

CHRISTIAN HERMENEUTICS [principles of Christian belief] outline, 2 pgs

(What Christians ought to know with respect to interpreting Scripture)

One of the things that keeps Christians divided is disagreement over how to read and understand the Bible. Unlike other hermeneutic systems that are based solely upon principles of interpretation, this one also identifies certain demonstrable points of doctrine and facts of nature that act as pillars to stabilize the correct framework in our thinking. This kind of broad approach is necessary because people are intransigently bound to various erroneous theological systems by their prior understandings. The biggest hindrance toward doctrinal unity is the lack of interaction because of what people have already learned from others and become comfortable with.

HERMENEUTIC PILLARS

1. Written revelation has necessarily been progressive: the quantity has accumulated through time until the completion of the canon; therefore our knowledge of God, his ways, and plans have progressively increased as well.
2. Christians believe that the 66 books of the Protestant Bible are God's communication to man after the fall: that most of the accounts therein are of actual historic events, miracles, encounters with spiritual beings, etc. and are accurate; that the canon is complete and closed so there is no new revelation forthcoming.
3. The Bible is written in human language and as such employs many of the linguistic devices (such as metaphor and hyperbole) used in ordinary communication. This includes the primacy of clear texts over the less clear and symbolic ones.
4. The Bible both reveals and hides truth. Christ and his work are not only revealed in direct prophecy but also through types (*picture prophecies*) and foreshadowings using people, things, and events.
5. The Old Covenant was a temporary covenant made with the nation of Israel (physical descendants of Abraham) and has been superseded by the New Covenant. Old Covenant commands are not binding for Christians (spiritual descendants of Abraham) but as part of the Old Testament Scriptures are useful for teaching and faith.
6. The Kingdom of God is spiritual in nature and after the resurrection of Jesus "God's people" consist only of those who have come to him by faith in Christ. The kingdom now unfolds in accord with a tension between the present (promises believers already enjoy) and the future (promises believers do not yet possess).
7. The NT is the apex of God's revelation. It holds logical priority over the OT due to its place as the last word in a progressive revelation. The NT reveals the antitypes and realities of OT types and shadows, unveils the hidden mysteries, and clarifies the true fulfillment of OT promises. Proper interpretation and use of any passage involves determining what the text says [translation], and then what it means by what it says [definitions and interpretation] by filtering it through the corrective/clarifying grid of the New Covenant.

8. Truth [here described in terms of *theory* or *theology*] holds logical priority over practice [or application], that is, the unchanging theoretical [theological] framework is the necessary foundation for changing [adaptive, situational, relational] practical applications.
9. Scripture teaches both Divine sovereignty and human responsibility & accountability.
10. God is the one Necessary Being. It is not possible for anything to exist unless God exists. He cannot not be if anything finite is to exist. He alone has the power of **being** in himself and this necessarily incorporates the idea of eternity. All else is dependent, derivative, provisional, contingent, conditional. Given the form and complexity of all things and the personal nature of intelligent life, the NECESSARY BEING has to be personal as well as intelligent.
11. God's existence as a personal being is in the form of Trinity (aka Godhead). He is one God living as 3 persons in harmonious relationship characterized by love. His divine nature forms the basis for all unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation.
12. Jesus is fully God and fully man in one person through his incarnation being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. He is truly human yet without inherited sin through Adam - tempted to sin yet proven righteous.
13. The universe has 2 parts, one is the natural realm and the other is the spiritual realm. Every particular must have an origin. Neither the universe nor any part of it can be perpetual because the chain of cause and effect requires a FIRST CAUSE. Causality expresses the basic manner in which the eternal God operates the universe. Every rational creature has the capacity to begin or alter a chain of cause and effect. Because God intercedes, blesses, and judges, there is a cause and effect relationship between the spiritual and the physical aspects of the universe that is not merely mechanical.
14. The natural world is real and objective rather than something like a dream of God. The elements of the universe act and react predictably in accord with their make-up. This is the core of rationality and the reason cause and effect works reliably. Each particular behaves according to the absolute of its own nature - according to what it is (what God made it to be). This principle is applicable to every created thing, whether materials, energies, forces, or living organisms. Therefore the world is objective, not arbitrary, capricious, or subjectively understood. And God is free to alter the attributes and reactions of the constituents of the natural universe as he will.
15. Absolutes of the physical realm are mirrored by the moral absolutes of the universe that apply to all rational beings. Moral absolutes are ethical objectives or restrictions governed by the character of God describing right and wrong, good and bad, what one should and should not do. Here the constraint is a matter of character, of decision and choice rather than of ability. God himself is also constrained in this way by his own essence, nature, and character - He is unchanging, omniscient, righteous, and good.
16. The person, work, and teachings of Jesus in the NT comprise the highest and most complete revelation of the character of God.