

Validation and Application

- Validating interpretations
- Criteria for validity
- Implications
- Contextualization
- Application
- Examples of application

© 2001 Brenda B. Colijn 1

Validating Interpretations

Is any interpretation as good as any other interpretation?



“Remember, I’m a professional. Don’t try this interpretation at home!”

2

Validating Interpretations

- Biblical interpreters are limited and fallible.
- We deal in probabilities.
- The idea of validating interpretations assumes that there are criteria we can use to judge one interpretation as more or less probable than another.

3

Criteria for Validity

- It’s possible according to the norms of the original language.
- It accounts for each linguistic component of the text.
- It follows the conventions of the genre.
- It is coherent and makes sense.

E. D. Hirsch (see handout 3.3 & Klein 202)

4

Criteria for Validity

- Examine the method used.
- See if the interpretation has a “sense of spiritual rightness.”
- Submit it to the discerning community of believers (the hermeneutical community).
- Test it in the “praxis of faith.”
- Subject it to cross-cultural testing.

(From Willard Swartley,
Slavery Sabbath War and Women)

5

Criteria for Validity

- Submit it to the ongoing dialogue between different communities of faith.
(from Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*)
- Examine the practice(s) it legitimizes.
- Ask who benefits from it. (Does it serve the interests of the powerful?)
- The more criteria support an interpretation, the more probable it becomes.

6

Implications

- We deal in probabilities.
- It's okay to be more sure of some things than others.
- Interpretations are provisional.
- We should exercise humility.
- When we disagree, we should dialogue in love.

7

Implications

“In essentials, unity;
in nonessentials, liberty;
in all things, charity.”

8

Contextualization

- Taking the biblical message from its own historical/cultural setting into a new one.
- The biblical message is incarnational.
- It's historically conditioned; so are we.

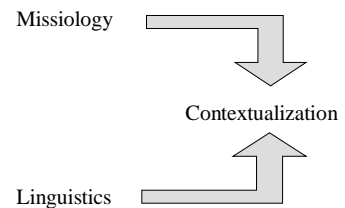
Biblical context  Our context

- This is the two horizons again.

9

Contextualization

- Term comes from missiology and linguistics.



10

Contextualization

- **Goal** = express biblical truth in terms that will carry the same message and make the same point in another culture.
- We must understand **both** cultures.
- We must keep a **balance**.
 - Express the message in relevant terms.
 - Don't distort the message.
 - Make it understandable, not acceptable.

11

Contextualization

- Examples of contextualization: John 6:35; Isaiah 1:18; John 1:29.
- See handout 8.1 on questions to ask when exegeting culture.
- See handout 8.2 for an example of exegeting a culture.

12

Application

- Mistakes in application:
 - Taking insufficient account of the original context.
 - Applying something to a situation that isn't parallel.
- This is the point at which presuppositions will have the greatest effect on the outcome!

13

Application

- We must decide what is **normative** and how.
- **Normative** = authoritative and binding.

14

Application

- Approaches to normativity:
 - Everything in the Bible is normative (universally binding) unless the text says it isn't.
 - Nothing in the Bible is normative unless the text says it is.
 - All of the Bible is part of a normative whole.
 - May be at the level of **principle**.
 - May be at the level of **application**.

15

Application

- Principlizing = A method of contextualizing the biblical message.
- Called “principlizing” because it involves determining the biblical principle and applying it in appropriate ways in new settings.

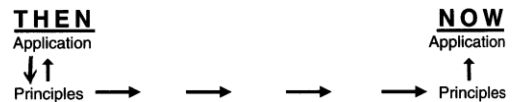
16

Application

- Grant Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*:
 - Determine the textual meaning.
 - Determine original cultural situation.
 - Determine the principle at stake.
 - Identify parallel situations today.
 - Decide on an application for the new context.

17

Application



Klein on principlizing, page 501.

18

Application

- Scripture contains both universal principles and context-specific applications.
- This is especially relevant to the NT epistles and OT prophets.
- This is a critical issue, and one where Christians may disagree in good faith.
- See handout 8.3 for principles.

19

Examples of Application

- Problem of meat sacrificed to idols.
- Historical/cultural situation in Corinth.
- Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13.
 - What situation is being referred to here?

20

Examples of Application

Situation	Cmd.	Principle	Parallels
Eating in an idol temple			

21

Examples of Application

- Problem of meat sacrificed to idols.
- Historical/cultural situation in Corinth.
- Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13.
 - What situation is being referred to here?
 - What is Paul's counsel?
 - Why does he give that counsel?

22

Examples of Application

Situation	Cmd.	Principle	Parallels
Eating in an idol temple	No	Don't lead others into sin.	

23

Examples of Application

- Now read 1 Corinthians 10:14-22.
 - What new reason does Paul give for not eating in idol temples?

24

Examples of Application

Situation	Cmd.	Principle	Parallels
Eating in an idol temple	No	Don't lead others into sin. Flee idolatry.	

25

Examples of Application

- Now read 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1.
 - What two new situations are referred to here?

26

Examples of Application

Situation	Cmd.	Principle	Parallels
Eating in an idol temple	No	Don't lead others into sin. Flee idolatry.	
Buying meat in the market			
Eating in a home			

27

Examples of Application

- Now read 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1.
 - What two new situations are referred to here?
 - What is Paul's counsel in each case?
 - Why does he give that counsel?

28

Examples of Application

Situation	Cmd.	Principle	Parallels
Eating in an idol temple	No	Don't lead others into sin. Flee idolatry.	
Buying meat in the market	Yes	The earth is the Lord's.	
Eating in a home	Yes but	Consider the other person's conscience (believer or unbeliever).	

29

Examples of Application

- To apply these principles today, we have to identify parallel situations...

30

Examples of Application

Situation	Cmd.	Principle	Parallels
Eating in an idol temple	No	Don't lead others into sin. Flee idolatry.	Causing others to sin. Idolatry.
Buying meat in the market	Yes	The earth is the Lord's.	Neutral issue.
Eating in a home	Yes but	Consider the other person's conscience (believer or unbeliever).	Neutral issue that harms someone else.

31