



Adv Year Summer Reading Assignment: 2011

Due: August 20, 2011

Assigned Text: The portions listed below from “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,” (IBC) Pontifical Biblical Commission 1993:

1. Introduction
2. The following parts of Section I. METHODS AND APPROACHES FOR INTERPRETATION
 - A. Historical-Critical Method
 - C. Approaches Based on Tradition
 - D. Approaches that Use the Human Sciences
 - F. Fundamentalist Interpretation
3. The following part of Section II. HERMENEUTICAL INTERPRETATION
 - B. The Meaning of Inspired Scripture
4. The first four paragraphs (introduction) of Section III. CHARACTERISTICS OF CATHOLIC INTERPRETATION

Note: An *abridged* version of these assigned readings from IBC is available online or in printed form at the Office of Religious Education. Because IBC can be challenging to read, it is **recommended that you use this abridged version** for the assignment. If you wish, you might then choose to read more of the document and compare it with the abridged version, but this is not required for your summer reading assignment.

And to assist you in your reading, I've attached a glossary of terms, below.

Written Assignment

1. Section I of IBC, “Methods and Approaches for Interpretation,” begins with the following statement:

“The historical-critical method is the indispensable method for the scientific study of the meaning of ancient texts. Holy Scripture, inasmuch as it is the ‘word of God in human language,’ has been composed by human authors in all its various parts and in all the sources that lie behind them. Because of this, its proper understanding not only admits the use of this method but actually requires it.”

Choose one passage in the Bible and explain, in your own words, one way the scientific study of the Bible enhances your understanding of that passage. (Suggestion: Answers from past homework assignments may remind you of passages that will work well for this question.)

2. After reading *all assigned portions of Section I*, use your own words to write a one-sentence definition of each of the following terms: (*Hint: You may use Boadt and other CBS textbooks to assist you. If you do, include the source title and page number.*)

- 1) Literary criticism
- 2) Study of genres (form criticism)
- 3) Redaction (editorial) criticism
- 4) The canonical approach

3. Choose *one* of the following IBC quotes (A, B OR C) below and do two things: (1) summarize the meaning of the quoted text, in your own words; and (2) give an example of how you think

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fundamentalists might fall into the trap described; give an example and use personal experience, if possible.

A. "Fundamentalism also places undue stress upon the inerrancy of certain details in the biblical texts, especially in what concerns historical events or supposedly scientific truth. It often historicizes material which from the start never claimed to be historical. It considers historical everything that is reported or recounted with verbs in the past tense, failing to take the necessary account of the possibility of symbolic or figurative meaning." (*IBC Section F Paragraph 6*)

B. "In what concerns the Gospels, fundamentalism does not take into account the development of the Gospel tradition, but naively confuses the final stage of this tradition (what the evangelists have written) with the initial (the words and deeds of the historical Jesus)." (*IBC Section F Paragraph 8*)

C. "Fundamentalism likewise tends to adopt very narrow points of view. It accepts the literal reality of an ancient, out-of-date cosmology simply because it is found expressed in the Bible; this blocks any dialogue with a broader way of seeing the relationship between culture and faith. Its relying upon a non-critical reading of certain texts of the Bible serves to reinforce political ideas and social attitudes that are marked by prejudices--racism, for example--quite contrary to the Christian Gospel." (*IBC Section F Paragraph 8*)

4. Consider the final paragraph of IBC Section F, then answer the question that follows:

"The fundamentalist approach is dangerous, for it is attractive to people who look to the Bible for ready answers to the problems of life. It can deceive these people, offering them interpretations that are pious but illusory, instead of telling them that the Bible does not necessarily contain an immediate answer to each and every problem. Without saying as much in so many words, fundamentalism actually invites people to a kind of intellectual suicide. It injects into life a false certitude, for it unwittingly confuses the divine substance of the biblical message with what are in fact its human limitations." (*IBC Section F Paragraph 11*)

Have you ever met a Catholic or other Christian whose fundamentalist approach to Scripture seems to have led them into what seems to you to be a "false certitude"? If so, describe the situation and how the Catholic Biblical School might help that person grow in faith. If not, what do you think is the most important insight for contemporary Catholics to nurture their faith that you've gained from your studies in the Biblical School?

5. From Section II of your reading, describe in your own words the difference between a "literal" sense and a "literalist" sense of Scripture?

6. Name one part of the reading you found difficult or confusing that you would like to learn more about.

(Continued)

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Glossary of Important Terms

(Definitions are tailored to the words' uses specifically in relation to biblical studies.)

Diachronic (*literally "across—or through—times"*) concerned with events and ideas as they occur or change over a period of time

Synchronic (*literally "at the same time"*) considering events and ideas without reference to their historical development.\

Textus receptus (*literally, "received text"*) an early (1516) reconstruction of the Greek text of the New Testament based on six manuscripts available at that time

Genre: identifies certain *kinds* of writing (e.g., story, poem, folktale, song)

Milieu: The historical and social environment including the ideas that shaped the way people thought and lived

A priori: Standing independently, without preceding conditions

Targum: An Aramaic translation or paraphrase of a portion of the Old Testament. Refers also to a body of such translations and interpretations that come from Old and New Testament times.

Midrash: (*literally, "to seek out" or "to investigate"*) Stories elaborating on incidents in the Bible, to derive a principle of Jewish law or provide a moral lesson. (Taken from website "Judaism 101" at <http://www.jewfaq.org/index.htm>)

Incarnation: (*literally, "enfleshed"*) Used in Christian theology to describe the mystery that, in Jesus, God is made flesh and lived as a human being in first-century Palestine. Also refers to the foundational premise of Biblical theology that God has chosen to reveal God's self within the context of creation, including human beings and communities, and not in magical or superstitious ways.