsemen (6:1-8)
 - (b) two cries (6:9-17)
 - (2) divine sealing of the 144,000 (7:1-17)
 - c) 7th: prelude at the heavenly temple (8:1-5)
 - 2. The Judgment: Seven Trumpets (8:6-11:19)
 - a) first four (natural calamities) (8:6-12)
 - b) last three (human woes) (8:13-11:19), including:
 - (1) interpretation by a mighty angel (10:1-7)
 - (2) foreshadow next section at 6th trumpet (10:8-11)
 - (3) elaboration on God's justice (11:1-13): two witnesses
 - (4) note of finality at 7th trumpet (11:14-19)
 - 3. The Victory of Christ's Kingdom (11:15-12:17)
 - a) declaration of Christ's triumph (11:15-19): hallelujah chorus
 - b) explanation: Satan eluded, defeated, cast down (12:1-12)
 - c) rescue of Jewish church (12:13-16)
 - d) transition: Satan turns to persecute Gentile church (12:17)

- B. Prophecy of the Little Book (13:1-20:6)
 - 1. Background to Judgment upon the second enemy (13:1-15:8)
 - a) setting and main characters
 - (1) Satan on sea-shore, two beasts (13:1-18)
 - (2) Christ on Zion with 144,000 followers (14:1-5)
 - b) preview and preparation for the judgment
 - (1) six of seven communications from heaven:
 - (a) four angelic messages (14:6-13)
 - (b) two harvests of earth (14:14-20)
 - c) 7th: prelude at the heavenly temple (15:1-8)
 - 2. The Judgment: Seven Bowls (16:1-18:24)
 - a) first four (natural calamities) (16:1-9)
 - b) last three (human woes) (16:10-18:24), including:
 - (1) foreshadow next section at 6th bowl (16:13-16)
 - (2) note of finality at 7th bowl (16:17-21)
 - (3) interpretation by angel (17:1-18): the harlot
 - (4) elaboration on God's justice (18:1-24): Babylon falls
 - 3. The Victory of Christ's Kingdom (19:1-20:7)
 - a) declaration of Christ's triumph (19:1-10): marriage supper of the Lamb
 - b) church's triumphant battle over world (19:11-21): Rider on white horse and followers
 - c) explanation: Satan bound, millennial rule (20:1-6)
 - d) transition: Satan loosed (20:7)
- C. Final Revolt, Final Judgment, and Consummation (20:8-22:5)
 - 1. Satan again deceives the nations (20:8-9a)
 - 2. Christ returns in judgment (20:9b-10)
 - 3. Last Judgment before the great white throne (20:11-15)
 - 4. The New Creation and New Jerusalem (21:1-22:5)

Closing: attestation, sanctions, benediction (22:6-21)

A Reformed Confession Regarding Hermeneutics

By Dr. Greg Bahnsen

Article 1

God's Prerogative to Reveal Himself

WE AFFIRM that God alone has the competence and authority to define His own character, work and will, so that man's knowledge of the same depends upon divine self-revelation.

WE AFFIRM that the only unchallengeable authority for doctrine or life, either for the individual believer or the corporate church, is the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

WE DENY that human speculation, imagination, tradition (even that of the church), or reasoning (even that labeled "science") has the aptitude or right to repudiate, replace, correct, or supplement what God has revealed about Himself, His works, or His will.

WE DENY that continuing changes in the world's scholarship pertaining to nature or history or changes in the lifestyle of unbelievers justify in themselves amending our interpretation of Scripture or correcting what it teaches.

Article 2

God's Efficacy in Revealing Himself

WE AFFIRM that God is omnipotent and sovereign, so that nothing has prevented Him from clearly and infallibly revealing to man His person and attributes, His works, and His will.

WE AFFIRM that the process of transmitting God's word through the ages has not diminished the infallibility and authority of the original message.

WE DENY that anything about the human mind and its functioning, any feature about human language, or the temporal and cultural particularity of all communication thwarts God from delivering to man a clear and universally applicable revelation of Himself, His works and His will.

WE DENY that God's use of human instrumentality in proclaiming or writing His word entails the fallibility or errancy of that word as a final product.

WE DENY that Scripture's perfection is incompatible with its genuine human authorship.

WE DENY that the inerrancy of the original text of Scripture automatically extends to the process of transmission and translation.

Article 3

God's Non-Verbal Self-Revelation in the Created Order

WE AFFIRM that God continually reveals Himself as Creator, Sustainer, Governor and Judge to all mankind through the external world's order and splendor, as well as through man's internal consciousness as a rational and moral being.

WE AFFIRM that this general revelation so clearly, effectively, and inescapably displays the deity, personal attributes, glory, and moral will of God that all men are left without excuse for sin and unbelief, standing under His wrath and condemnation.

WE AFFIRM that, apart from God's saving grace, fallen men naturally respond to God's general revelation by seeking in a variety of unrighteous ways (ranging from open repudiation to false religiosity) to suppress and distort the truth about God, resulting in vain reasoning and darkened understanding.

WE DENY that God's general revelation communicates His saving grace or plan, and that it can relieve man's spiritual, intellectual or moral plight.

Article 4

God's Self-Revelation in the Canonical Scriptures

WE AFFIRM that, both before and after the fall, God has also specially revealed Himself, His works, and His will in a variety of ways: by addressing individuals, by typological events and ritual institutions, by inspired proclamation through prophets and apostles, and supremely by the personal manifestation of His own Son, Jesus Christ.

WE AFFIRM that many of these various divine revelations were verbally recorded for all subsequent ages in the canonical Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, which is also itself the very revelation of God to man as a word of both information and power.

WE AFFIRM that in all of its linguistic functions, whether praises, promises, commands, threatenings, questions, assurances, exhortations, confessions, narratives or propositional teaching, etc. the Scripture is authoritative as God's word.

WE AFFIRM that the Scripture communicates not only all of the theological and moral truths of general revelation, but goes beyond what is available to man in general revelation by especially revealing God's gracious plan of salvation and its accomplishment in history, focusing upon the work of Jesus as the Christ.

WE DENY that there was or is continuing additions to special revelation beyond the historical completion of the canon of Scripture.

WE DENY that the theological truths and moral demands communicated by general revelation disagree with the theological and moral content of Scriptural revelation, either in substance or specific application.

WE DENY that the authority of God may be separated from or set in opposition to the authority of Scripture, in part or in whole, on any matter which Scripture addresses, including details of nature or history.

WE DENY that any human judgment or assertion which purports to interpret and give expression to God's non-verbal general revelation may take precedence in theology or ethics over God's own verbally-expressed revelation.

WE DENY any dichotomy between an inerrant "kernel" and an alleged errant "husk" of the Scriptural message.

WE DENY the inference that, because the Bible does not present itself as a "textbook" in a certain field of study, what the Bible teaches in that field may be dismissed as erroneous.

WE DENY that the veracity of God's verbal revelation may be confined to matters of eternal salvation, or restricted to an absence of willful deception by the writer, or reduced to Scripture infallibly accomplishing God's personal purposes in its hearer or reader.

Article 5

The Relevance of Extrabiblical Scholarship

WE AFFIRM that extrascriptural studies in fields relevant to Biblical interpretation (e.g., linguistics, archaeology, natural science, history) may be a great benefit in elucidating the meaning of the Biblical text and deepening our understanding of it.

WE AFFIRM that when such studies appear to conflict with the Biblical text, they may legitimately occasion the reexamination and possible correction of previous interpretations given to the text.

WE DENY, however, that any Biblical text which has been given its proper linguistic sense (in semantic, literary and theological context) may be challenged, corrected, or ignored on the basis of conclusions reached in fallible, extrabiblical fields of study.

WE DENY that modern studies using sophisticated scholarly tools or computer technology may properly produce such novel interpretations of any Scriptural text that its original recipients, without the tools of modern scholarship, could not have gained that understanding for themselves from the text itself (even with the aid of progressive revelation).

Article 6

The Historico-Grammatical Method of Interpretation

WE AFFIRM that God's verbal revelation in Scripture is intended as a public communication and must be properly understood according to the same principles of interpretation which apply to any human, non-esoteric, literary work.

WE AFFIRM that the Scripture is interpreted correctly only when interpreted according to its letter ("literally") in the normal, historical and grammatical sense, taking account of a text's literary genre (whether figurative or not, etc.) and the author's intent (as determined semantically, and by the local and broader literary contexts).

WE DENY that Scripture contains secret wisdom or hidden, subtle meanings which are ascertained by approaching the Bible on some supposed higher or Spiritual plane.

WE DENY that deeper, creative insights and artistic connections in Scripture should be maximized by lines of interpretation which follow no objective, definite, or consistent rule of interpretation which would make publicly predictable and correctable conclusions possible.

WE DENY that Scripture is properly handled by any "prooftexting" method which fails to consult a text's local context as well as the entire teaching of Scripture as it pertains to any particular text.

WE DENY as well that any theological or moral truth (including the larger theme or thrust of the Bible as a whole) can be established without adducing texts from Scripture which prove it or without showing that it follows by sound logical inference from such.

WE DENY that Scripture, as some would allege about any literary work, is empty of fixed and objective meaning so that its language makes no unchanging disclosure, its authorial intent is inaccessible, and every reading of a text constitutes a misreading.

WE DENY that literary evidence of stylized expression, order or balance in a text of Scripture precludes its historicity or factuality.

WE DENY that the Biblical authors invented illustrative stories or traditions and then narrated or presented them as though they were actual historical events.

Article 7

The Primary and Secondary Authors of Scripture

WE AFFIRM that God used a variety of fallible human authors and editors with differences in background, personality, interest, setting and linguistic idiom in producing the Scriptures, and yet the Holy Spirit was in each case the primary author of the Scriptures, thus requiring that the Bible be acknowledged as completely true in what it teaches and interpreted as one book (with unity, harmony and consistency), not many.

WE DENY that the teaching of one Biblical author may be set in conflict with the teaching of another Biblical author, as though they contradict each other rather than complementing and enriching each other in their distinctive styles, themes, and assertions.

WE DENY that any author of Scripture misunderstood, misinterpreted, or misapplied any previous portion of Scripture which he quotes or to which he alludes.

WE DENY that, at the time the human authors of Scripture received revelation from the Holy Spirit, they fully perceived the full implications of their own words or how they would come to pass in the light of redemptive history and further revelation.

WE DENY that any of the erroneous beliefs and historical limitations of an author's society or his own personal misperceptions were incorporated as truth in the text of Scripture, thereby calling for the correction of modern experts in science, history, sociology, etc.

Article 8

The Self-Interpreting Nature of Scripture

WE AFFIRM that the normative themes or conceptual perspectives by which the truths of Scripture should be organized and interpreted may be drawn from the Scripture itself.

WE AFFIRM that extrabiblical themes, perspectives, frameworks or organizing principles which are brought to the text may be pedagogically convenient or effective in teaching the message of Scripture, but have no authority for determining the meaning of the text itself.

WE DENY that any Biblical model or perspective leads to doctrinal or moral conclusions which are at odds with conclusions reached by means of other Biblical models or perspectives.

WE DENY that the pre-understandings and personal horizon which the reader brings to the text of Scripture may properly function to edit its message or render its meaning not objectively uniform for all readers.

WE DENY that the historical and cultural specifics used in Biblical motifs or paradigms hinder a true understanding of the Biblical text, deter readers from discerning its intended sense, or prevent cross-cultural translation, proclamation and application of what the Biblical authors meant.

Article 9

The Clarity of Scripture

WE AFFIRM that God's central message and demand in Scripture is so clear that any hearer or reader using the common and ordinary means of literary interpretation may understand it.

WE AFFIRM that even the deepest divine mysteries which are revealed in Scripture are communicated clearly enough that with diligence they may be cogently understood and taught.

WE DENY that all parts of Scripture are equally plain to all readers or as readily understood in themselves as other parts of Scripture.

WE DENY that there is a need for a pope, an infallible church or council, or modern scientific experts to interpret the true meaning of Scripture and explain to all men what is and is not incumbent upon them to believe and obey.

WE DENY that the true and full meaning of any Biblical text is multiple, subjective, or varies from reader to reader.

WE DENY that any aspect of the Biblical message can be expressed only in irresolvably contradictory assertions or in a fashion which requires mystical apprehension.

Article 10

The Redemptive-Covenantal Development Within Scripture

WE AFFIRM that all of God's post-fall covenantal administrations complemented (not contradicted) each other, being progressively revealed facets of the same underlying single promise of God which came to fulfillment in the person and saving work of Jesus Christ.

WE AFFIRM that the Old Covenant and the New Covenant are one in purpose and substance, constituting a unified Covenant of Grace established by God, with both Testaments testifying to the person and saving work of Christ as the central message of the whole Bible.

WE AFFIRM that under Old Covenant administrations, the redemptive precepts and marks of ritual purity or consecration were temporary foreshadows of the Savior, being a tutor which taught justification by faith and led to Christ, who was the aim or purpose to which the entire Old Covenant Scriptures pointed.

WE DENY that the Old Covenant foreshadows which are found in redemptive precepts or regulations for ritual purity or consecration are obligatory after the advent of the reality they anticipated, the establishment of the New Covenant in Christ.

WE DENY that the New Covenant's displacement of Old Covenant regulations for redemption or ritual purity and consecration places the Old and New Covenants in opposition or antagonism to each other.

WE DENY that the laying aside of the redemptive and ritual aspects of Old Covenant teaching legitimately implies the laying aside of the whole of Old Covenant instruction, as though only those things repeated in the New Testament have continuing authority and application.

Article 11

Scripture's Unchanging Moral Instruction

WE AFFIRM that the moral character and behavior which God requires of man are a reflection of His own holy, righteous and unchanging character, so that all men in all ages are under obligation to the moral instruction found throughout the Bible, both in the norms given generalized statement and in the moral principles which underly Scripture's culturally specific illustrations and applications.

WE DENY that God has a double standard of morality (one for His people and a different one for the cultures of the unbelieving world) or any notion of ethical relativism.

WE DENY that Christ's accomplishment of the salvation anticipated throughout the Old Testament has cancelled the moral instruction previously revealed by God.

Article 12

The Objective Text as Standard

WE AFFIRM that the standard by which our unchanging God manifests His holy requirements and guides the lifestyle of His people is set down specifically and definitively in the text of His written word.

WE AFFIRM that the teaching and norm of the written text remains fully and solely the authority for God's people whether they are historically closer to man's fall from original purity, or to the accomplishment of redemption at Christ's first advent, or to redemption's consummation at Christ's final coming.

WE DENY that God intends His people to live by their maturing ethical consciousness or by some gradually evolving moral standard which goes beyond, or even against, the Scriptural text, the divinely intended control factor for theology and ethics.

WE DENY that since the closing of the Scriptural canon, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and forever, now guides His church as it approaches the consummation of history to tolerate or commend practices which were previously forbidden by Him in the inspired text of the New Testament or the Old Testament (as interpreted and modified by the New).

Article 13

The Holy Spirit's Role in Our Proper Handling of Scripture

WE AFFIRM that, although unbelievers can understand the literary sense of the Scriptural text, the saving discernment, acceptance, and application of God's word requires the Holy Spirit's work of enlightenment, regeneration, bestowal of faith, nurture and sanctification.

WE DENY that a holy and righteous handling, summarizing, teaching, proclamation and application of Scripture can be performed by unregenerate men, even though there may be limited value in their discussions of the Scriptures.

WE DENY that the Holy Spirit ever teaches men to believe or leads men to do what is contrary to the Scripture.