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The Necessity of Biblical Hermeneutics

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Objection:

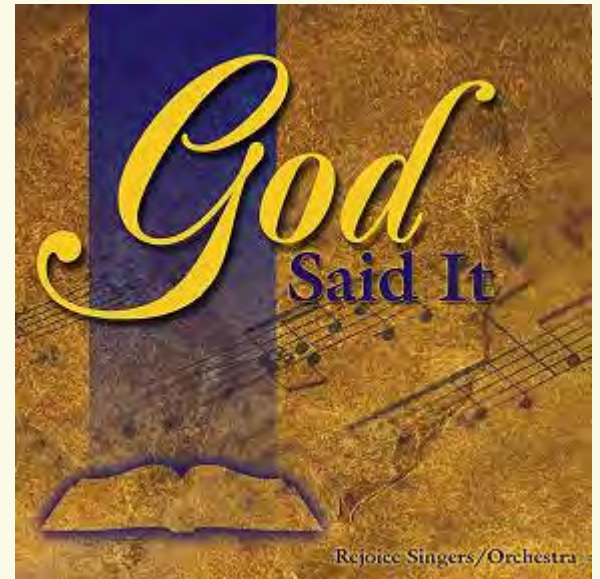
“We don’t need rules (hermeneutics) to understand the Bible. All you have to do is simply read it and do what it says!”



The Necessity of Biblical Hermeneutics

Song:

“God said it,
I believe it,
And that settles it for me!”



The Necessity of Biblical Hermeneutics

Response #1:

- Affirm the Perspicuity of Scripture



Affirm the *Perspicuity* of Scripture

- Historical understanding of the term “perspicuity”
- Although the Reformers affirmed that Scripture was perspicuous or clear, they did not mean that everything in the whole Bible was simple or easy to understand

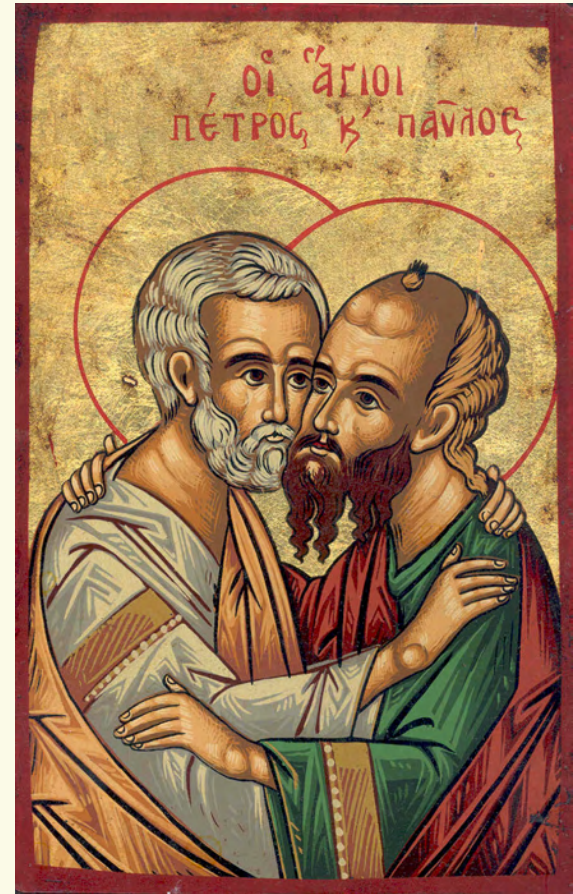


Protestant Reformers:
Zwingli, Wycliffe, Hus,
Luther, Calvin

Affirm the *Perspicuity* of Scripture

➤ 2 Peter 3:16

“There are some things in
them [i.e. the letters of Paul]
hard to understand...”



Peter & Paul

Affirm the *Perspicuity* of Scripture

➤ Acts 8:26-40

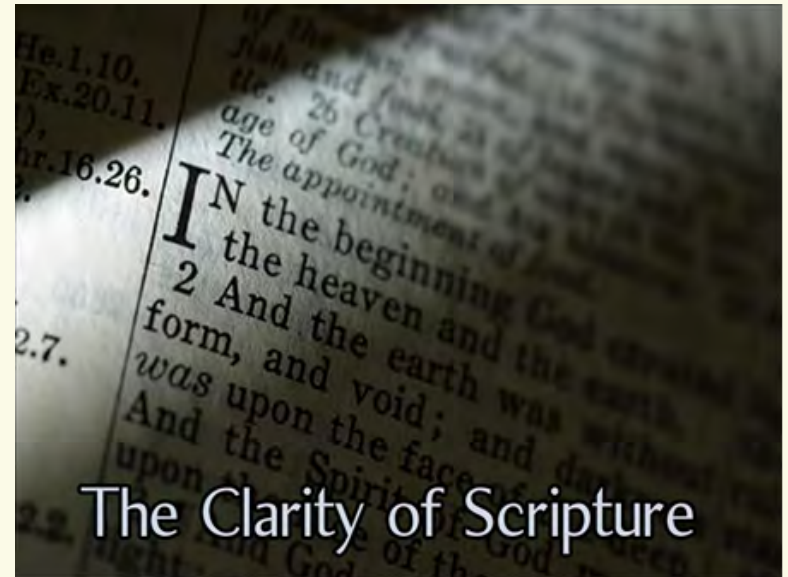
“Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ Philip asked. He answered, ‘How can I unless someone explains it to me?’” (verse 30-31)



Philip & the
Ethiopian Eunuch

Affirm the *Perspicuity* of Scripture

- A “restricted” or “narrow” sense of the term perspicuity
- Term “perspicuity” not applied to everything in the Bible but limited to those things that must be known for salvation



Affirm the *Perspicuity* of Scripture



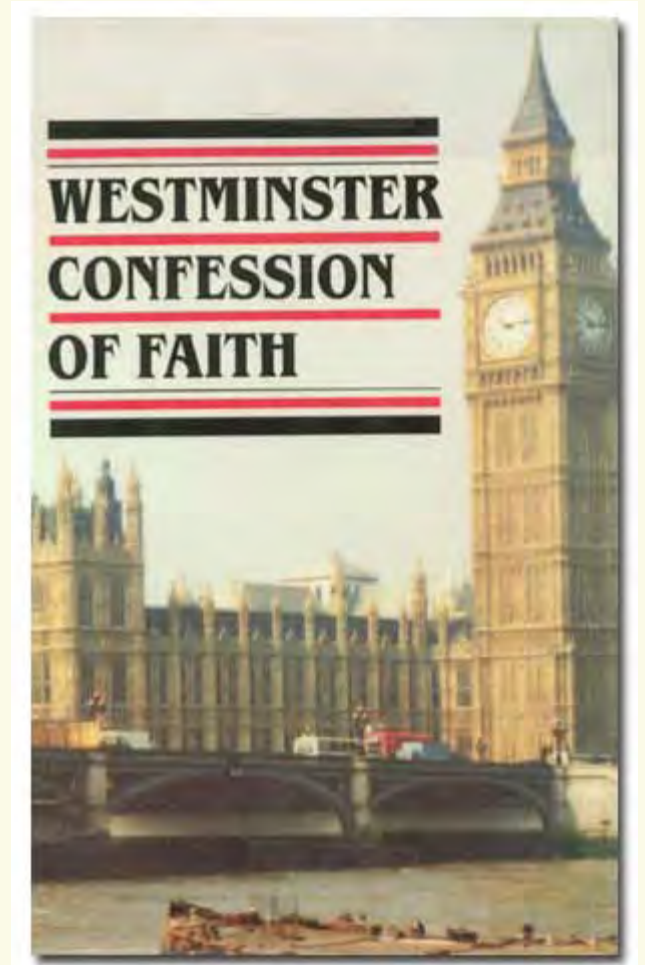
Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*:

“I admit, of course that there are many texts in the Scriptures that are obscure and abstruse, not because of the majesty of their subject matter, but because of our ignorance of their vocabulary and grammar; but these texts in no way hinder a knowledge of all the subject matter of Scripture” (response to Erasmus)

Affirm the *Perspicuity* of Scripture

Westminster Confession (1643-1648)

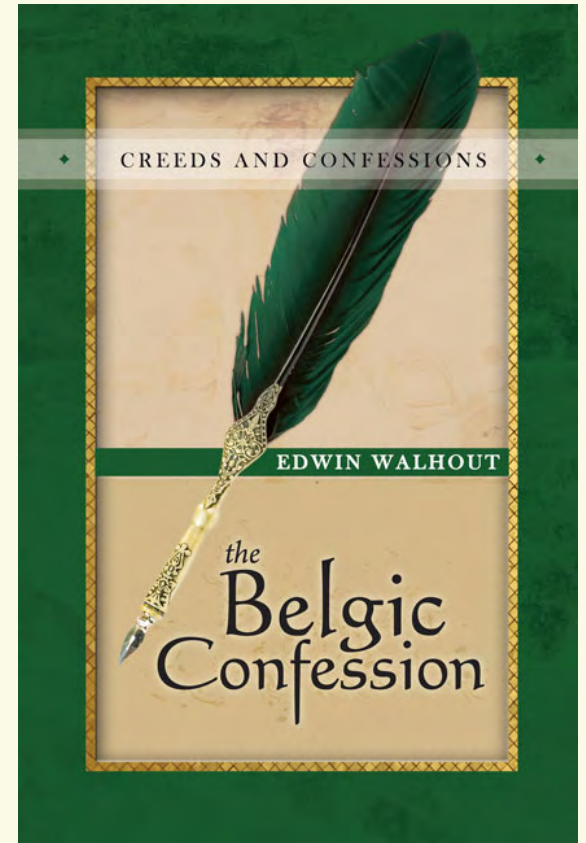
“All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; *yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation*, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.” (Chapter 1, Article 7)



Affirm the *Perspicuity* of Scripture

Belgic Confession (1561)

“Second, he makes himself known to us more openly by his holy and divine Word, *as much as we need* in this life, for his glory and for the salvation of his own” (Article 2)

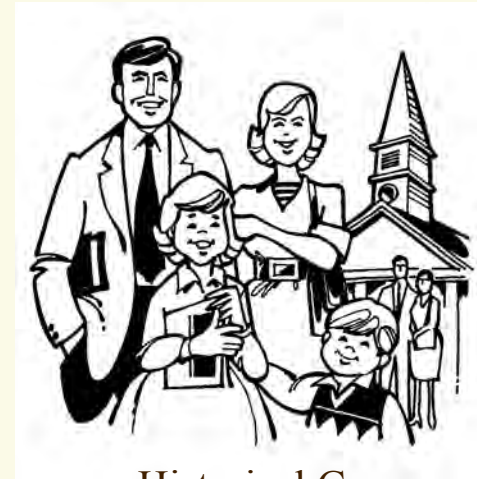


Guido de Bres,
Belgian Pastor

Affirm the *Necessity* of Biblical Hermeneutics

Response #2:

➤ An easy understanding of the Bible is hindered by several “gaps” that exist between the Bible and us, thereby requiring the use of hermeneutics

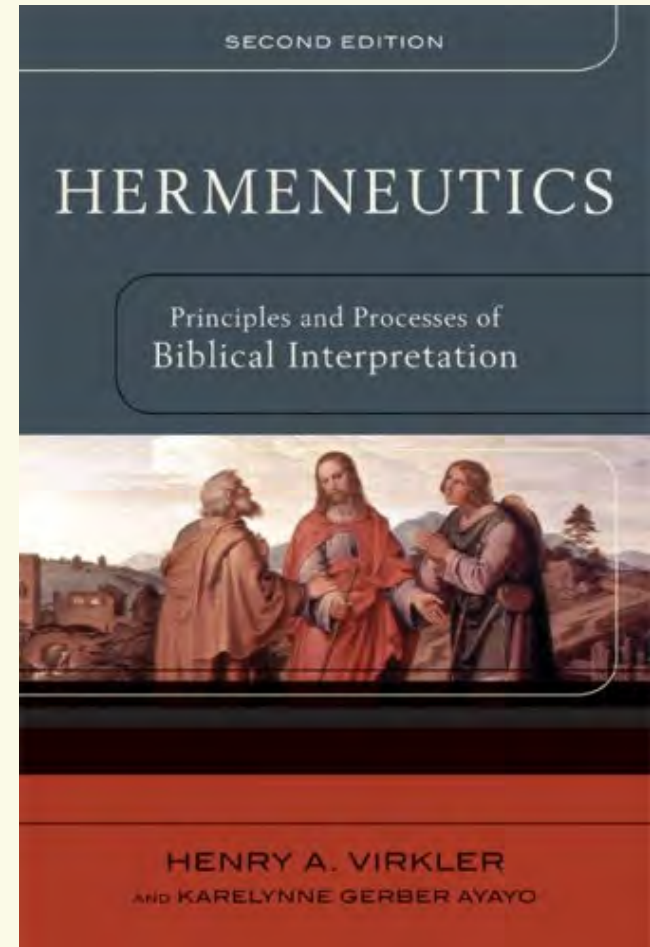


Historical Gap
Cultural Gap
Philosophical Gap
Linguistic Gap



Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics. Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981; 2nd edition 2007.

“Hermeneutics is needed, then, because of the historical, cultural, philosophical, and linguistic gaps that block a spontaneous, accurate understanding of God’s word” (page 20)



Affirm the *Necessity* of Biblical Hermeneutics

Response #3:

- All people already have a hermeneutic!
- Key issue: What kind of hermeneutic do they have?



“Church Lady”