

The Science of Interpretation

by Tyler Greene

With the last few articles I have attempted to show you the necessity for studying the Scriptures. I believe most people at Montreat understand this and so I thought it would be helpful to go over some of the methods of interpreting the Scriptures in the next few articles.

The first and most important one is called "the analogy of faith." It is most commonly known as "Scripture interprets Scripture." What it teaches is that since the Scriptures are without error, we may use them to interpret them.

For example, if, while we are reading Scripture, we come across a perplexing passage that seems to teach two different things, one consistent with the other parts of the Bible and the other inconsistent, then we know that since "the Scriptures never err" (a saying of Martin Luther)

we must go with the one that is consistent. The reason this is helpful is that not all parts of the Bible speak with the same clarity on any given topic. Therefore, we must understand the less clear passages in light of the passages which are clearer.

The Westminster Confession of Faith puts it this way: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly" (WCF 1.9). This, of course, does not guarantee success to the interpreter because of possible misunderstanding on their part. Nonetheless, this is the most important interpretive method.

A second helpful interpretive method is interpreting the Bible

literally. This has, in recent church history, been misunderstood in a number of ways, thus leading to many problems. Theologian R. C. Sproul writes, "One of the most significant advances of biblical scholarship during the Reformation was gained as a result of Luther's militant advocacy of the second rule of hermeneutics: the Bible should be interpreted according to its literal sense....To interpret the Bible literally is to interpret it as literature.

That is, the natural meaning of a passage is to be interpreted according to the normal rules of grammar, speech, syntax, and context." What Sproul is stressing is that we should interpret the Bible in the same way we would any other book. The Bible was written with the intention of being read literally, but it is important for us to understand

that the Bible uses different literary devices such as narrative, didactic, poetry, apocalypse, and parable, and we must recognize their differences.

We should not read poetry as if it were narrative. Otherwise, for David, spending one day in God's courts was better than exactly 1,000 days elsewhere (Ps. 84:10) (instead of understanding 1,000 as poetic number meaning many). So, even though the Bible uses different literary forms, which must be read in light of their styles, the Bible is meant to be interpreted literally.

A good understanding of these two rules of interpretation should provide a solid foundation by which someone can build a healthy understanding of Scripture. In the next issue I will continue with more methods of interpretation.



Sacra

In my next article I will continue with more methods of biblical interpretation.

If you would like to respond, please send me an E-mail (approx. 100 words) to

greenebt@montreat.edu

Theologia

Dear Counselor,

I have a friend who is NEVER sick. When I asked her how she keeps from getting sick, especially during cold and flu season, she said she just thinks herself well. This sounds crazy to me, but she is really healthy. What do you think? Sick of being Sick

Dear SOS: It may not be as crazy as it sounds. We are finding out more and more about the connections with mental/emotional and physical health. Keeping ourselves physically healthy helps us deal better with stress. Likewise, it appears, when we keep a positive attitude, our bodies are more resistant to disease and/or recover from disease more quickly.

Some habits to develop that will contribute to a healthy life include:

- eating a balanced diet—avoiding fatty foods, high in sugar and salt
- avoiding alcohol and drinking adequate amounts of water each day, restricting caffeine intake
- thinking positively, focusing on pure thoughts, concentrating on the future, thinking more about solutions than problems and yes, laughter is great medicine
- keeping things clean—especially your hands
- getting enough rest—8 hours of uninterrupted sleep is usually a minimum for good health

Developing these habits early should contribute to a healthy lifestyle that will serve you, well...well. Cassie

To learn more about this or other mental/emotional health issues, contact The Counseling Center at Montreat College ext. 3538 or one of the counselors at cpavone@montreat.edu or ccopenhaver@montreat.edu. The Counseling Center is located in the lower level of the Bell Library.

Missions Team Fundraises for L.A. Spring Break Trip

by Kortney Blythe

Valentine's Day Bags of Love: Those decorated bags stuffed with goodies galore were compliments of Bill Cain and the missions team. They sent out letters to parents asking for donations and a Valentine's Day letter for their student. Montreat staff and faculty baked the homemade goodies for the bags.

Penny Drive: This annual fund-

raiser will involve dorm competitions between floors. The goal is to get as many pennies in your floor's jar but to put silver coins in opposing floor's containers because pennies mean points and silver coins subtract points. The floors that raise the most money win a nice surprise.

Chapel Band CD: The Montreat chapel band made a CD of favorite

worship songs and will sell it for \$8 beginning February 26.

The Passion Of The Christ: The \$2 you paid to see the sneak preview of *The Passion*, Mel Gibson's controversial movie on the crucifixion of Christ, went to support this year's spring break mission trip.

The following groups also sent gifts: The Presbytery of Western

North Carolina, the Calvin Thielman Fund (initiated by Montreat Presbyterian Church), Black Mountain Presbyterian, and Montreat Presbyterian.

Keep all those involved in your prayers! Check out the next *Whetstone* for more L.A. Spring Break Missions Trip info!

Creative Writing

"Owed" to Bob

There once was a guy named Bob Who was anything but a snob. Alumni affairs was his game For which he received much acclaim.

According to those who knew him, He often went out on a limb Taking the part of a student, Even if not always prudent. At many events he was found, Most often, running around In directions profuse Like a lion let loose, With laughter contagious And humor outrageous. He stayed among us a while Sharing his own kind of style. No matter the need or the plan, It was always, "Bob, you're da man!" What more can I say?

At home, work or play, There once was a guy named Bob Who was anything but a snob!

Anne Ownbey
January 28, 2004

On the occasion of Bob Graham's leaving the position of Director of Alumni Affairs.