Validation and Application

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

Validating Interpretations

Is any interpretation as good as any other interpretation?

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

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.
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 146)

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)

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.
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.

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

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.
Contextualization

• Term comes from missiology and linguistics.

Missiology

Contextualization

Linguistics

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.

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.
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!

Application

• Klein: All Scripture is inspired and relevant.
  – Not every word, phrase, or verse in isolation.
  – But all of these are part of some larger, meaningful context.
• We must decide what is normative and how.
• Normative = authoritative and binding.

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.
  – Klein & Co.: Every passage is normative.
    • May be at the level of principle.
    • May be at the level of application.
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.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determine the original application.</td>
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<tr>
<td>See if it transfers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If it doesn’t, identify the principle.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apply the principle in a new application.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determine the principle.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify parallel situations today.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decide on an application for the new context.</td>
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Klein on principlizing, page 424.
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 handouts 8.3 and 8.6 for principles.

Examples of Application

• Problem of meat sacrificed to idols.
• Historical/cultural situation in Corinth.
• See 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1.