

## ATTACKS ON THE OLD HERMENEUTICS, #1

Copies of two sermons were recently given to me for review. They are both by the same brother, who takes issue with what is called “Bible Hermeneutics”, or the way we apply certain methods of understanding what the will of the Lord is for us today. We well recall how the church grew from the time of the restoration movement until around 1980. This was the time of unrest among some of our college professors and preachers who were yearning for a new method of understanding scripture, so as get along with folks in the denominational world. Perhaps this was the mission of those in the Restoration movement, but in their search, they came to realize that goal was unreachable, and at the same time came to realize that the only way to have unity was to return to the word of God, the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:10-11), and believe and teach the same thing (1 Cor. 1:10). At that point many of the preachers joined forces, and the church of Christ was restored. Things went well until late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as some began clamoring for a “new” hermeneutic, or way of interpreting and understanding scripture so as to have unity in diversity, with various denominations of the world.

I recall reading the manuscripts of many who were leading in this effort. They wanted something different, but had difficulty deciding on what it should be. I noticed that a common thread among them were quotations from one Woody Woodrow, the Bible Chair director in Denison, Texas. He hit upon something that sparked their interest, and away they went. The idea of adapting to “culture” seemed to be the common idea, that we should always make the scripture apply to our culture, since it is now different. They seem to forget that culture changes all the time—with each generation, and in each community. The teaching of the Lord does not change, and applies in all generations, with varying cultures. The word means the same thing to America's culture as it does in Africa, when it comes to the application of scripture. Would one argue that fornication is acceptable in today's culture in America because it “seems” that everyone is doing it? Paul wrote to the Corinthians in a culture of “fornication”, and told them they could not practice such and have eternal life, even though their “culture” practiced it (1 Cor. 6:9,10).

The sermons under review by a brother argue that Alexander Campbell is the author of the “old hermeneutics”, of Commands, Example and Inference, labeling it as CEI. We prefer that the “I” stand for Implication, rather than inference. Inference is actually incorrect, for it is subjective, signifying what a person learns from a passage, rather than what is implied or suggested in the words of the writer. It is not true that Alexander Campbell originated such a system, but he can be given credit for observing it in scripture, as other restorationists did, than enabled them to return to a proper understanding of the Bible. The brother states in his sermons that the scripture does not say anything specifically about Commands, approved Examples, or Inference (properly, Implication), and that Campbell thus **added** this to the scripture. He stopped just short of calling anyone who believes in this “old” system, as being “Campbellites.” He stated that we should just study the Bible and follow the “principles” revealed therein. We believe that if we **do** search the scriptures, we can be wise enough to see that the principle is that we (1) Obey Commands, (2) Follow approved Examples, and (3) Realize that certain truths are Implied in scripture.

The words “commandments” and “obey” in varied forms are found hundreds of times in the Bible. If Adam and Eve had obeyed God, we wouldn't be in such a mess in the world today. Noah “obeyed” God, thus enjoying His “grace” (Gen. 6:8,22). Examples that are to be followed are those that show action (where no actual command is recorded in connection with them), that indicate some were acting in such a way as to

know that God required it of them. This would be seen in Acts 20:7, where disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread. Implication is seen from Mark 16:16, when Jesus stated "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Your name is not recorded there, but it is understood or implied that it applies to you. Reference is made to "sound doctrine" in the scripture, which "implies" that there is UN-sound doctrine, or false doctrine. The "brother" under consideration in this writing set forth five areas of consideration that contribute to our disunity today: (1) Hermeneutics, (2) Patternism, (3) Partyism, (4) Twisting of scripture, and (5) Broken Communication. I would love to have communication with the brother over any or all of these matters. My review of this material has involved a "touching" of the subject of "Bible understanding" already covered, plus a detailed study of the words "gospel" and "doctrine." It seems that the brother uses the making of a **distinction** between "gospel" and "doctrine" as a basic way of undermining the importance of Command, Example and Implication. Our brother states that there IS "no divine hermeneutics", and to use Matt. 15:9 with a reference to "doctrines of men" is "hypocritical", and should just look for principles and leave it there. He argues that the "gospel" is **only** the "incarnation" of Jesus (His death, burial and resurrection", that is proclaimed to the lost, and that is the only requirement of salvation (but admits that this includes our response to it in faith, repentance, confession and baptism), even though Heb. 6:1 places "baptism" in the realm of "doctrine", rather than "gospel." The brother argues that the "gospel" is a *proclamation* to the lost, and "doctrine" is an *indoctrination* for the saved (those who accept the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, and that we should not fall out or divide over any kind of doctrine. Does this mean we can believe anything we want to believe???

Our next article will involve a careful study of "gospel" and "doctrine", followed by a study of "twisted scripture". At this point we know not if other matters will be covered. We shall see.

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