

THE QUEST FOR NEW TESTAMENT PATTERNS

BACONIAN HERMENEUTICS AND COMMON SENSE
INTERPRETATION

Testing the Validity of Pattern Thinking: A New Testament Church

- ▣ 1. An Organization—Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; I Tim. 3: 1ff; Titus 1:5ff.
- ▣ 2. An Assembly—Heb. 10:25; I Cor. 11:18
- ▣ 3. Taught—Acts 20:7; I Cor. 14:15
- ▣ 4. Prayed—Acts 12:5; I Cor. 14:19
- ▣ 5. Sang—Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; I Cor. 14:15
- ▣ 6. Lord's Supper on 1st Day—Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:20
- ▣ 7. Gave on 1st Day—I Cor. 16:1,2; Acts 2:44-45
- ▣ 8. Treasury—Acts 5:1-4
- ▣ 9. Relieved Needy Saints—Acts 4:34-35; 11:29-30; I Cor. 16:1
- ▣ 10. Supported Preaching—II Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:15-16
- ▣ 11. Disciplined Unruly Members—I Cor. 5:1-5
- ▣ 12. Discussed Congregational Activities—Acts 6:1-5

CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE? HERMENEUTICS

- Main Entry: **her·me·neu·tic**

Function: *noun*

1 the study of the methodological principles of interpretation (as of the Bible)

2 : a method or principle of interpretation

- *Merrian Webster online Dictionary*

APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY AND HERMENEUTICS: THE CROSSROAD OF UNITY AND DIVISION IN THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

- 1. DOES APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY DEMAND STRIVING FOR UNIFORMITY IN TEACHING AND PRACTICE BASED ON THE “APOSTLES TEACHING”?
- 2. IS IT POSSIBLE TO ARRIVE AT COMMON BELIEFS?

POSTMODERNISM—MODERN GNOSTICISM

- The tendencies of postmodernism include (1) a rejection of traditional authority, (2) radical experimentation--in some cases bordering on gimmickry, (3) eclecticism and multiculturalism, . . .Modernism hoped to tear down tradition and longed to build something better in its ruins.

Postmodernism, on the other hand, is often suspicious of scientific claims, and often denies the possibility or desirability of establishing any objective truths and shared cultural standards. It usually embraces pluralism and spurns monolithic beliefs, and it often borders on solipsism.

L. Kip Wheeler in *Literary Vocabulary*, web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms.html

A NEW HERMENEUTIC FOR THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

- ▣ “A cultural shift in the West is occurring. It gives no evidence of being a passing fad. Its roots lie early in the twentieth century and its effects should be felt for generations to come. The gains and methods of science will not be lost in the coming centuries. but, there is considerable evidence that people are beginning to view (50) knowledge and the world differently.” (51)
- ▣ Jeff W. Childers, Douglas A. Foster, and Jack H. Reese, *The Crux of the Matter* (Abilene: ACU Press, 2001), pp. 50-51.

ABANDONING THE HERMENEUTIC OF COMMON SENSE

Michael W. Casey, *The Battle Over Hermeneutics in the Stone-Campbell Movement, 1800-1870* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998)

CHALLENGE NO. 1

“For the practitioner of restoration theology in the Stone-Campbell movement, the most serious question this study raises is the validity of the rationalistic restoration hermeneutic. Two challenges face the tradition. The entire Enlightenment project and its epistemological foundationalism are under attack and have been discredited in many academic circles. The normative vocabulary of American Common Sense philosophy has also been discredited. Given the extent that restoration hermeneutics is grounded in the Enlightenment and the normative language of Common Sense, can an alternative restoration hermeneutic be constructed? (p. 268)

WHAT IS THE BACONIAN HERMENEUTIC?

- THE AGE OF REASON (1500-1800)
 - Francis Bacon (1561-1626)
 - Inductive Reasoning (the scientific method)
 - Empirical investigation, conclusions based on evidence and tested by reason
 - Command, example, necessary inference
 - The scientific revolution and Isaac Newton (1642-1727)
 - Thomas Bayes (1702-1761)
 - Probability Theory

FRANCIS BACON, 1561-1626

- Graduate of Cambridge and Gray's Inn
- Lawyer, member of Parliament for 37 years, and Queen's (Elizabeth) Council
- Under James I member of Privy Council, knighted (1603-1616)
- Removed for corruption in 1621
- Described "scientific method" and inductive thought in *Novum Organum Scientiarum* (1620)



ISAAC NEWTON, 1642-1727

- Graduate of Cambridge
- Professor of Mathematics
1667-1696
- Member of Parliament and
Warden of the Mint
- Knighted in 1705
- Lived modestly ; studied
various subjects including
Optics and Mechanics
- The father of modern science
- *Principia* (1687) *Opticks* (1704)
- Deeply religious; defended
Bible account of creation



The Baconian Hermeneutic and Common Sense

1. A sense possessed by all human beings in common—salvation not dependent on elites
2. The basis of law and order in society
3. It is not necessary to understand models of how common sense works (command, example, necessary inference)--*hermeneutics*
4. Asking good questions; following directions

A DISCURSIVE LOOK AT PROBABILITY THINKING

- Thinking about God and His directions with our common sense
- Thomas Bayes (1702-1761)
- Emily Eakin, "So God's Really in the Details," *New York Times*, May 11, 2002, pp. A17, 19.



So God's Really in the Details? Probably, Som

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same tactics or even hold the same religious beliefs. Some, including Mr. Swinburne, for example, are what's known as evidentialists: they accept the Enlightenment doctrine that a belief is justified only when evidence can be found for it outside the believer's own mind. According to the classic evidentialist argument, for faith to be considered rational it has to be supported by independent proof, and there simply isn't any. (Asked what he would say if God appeared to him after his death and demanded to know why he had failed to believe, the British philosopher and staunch evidentialist Bertrand Russell replied that he would say, "Not enough evidence, God! Not enough evidence.")

In "The Existence of God" (Oxford University Press, 1979), Mr. Swinburne, a Greek Orthodox Christian, tried to meet the evidentialist challenge using Bayes's theorem. Supplying pages of intricate, technical argumentation to back up his claims, he wrote that many natural phenomena — including the universe itself — are, well, if not incontrovertible proof of God's handiwork, at least "more probable if there is a God than if there is not." (Mr. Swinburne, it turns out, is not the first to enlist Bayes's theorem in defense of religion. In a 1763 paper presented to the British Royal Society, the minister Richard Price used it to show there was good evidence in favor of the miracles described in the New Testament.)

More influential at the moment, however, are the "reformed epistemologists" led by Mr. Plantinga and Mr. Wolterstorff, who are Calvinists. These scholars reject the evidentialist insistence on independent proofs. After all, they point out, the ability to distinguish good evidence from bad requires reason. *but why trust our*



MATH OF FAITH Using Bayes's probability formula, superimposed above on a detail of Van Dyck's "The Resurrection," a Christian philosopher calculates the probability that the Resurrection occurred as 9

state — like "I feel dizzy" — without having to consult other sources. "We believe lots of things that don't have publicly formulated arguments," Mr. Wolterstorff said. "Reformed epistemology challenges the need for arguments."

To buttress their case, the reformed epistemologists lean on Thomas Reid: an 18th-century Scot-

the Great Pumpkin returns every Halloween? Could I properly take *that* as basic?"

The answer, as you'd expect, is "certainly not." But explaining why turns out to be a formidable challenge. Mr. Plantinga has devoted three thick volumes and the last 20 years to the effort, stressing, among other things, that for a belief to be

casually giving th of a medieval synod otent and wholly go permit evil to occ phers wondered. A mately decides wha world, in what sens ings be said to have Mr. Swinburne al

Richard Swinburne (Oxford University) at Yale Conference

- ▣ “Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Swinburne and a handful of other nimble scholarly minds . . . religious belief no longer languishes in a state of philosophical disrepute. Deploying a range of sophisticated logical arguments developed over the last 25 years, Christian philosophers have revived faith as a subject of rigorous academic debate, steadily chipping away at the assumption—all but axiomatic in philosophy since the Enlightenment—that belief in God is logically indefensible.”

BAYES THEORY

- The predictive features of Bayesian Systems' products are based on a fundamental principal of logic known as Bayes' theorem. This principle was discovered in 1761 by the Englishman Thomas Bayes, and brought into its modern form shortly thereafter by the great French mathematician Pierre Simon de Laplace.
- Properly understood, the theorem is the fundamental mathematical law governing the process of logical inference—determining what degree of confidence we may have, in various possible conclusions, based on the body of evidence available. This is exactly the process of predictive reasoning; therefore, to arrive at a logically defensible prediction one must use Bayes' theorem.

THOMAS BAYES AND BAYES THEOREM

- $P(h/e \& k) = \frac{P(e/h \& k) P(h/k)}{P(e/k)}$

- 1. Used to forecast insurance
- 2. Used to predict economics and consumer spending
- 3. Used by professional gamblers

Calculating the Odds

The universe is evidence
of a Divine God

BAYSIAN ODDS ARE 97%

The Hermeneutical Dilemma— Can It Be Done?

Luke 10:25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

Luke 10:26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? ²⁷And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. ²⁸And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS IS ASKING GOOD
QUESTIONS AND GETTING GOD'S ANSWERS

Is It Possible? The Hermeneutic of Postmodernism and Deconstruction

- Luke 10:29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

Luke 10:36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? ³⁷ And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Asking Wrong Questions

- **John 4:20** Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

²¹Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²²Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. ²³But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

Asking Wrong Questions: the Pentecostal Dilemma-Heb. 2:3-4

- ³How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; ⁴God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

Asking Wrong Questions: the Pentecostal Dilemma—Mark 16:15-18

¹⁵And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

¹⁷And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; *they shall speak with new tongues;*

¹⁸*They shall take up serpents;* and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

WHAT IS A CHURCH OF CHRIST—A GOOD QUESTION?

- ▣ **I Cor. 4:17** For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.
- ▣ **I Cor. 7:17** But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.
- ▣ **I Cor. 11:16** But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.
- ▣ **I Cor. 16:1** Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.