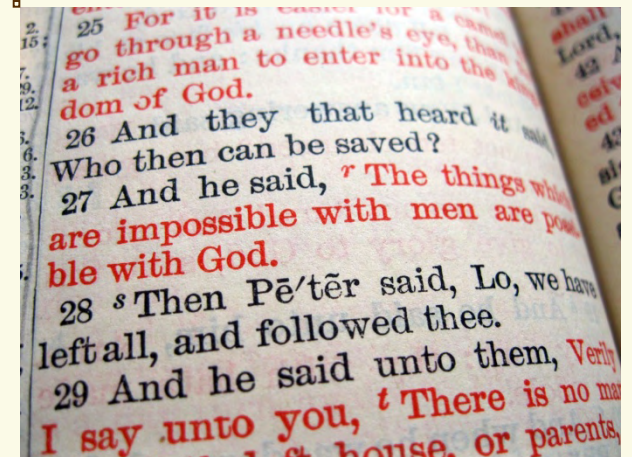
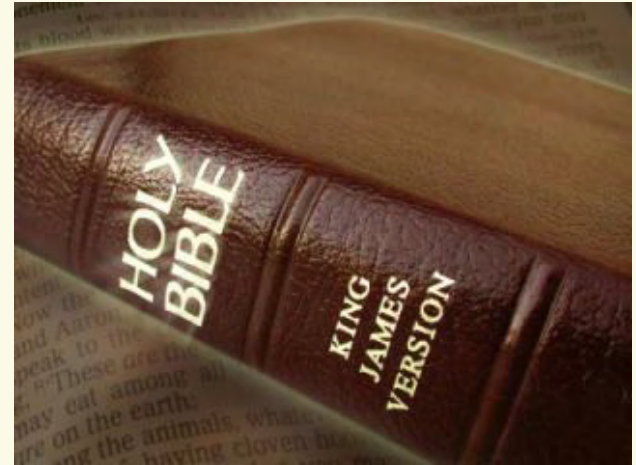


# *Major Elements of a Reformed Hermeneutic*

1. The Holy Spirit Element
2. The Grammatical Element
3. The Literary Element
4. *The Historical Element*
5. The Theological Element

# The Historical Element

- The Bible did not fall from heaven in the King James Version, with red letters, and a concordance along with maps in the back!
- Instead every passage in the Bible has a historical context—a specific historical situation which caused the text to come into existence
- Knowing the historical context is crucial to interpreting any biblical text properly



# The Historical Element

- Page 1: The Trouble in the Text
- Page 2: The Trouble in the World
- Page 3: The Grace in the Text
- Page 4: The Grace in the World

## THE FOUR PAGES OF THE SERMON



*A Guide to Biblical Preaching*  
**PAUL SCOTT WILSON**

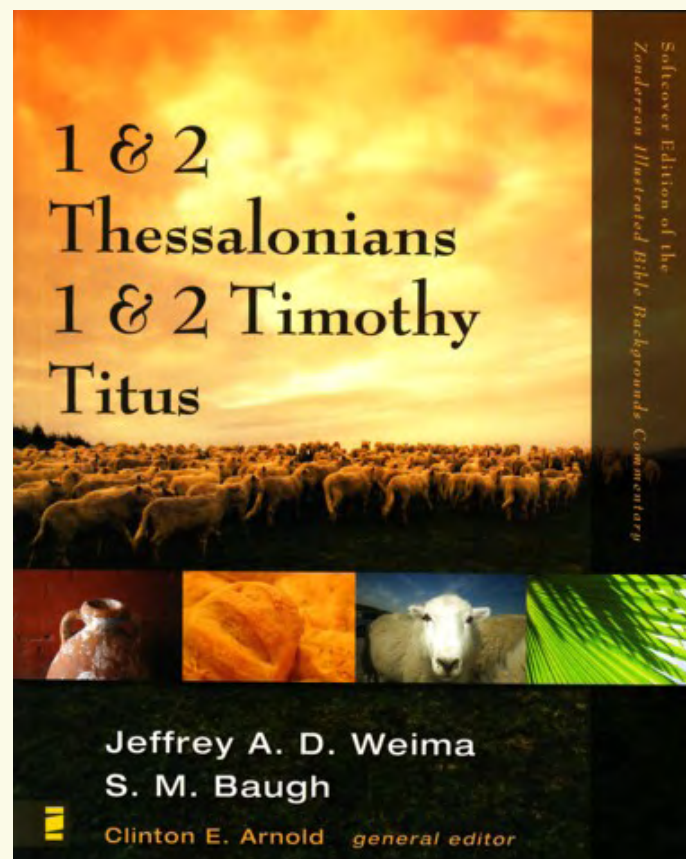
# The Historical Element

- German phrase “Sitz im Leben”
- Literally means “Situation in Life”
- Phrase commonly used in German biblical scholarship to refer to the historical context or social setting or cultural background of any given text



# The Historical Element

- Series is entitled: “Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary”
- Term “Backgrounds” reflects emphasis in this commentary series to show how the ancient world of the 1<sup>st</sup> century sheds light on the proper interpretation of the NT





# The Historical Element

- Example: Luke 10:25-37
  - Parable of the Good Samaritan



*The Good Samaritan, Rembrandt*

# Parable of the Good Samaritan



Samaritans = Decendants of 10 Lost Tribes of Israel

# Parable of the Good Samaritan





# Parable of the Good Samaritan



*Jesus speaks with the Samaritan woman  
at a Well. Catacomb Mural, 4th/5th AD.*

**John 4:9** “The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?’”

# Parable of the Good Samaritan

- Modern title of the parable

**ox·y·mo·ron**

(*ŏk'sē-mŏr'ŏn*)

**NOUN:** A phrase in which incongruous or contradictory terms are combined



# Parable of the Good Samaritan

- The answer of the “expert in the law”:
- <sup>36</sup> “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” <sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, “*The one who had mercy on him.*”
- Circumlocution: a roundabout or indirect way of speaking



# Parable of the Good Samaritan

- The application of Parable:
- Priest & Levite: historical reasons why they may have had logical excuses *not* to stop and help out person in need
- Parallel with believers today



Priest & Levite = Who Today?



# The Historical Element

## ✓ Problem of the “Historical Gap”



# The Historical Element

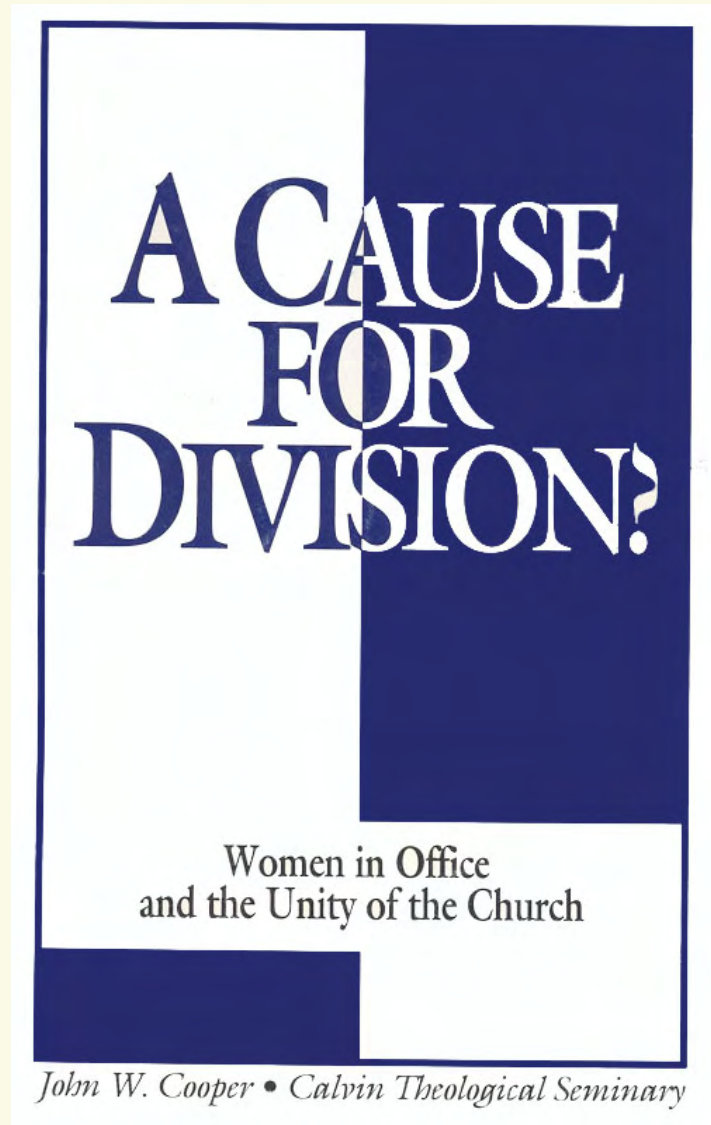
- Distinction between viewing the Bible as “culturally conditioned” or “culturally bound”
- Culturally conditioned: Bible is conditioned/impacted by its ancient culture but still relevant for church today
- Culturally bound: Bible is bound to its original ancient culture and thus not relevant for church today



Relationship between the Bible and Ancient World & Its Culture

John Cooper (1991):

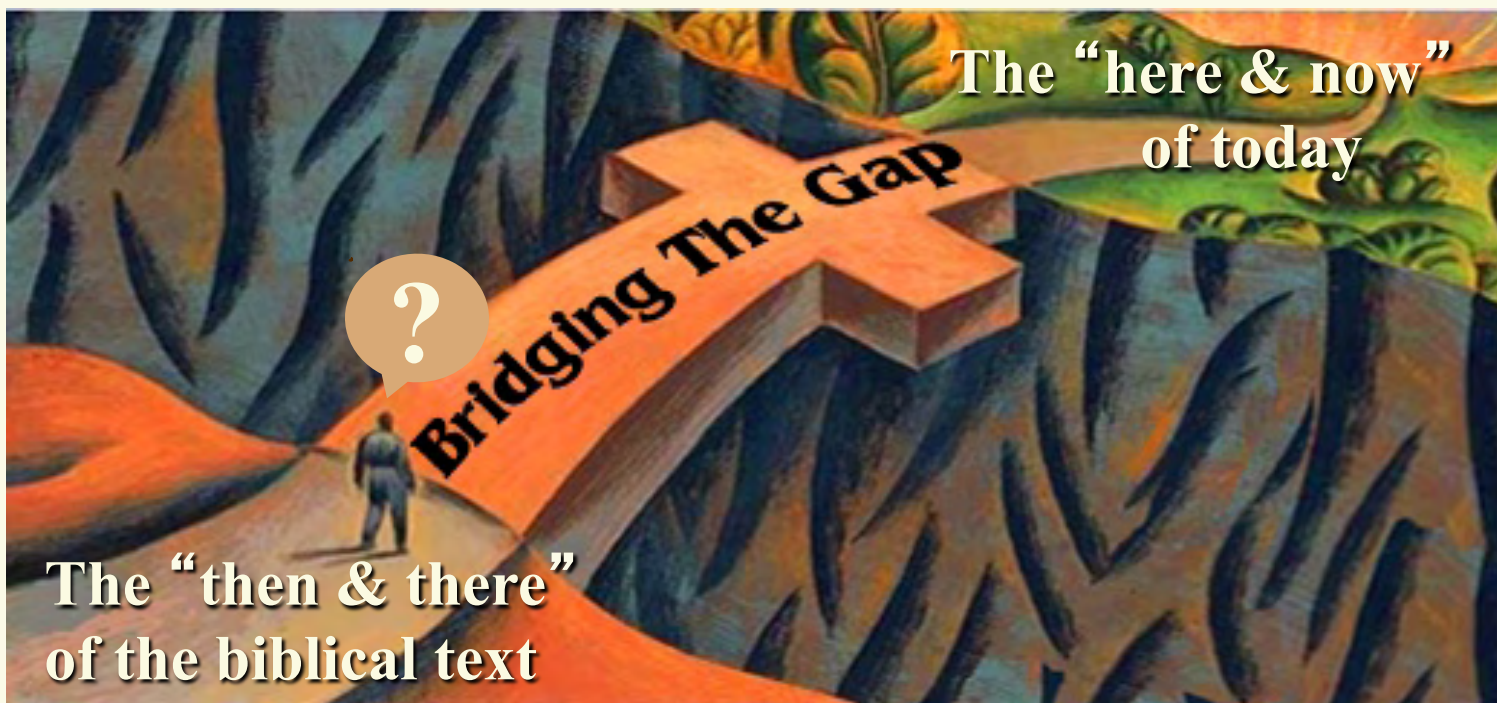
“But first it is crucial to reiterate that all of the Bible is authoritative and normative for today. The issue is not *whether* the Bible is normative or *which parts* are normative, but *how* it is normative for today.” (p. 26)





# The Historical Element

Q: How can one bridge the “Historical Gap”?





# The Historical Element

Step #1: Discover the abiding principle or underlying moral truth claim (exegetis)



# The Historical Element

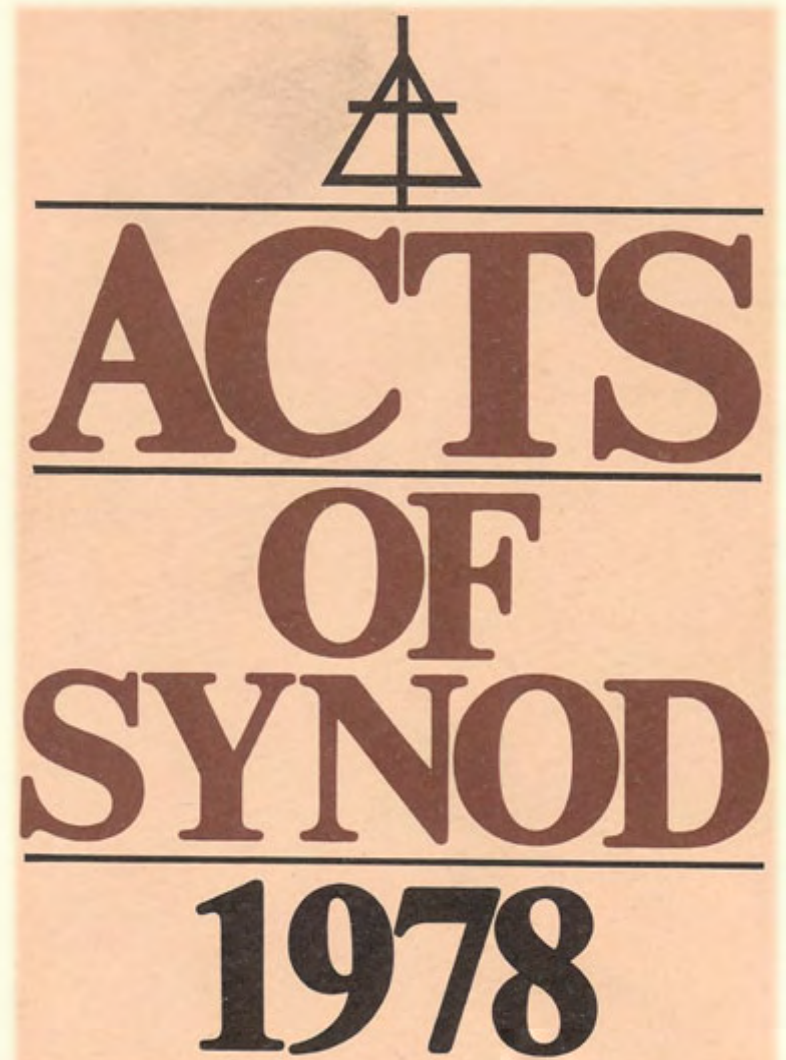
Step #2: Apply that abiding principle to today's new and contemporary situation (homiletics)



Acts of Synod, 1978

“Hermeneutical Principles  
Concerning Women in  
Ecclesiastical Office”:

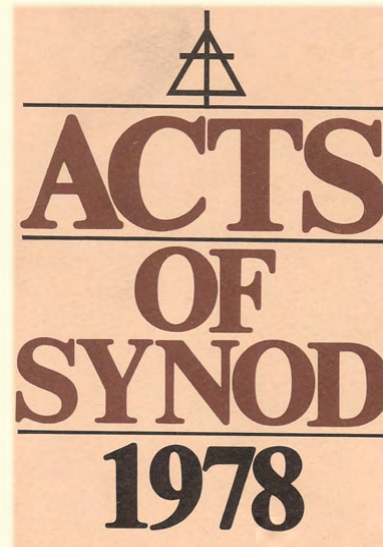
“A distinction must be  
made between a *moral  
principle* and the  
*application of that  
principle*. The former is  
normative for the Christian  
life today, the latter is not  
necessarily so.” (p. 500;  
emphasis added)





## Acts of Synod, 1978

“Hermeneutical Principles Concerning Women in Ecclesiastical Office”:



“The biblical text often contains concrete applications made in specific historical situations. Care should be taken not to transfer such applications directly to the different situations obtaining today. One must first seek to discover the abiding principle... Only after discovering the underlying principle, can one seek to apply it in a different situation today” (p 500)



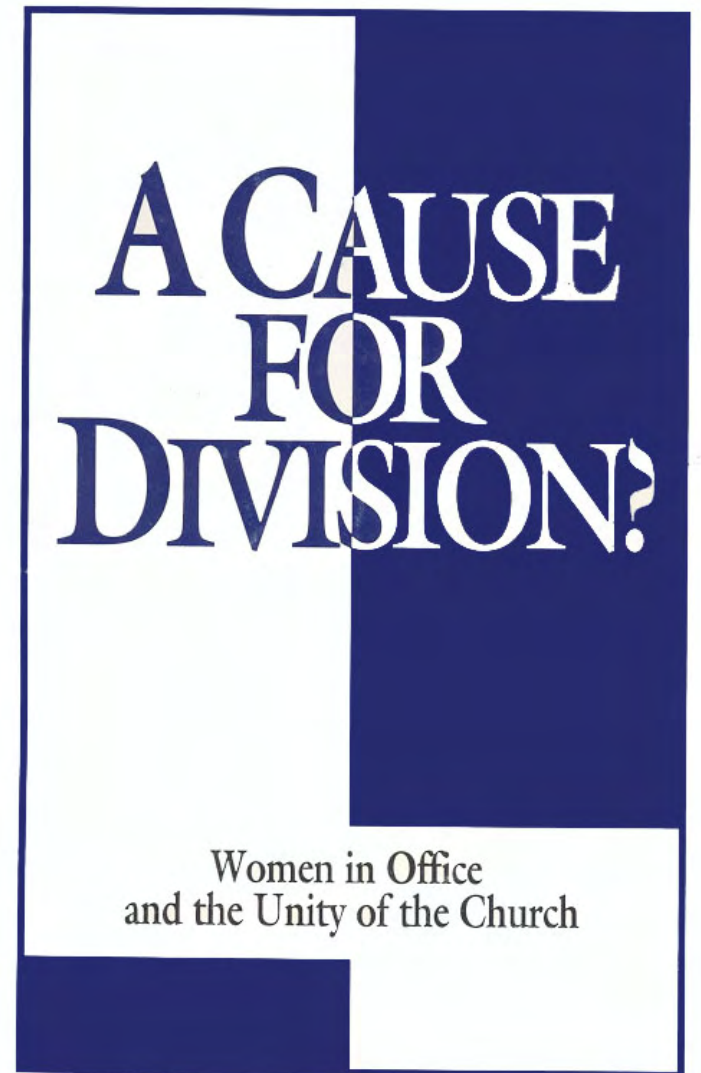


Louis Berkhof, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1932; 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition, 1941): 174-175

“Sometimes we may have to come to the conclusion that, while certain laws no more apply in the form in which they were cast, yet their underlying principle is just as binding today as it ever was.”

John Cooper (1991):

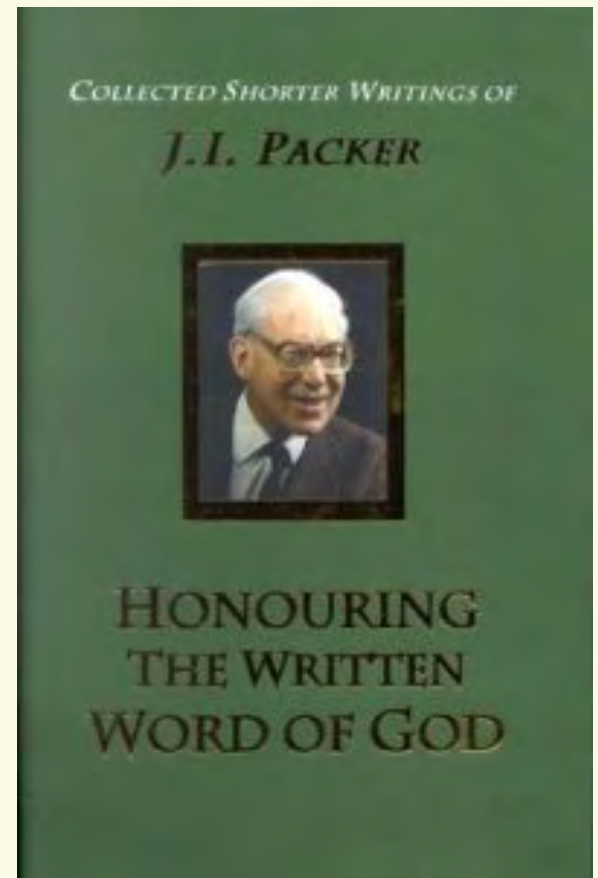
“Reformed hermeneutics recognizes the difference between a principle and the application of that principle. A principle states God’s abiding will for our lives, but how that principle is applied may vary according to time and place.” (p 29)



*John W. Cooper • Calvin Theological Seminary*

James I. Packer:

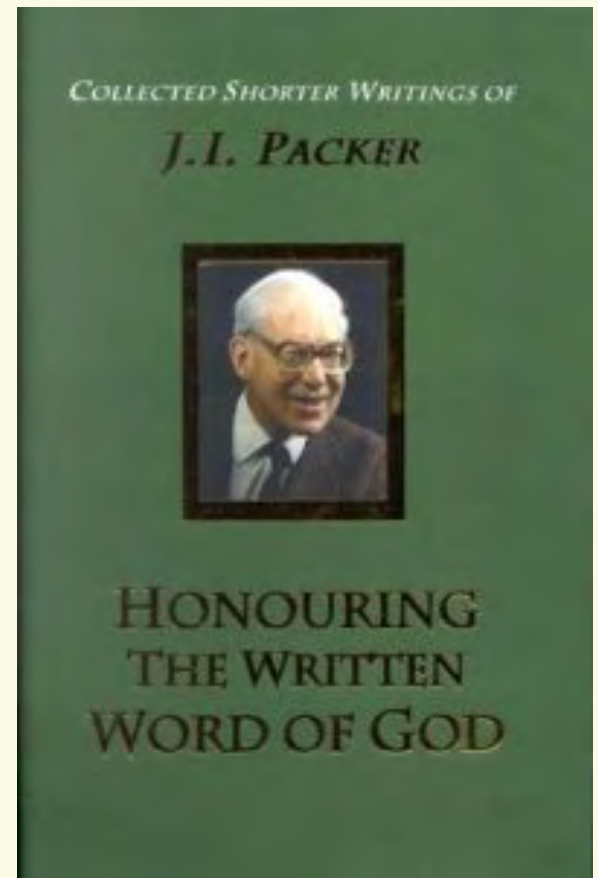
“So, just as it is possible to identify in all the books of Scripture universal and abiding truths about the will, work and ways of God, it is equally possible to find in every one of them *universal and abiding principles* of loyalty and devotion to the holy, gracious Creator; and then to detach these from the particular situations to which, and the cultural frames within which, the books apply them, and to ...



James I. Packer:

... reapply them to ourselves in the places, circumstances, and conditions of our own lives today” (page 157)

Quote from “Understanding the Bible: Evangelical Hermeneutics,” *Honouring the Written Word of God* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999) 3.157 (originally published in *Restoring the Vision: Anglican Evangelical Speak Out* [1990]: 39-58).





# Differing Degrees of Cultural Influence in Scripture

## Minimal Cultural Influence: Col 3:1-3

*“Since (literally ‘if’), then, you have been raised with Christ, set your minds on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God”*

Step 1: Discover the abiding principle or underlying moral truth claim (exegesis)

Step 2: Apply that abiding principle to today’s new and contemporary situation (homiletics)

# Differing Degrees of Cultural Influence in Scripture

## **Some Cultural Influence: Eph 2:11-22**

Division between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians over the issue of circumcision.

Step 1: Discover the abiding principle or underlying moral truth claim (exegesis)

Step 2: Apply that abiding principle to today's new and contemporary situation (homiletics)

# Differing Degrees of Cultural Influence in Scripture

## **Great Cultural Influence: 1 Cor. 16:20b**

*“Greet one another with a holy kiss”*

Step 1: Discover the abiding principle or underlying moral truth claim (exegesis)

Step 2: Apply that abiding principle to today’s new and contemporary situation (homiletics)

# Holy Kiss

