

Issues in new testament hermeneutics



Gordon D. Fee, the writer of *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics*, serves as the Professor Emeritus at Regent College. He has taught for 16 old ages and has besides served with many other theological establishments such as Wheaton College and Gordon-Cornwell Theological Seminary. Besides being a sought after talker in colleges and conferences, Fee is an outstanding New Testament bookman and a distinguished writer. His plants include commentaries on a figure of epistles. He is soon the General Editor of New International Commentaries Series. In add-on, Fee is an appointed curate of the Assemblies of God who has a passion for resurgence in the church. He is married and has four kids.

The book “ *Gospel and Spirit*” was written in an effort to turn to the absence of sound exegetical and hermeneutical rules both in the Pentecostal and evangelical spheres. To a big extent, Fee is motivated to compose this book by his ain personal experiences as a Pentecostal, an evangelical and an academician. Chiefly, Fee’s mark audience is the academic universe and all those interested in Bible based hermeneutics.

The book is a aggregation of Fee’s essays which are presented in eight chapters. They are fundamentally his part and statements on the deficiency of a sound hermeneutical rules in both Pentecostal and evangelical divinity. He argues the demand for a balanced attack to issues of the function of adult females in the church and linguas as the initial grounds of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The chief subject running through the book is the demand for sound hermeneutics and the right application of the Scriptures in today’s universe.

It is clear that Fee writes based on the theological tensions created within himself over time as a adult male who has lived in two universes: Pentecostal and evangelical. First, the tension between his bosom and caput. Being a Pentecostal, the writer noticed that his denomination (Pentecostalism) tended to reason on the footing of historical case in point and not on sound hermeneutical rules. Obviously, it is clear that their " restorationist" place is unquestionably missing in hermeneutical consistency. Second, Fee's association with the North American Evangelicalism. Evangelicals, like most dispensationalists and reformers, tend to look down upon Pentecostal bookmen. However, their own exegesis, peculiarly with respect to issues of the Spirit and adult females in ministry, leaves much to be desired.

Third, being an academician is yet another beginning of Fee's tension. He found himself caught up in contentions concerning issues of inerrancy and adult females in ministry. Clearly, this was a clash between his Pentecostal positions and his evangelical place ; and by extension, a tension between the " there and then" and " here and now" facets of scriptural reading.

Since the reading of the Epistles, Fee dismisses the statement that they are the easiest to construe. He observes that they are non homogeneous and that " they are occasional papers of the first century, written out of the context of the writer to the context of the recipients" (p. 7) .

Three elements are required for their rightful reading. First, a consideration of the original scene. There is demand for the translator to seek and retrace the possible fortunes of the original scene. Second, the translator must seek to hear the word of God as it was heard in the original state of affairs. This is

of import because it helps the translator to appreciate what was originally said to the receivers. And 3rd, that the word can be applied to our state of affairs today ; which is truly the hermeneutical facet of it. Additionally a figure of hermeneutical jobs arise. Among others, these are issues of cultural relativity, the challenge of comparing the specifics of the original text to those in the present state of affairs and the challenge of finding the original message.

As for the evangelical quandary, as respects the word of God, there is a clang between the evangelical belief that the word of God is godly and western rationalism which is the female parent of liberalism. This quandary, to some extent is caused by the failure of evangelical exegetes to appreciate the use of the words of Bible in the context of the original scene. Besides, the apprehension of the word ' authority' besides poses a menace to as to how Christians would subject to the authorization of word of God. This is further compounded by the ecstasy, as is the instance with the Catholics, of tradition above the word of God.

Looking at normativeness and auctorial purpose, Fee argues that because the Gospel was written in the historical yesteryear, it has an built-in ambiguity. He besides recognizes that frequently times, the tenseness among evangelicals is non on the jussive moods but on the catholicity and normativeness of their application. In position of this the exegete is encouraged to ever seek the original of the writer. It is unsafe to hold neglect to the intended significance of the author's words. Besides our hermeneutics must be redemptional in nature.

A redemptional theoretical account of hermeneutics is based on God's unconditioned love and non on the strict demands of the jurisprudence. In fact, the regulations that we subjectively deduce from the Bible must ne'er go more of import than the people we feel have broken them. To make so would amount to go againsting the really message of the Gospel that is meant for the jurisprudence ledgeman. This means, in kernel, that the New Testament jussive moods should concentrate on the Gospel of grace and non on the jurisprudence.

Additionally, in an effort to set up how much of the historical specialness in which God's word was spoken is a portion of the ageless word, Fee uses 1 Timothy 2: 8 – 15 as a instance survey. This is a controversial issue which deals with the function of adult females in ministry harmonizing to Paul's purpose. On one manus, broad translators dismiss this text as being irrelevant for today based on the apprehension that it is a canon within a canon. On the other manus, nevertheless, evangelicals argue that the text, based on cultural relativity, was non intended to be adhering on the cosmopolitan church but instead on the local state of affairs prevailing at that clip.

The truth is that to appreciate 1Timothy 2: 8 – 15, it is necessary to look into the historical scene of the book. The intent of the book is to teach Timothy to take up the leading at Ephesus and face the instructions of the mistaking seniors. These seniors, while utilizing the places of younger widows for the meeting of trusters, ended up taking advantage of them. Worse still, these younger widows, with the authorization of the seniors, became instructors themselves. This, it would look, is the job to which Paul was reacting. It is,

hence, non unusual that he goes every bit far as turn toing issues of dressing and morality among Christian adult females. What is non clear, nevertheless, whether or non the adult females in inquiry were dressing with the purpose to score and insubordinately.

With respect with the specialness of the state of affairs as seen in the text, it is just that we must be more concerned with the finally obeying the text than reassigning the specifics over to the missive. Although some may reason to the contrary, there is nil in the text that seems to propose that adult females must prophesy or learn outside the context of the ad hoc state of affairs. In the concluding analysis, Fee argues, that “ To deny adult females to curate or Teach in the church is to deny the clear gifts of God himself” (p. 64) . More so, in the visible radiation of the visible radiation of the fact that the Gospel is meant to be redemptional and non legalistic.

Sing balanced hermeneutics, what is the function of tradition? By definition, tradition means a figure of things. At scholarly degree, nevertheless, it means “ the unwritten and early written phase of the New Testament materials” (p. 67) . It is besides of import to observe how tradition has evolved from the first sense to the 5th sense as follows: First, the early Hagiographas of the New Testament. Second, the brooding apprehension of Christian things agreed upon by the church male parents. Third, the equation of church tradition to the Scripture itself. Fourth, the growing of many traditions after the Great Schism of 1054 such as, among others, the evangelical, Pentecostal and Baptist traditions. And fifthly, personal historical experiences which people bring with them as they approach the Bible.

Often times, the impact of tradition on hermeneutics has been rather negative. It is, hence, of import for hermeneutics as “ a community matter ; and the first community to which we are debtors is that of the church in history” (p. 69) . The truth is tradition affects the manner we interpret the scriptural texts. In other words, our traditions cause to near hermeneutics with ill-conceived presuppositions ; thereby, making great unfairness to the Scriptures.

Fee’s advice, in this regard, is that Bible translators must ever bear in head that “ no prognostication of Scripture is a affair of one’s ain interpretation” (2 Peter 1: 20) . At the terminal of the twenty-four hours, all acceptable exegesis and hermeneutics must hold with the Christian community in its entireness. Most significantly, translators must be willing to re-examine our perceptual experiences with regard to how they affect us and others. Besides, Bible translators must be willing to alter and modify where necessary.

Looking at the issue for Pentecostal hermeneutics and the historical case in point, it appreciated that Pentecostals were responsible for recapturing the missional ardor and comprehensiveness of life in the Spirit and yet it is undeniable that they have bad hermeneutics. The existent job lies in their ‘ distinctives’ : the philosophies of sequel and linguas. For them the Holy Spirit baptism go oning subsequent to transition is seen as a clear instruction of Scripture although it is based on scriptural historical precedency. In kernel Pentecostals argue that the experience of the apostles is the normative theoretical account for the ongoing church. Interestingly, harmonizing to

their critics, the Pentecostal statement fails to acknowledge the difference between didactic and historical parts of Scriptures.

Within the Pentecostal tradition, two observations are deserving observing. First, there is an evident neglect for balanced exegesis and hermeneutics. Second, Pentecostals tend to let their experience to predate their hermeneutics and to exegete their ain religious experiences. Quoting William Menzies, Fee points out Pentecostals do non look to the text for the beginning of their divinity but instead to the text for the proof of their experiences. This hermeneutical job is non alone to Pentecostals entirely. In fact, it is more about the reading and appropriation of the historical parts of the Bible.

When compared with the other two books, " Scripture and the Authority of God" and " A Popular Survey of the New Testament" by N. T. Wright and Norman L. Geisler severally, the three authors build on each other's statement to consolidate the fact that before any reading is deemed acceptable, it must foremost be subjected to the right hermeneutical procedure. This procedure must take into consideration the historical and cultural considerations of the text. It must besides seek to understand the significance of the text to the original audience. What was the sensed significance of the text? Chiefly, that is the concern of Wright. Geisler, on the other manus, is concerned with the cultural and historical issues of the text. In the concluding analysis, all the writers seem to do a point by foregrounding the demand for good hermeneutics.

Reading the book, *Gospel and Spirit*, I have learnt a figure of things. First, it is of import to understand the cultural and historical context of the transition in order to avoid bad hermeneutics. Second, it is of import to seek to detect the original significance of the words found in a peculiar transition of Scripture. The failure to understand how the original audience understood them would take to a faulty application. Third, the translator must besides understand the relationship between the original scene and the present state of affairs. Is the word of God, as present in the text applicable to the interpreter's state of affairs?

As a Pentecostal sermonizer, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics*, has influenced my position of Pentecostal divinity. Unlike evangelical divinity, Fee is write when he observes that Pentecostal theologians have a inclination to exegete their experiences. For after sing the Azusa Street resurgence, they began to look for Bibles to formalize their experience. This sort of hermeneutics opens the door to the belief that " The Bible can state anything you want to say."

Equally incorrect is the reluctance by evangelicals to encompass what is a clear transition of Bible when it is seen to be in struggle with the traditional philosophy of the church. In the instance of adult females ordination, evangelicals choose to overlook what the Bible Teachs both explicitly and by implicitly. These are issues that the writer gives peculiar attending to and instead explains in greater item.

Another lesson that I have learnt is it is incorrect to judge others based on our doctrinal strong beliefs and long held church traditions. Good

hermeneutics requires us to judge others in the visible radiation of the Scriptures and a good apprehension of the intended significance of the original text. In so making the translator would be avoiding the danger of misusing the word of God ; peculiarly, as respects the predominating context.

Given an chance to rewrite the book, I would utilize two illustrations to exemplify the importance for good hermeneutics. First, the transition in 1 Playboies 15: 29 - 32 in which Paul trades with the affairs of being baptized on behalf of the dead. In the original state of affairs the receivers of the missive to Corinth had developed a pattern of baptising people on behalf of the dead. This sort of baptism was based on the belief that one was to be baptized on his or her ain history (oibaptizpmenoi) and on that of the dead (oinekroi) .

This pattern made the Corinthians to easy understand Paul's statement. In this respect, analyzing the cultural-historical background of the text is critical if the text is to be decently applied. By all means one would happen that the text does non at all require trusters to be baptized on behalf of the dead. As a affair of fact, nowhere is this suggested in the whole of the Bible. It is, hence, incorrect to even construct a philosophy on such a standalone part of Scripture.

Second, the transition in Romans 16: 16 where Paul exhorts the trusters to recognize one another with a " holy kiss." The transition is a debatable one if non subjected to good exegesis. Greeting with a buss is clearly a civilization issue which can non be made a cosmopolitan pattern for trusters today. The

civilization of Paul's audience is non the same as that of those that would read the book of Romans today.

In fact, Paul was non learning an absolute truth but instead he was cheering the trusters to show through what he calls a " holy kiss." His audience understand what he said based on the pattern of recognizing that prevailed in their civilization and in their alone state of affairs. However, from the transition, today's trusters can larn the importance of brotherlike love ; a rule which is supported throughout the New Testament.

As respects my ability to construe the Bible, I have been challenged in more ways than one. Bing virtuousness of being a Pentecostal sermonizer, I have been guilty of exegeting my ain experiences and looking for Scriptures to back up them. However, holding been exposed to the instructions of Fee, I made a resoluteness to be deliberate in making good hermeneutics. It is of import for me to ever seek the original significance in any text ; to seek and understand the specific state of affairs in which the word of the Lord came. In other words, to set up the purpose of the writer for composing a peculiar book.

I have besides learnt the importance of objectiveness in footings of larning from others. For case, in every bit much as Fee was a Pentecostal at bosom, he was willing to larn from evangelical divinity. And I believe it is the wickedness of pride that leads to the birth of false philosophies and indefinable extremes that have divided the church over the old ages. It is an undebatable fact that any doctrine extreme must be avoided at all costs for

the interest of maintaining the peace and the integrity of the organic structure of Christ.

This reminds of a state of affairs that occurred in the Malawi Assemblies of God. It was an issue to make with the usage of H₂O to mend the sick. This indecent pattern was deriving land and a batch of people were acquiring carried off by it. However, the church handled the issue with silence. This intensified the misinterpretations and began to take to divisions in the church. There were those who felt that it was right to utilize H₂O to curate mending to the ill but there besides those who opposed the pattern ferociously.

It is state of affairss such as this that, left unbridled, have led to the publicity of unusual philosophies. And this is non merely an Assemblies of God job, it is a Pentecostal job. Time has come for Pentecostalists to halt being reactive and become proactive in their response to issues of philosophy and church affairs in general.

In an effort to decide issues such as the H₂O " issue, " it is merely right to rapidly discourse the issue, look at the divinity environing it and, of class, the hermeneutical place of the affair. And so every bit shortly as a determination is arrived at, the members must be consequently warned on the virtues and demerits of that issue. Otherwise, watching mutely leaves to be desired and is decidedly non in the best involvement of the organic structure of Christ.

Time had come for us to borrow a page from history and garbage to reiterate both the exegetical and hermeneutic errors of the past. We need to fall in custodies with all stakeholders and a semen to common apprehension that is <https://assignbuster.com/issues-in-new-testament-hermeneutics/>

Bible based and redemptional in nature. Legalistic inclinations must not be encouraged because they defeat the really work of Christ on the cross. He died to deliver us from the do's and don'ts of the Law and no church or sermonizer has the right to enslave God's people by subjecting them to the regulations and methods that a direct contradiction of the spirit of salvation. In this respect, it is my settled strong belief that the function of hermeneutics is to assist us avoid legalism.

In my appraisal, Fee's book is a must read for all sermonizers irrespective of their denominational association. It is one book that handles the hermeneutical challenge with the daring it deserves. The wisdom and the adulthood with which he handles the function of adult females in ministry and the topographic point of linguas in relation to the baptism of the Holy Spirit creates a wellness environment where outstanding differences can be confronted and resolved hermeneutically. In peculiar, it is an environment where adversarial parties can put their differences aside and hold to differ.