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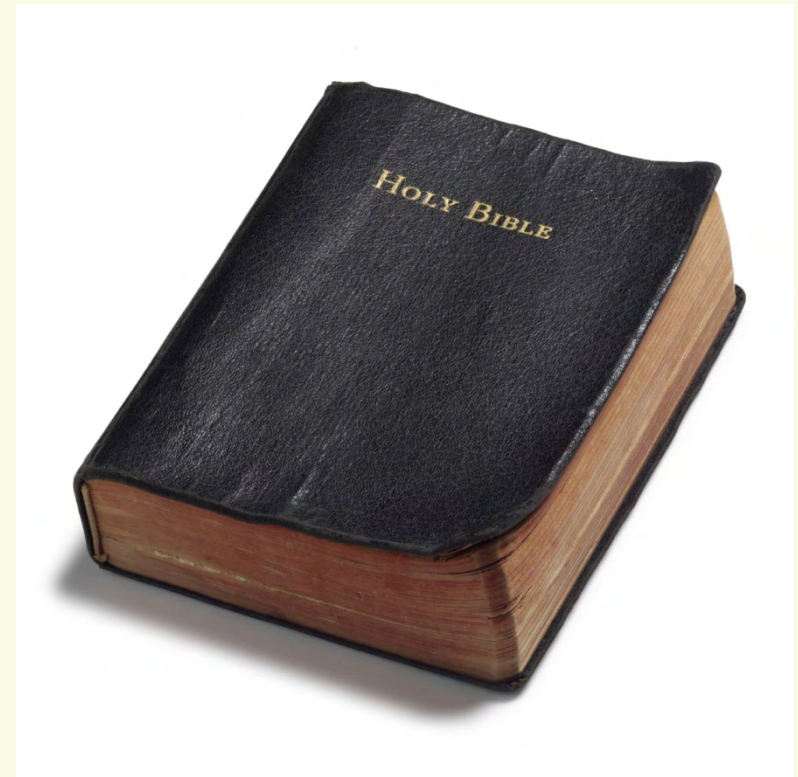
Major Elements of a Reformed Hermeneutic

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 Holy Spirit Element

- The same Holy Spirit who inspired the biblical writers *to record* God's revelation needs to work in our heart and mind *to understand and accept* that revelation



The Holy Spirit Element



John 14:26

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

John 16:13-15

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth ...he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

The Holy Spirit Element



1 Corinthians 2:10-11

“God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one *knows* (ἔγνωκεν) the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”

The Holy Spirit Element



1 Corinthians 2:14

“The person without the Spirit does not *accept* (δέχεται) the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot *understand* (οὐ δύναται γνῶναι) them because they are discerned only through the Spirit”

The Holy Spirit Element



Issue:

Does the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit cause believers to **KNOW/UNDERSTAND** or to **ACCEPT** the will of God as revealed in the Bible?



Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*

“... no man perceives one iota of what is in the Scriptures unless he has the Spirit of God. All men have a darkened heart, so that even if they can recite every-thing in Scripture, and know how to quote it, yet they apprehend and truly understand nothing of it... For the Spirit is required for the understanding of Scripture, both as a whole and in any part of it.”

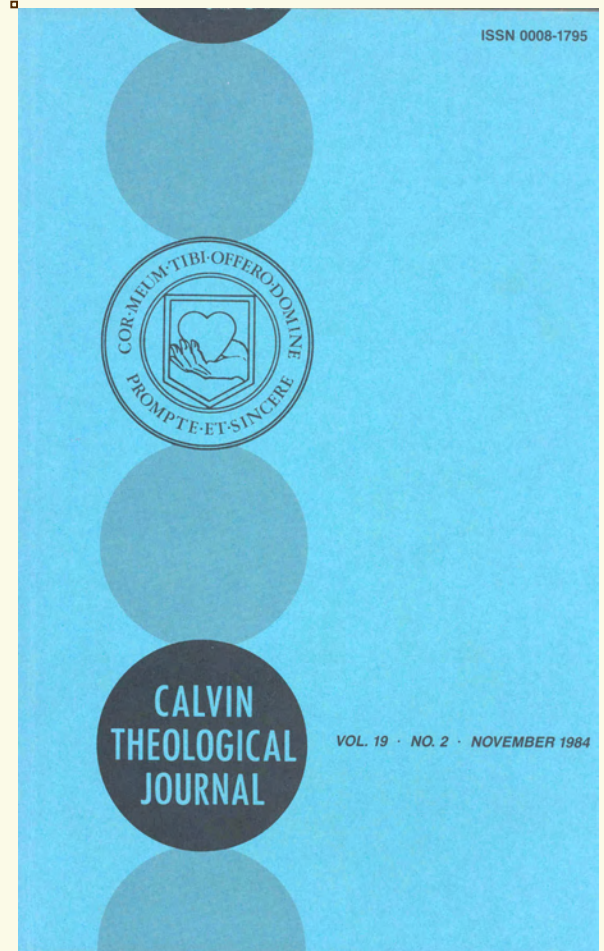
John Calvin (in a sermon on 1 Timothy 3:8-10):



“When we come to hear the sermon or to take up the Bible, we must not have the foolish arrogance of thinking that we shall easily understand everything we hear or read. But we must come with reverence, we must wait entirely upon God, *knowing that we need to be taught by his Holy Spirit, and that without Him we cannot understand anything that is shown to us in his Word.*”

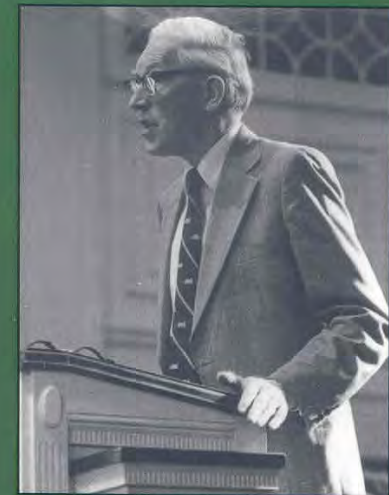
Klaas Runia, "The Hermeneutics of the Reformers," *Calvin Theological Journal* 19.2 (1984): 121-152.

“Finally, if we want to come to a truly biblical hermeneutics, we must realize with the Reformers that the Word of God cannot be understood without the illumination of the Spirit of God ... The final key to the hermeneutics of the Reformers is the confession ‘*Spiritus Sanctus est Verus Interpres Scripturae*’ (the Holy Spirit is the true interpreter of Scripture). Therefore the beginning and end of all biblical hermeneutics is the humble prayer ‘*Veni Creator Spiritus*’ (Come, Creator Spirit)” (pp 151-152).



J. I. Packer, “Understanding the Bible: Evangelical Hermeneutics,”
Honoring the Written Word of God (Paternoster, 1999) 3.147-160.

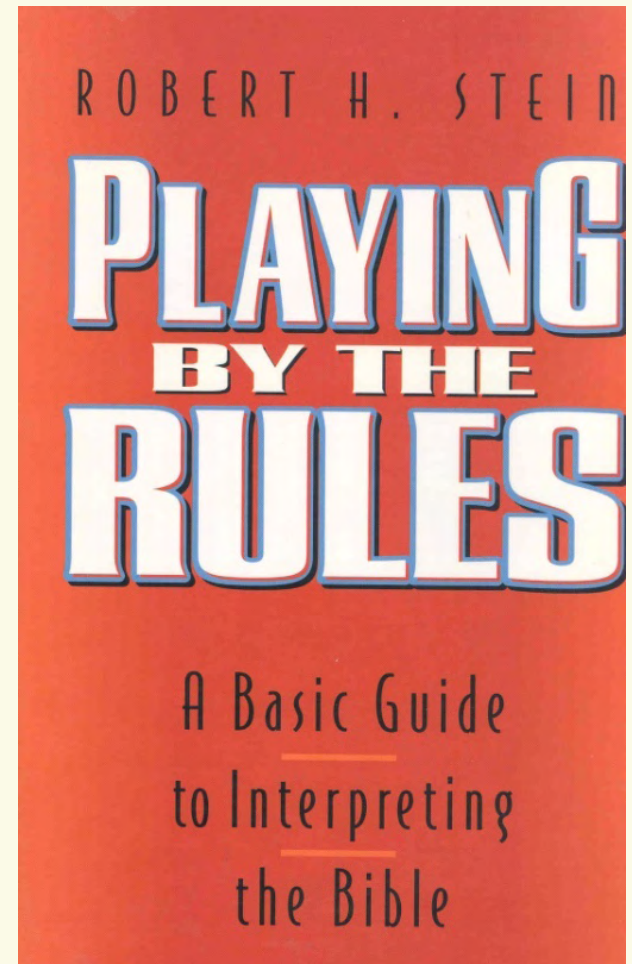
“The characteristic procedures and techniques of evangelical hermeneutics are now before us, and it remains only to add that the evangelical way of practicing them involves radical dependence on the Holy Spirit, a dependence that is expressed by prayer for wisdom and insight before, during, and after the hermeneutical exercise itself. Evangelicals do not forget that sin, as an inbred anti-God perversity of the soul, disables minds from understanding God no less than it disables wills from obeying him, so that divine help is needed at every stage of the process of receiving the divine message” (page 158)



J.I. Packer is Board of Governors' Professor of Theology at Regent College, Vancouver. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential thinkers and apologists for Christianity in the twentieth century. He is the author of numerous books including *Knowing God*, *Rediscovering Holiness* and *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs*.

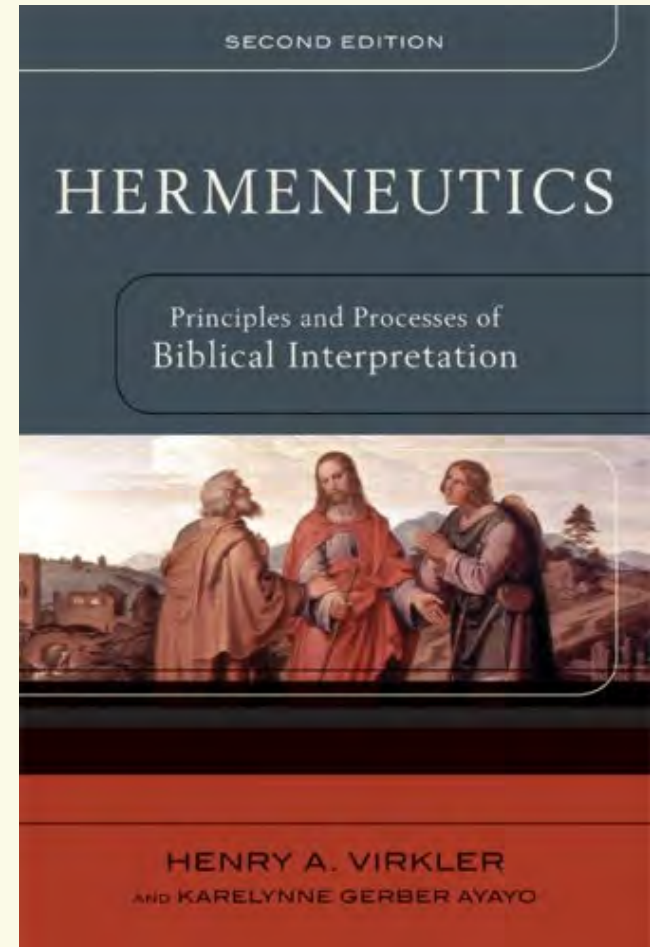
Robert H. Stein, *Playing by the Rules. A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.

“... it would appear that what the Reformers called ‘illumination’ refers to understanding the meaning of the text, ‘conviction’ to the attribution of a positive significance to the text. In other words, the Spirit helps the reader understand the pattern of meaning that the author willed and convinces the reader as to the truth of that teaching” (page 64)



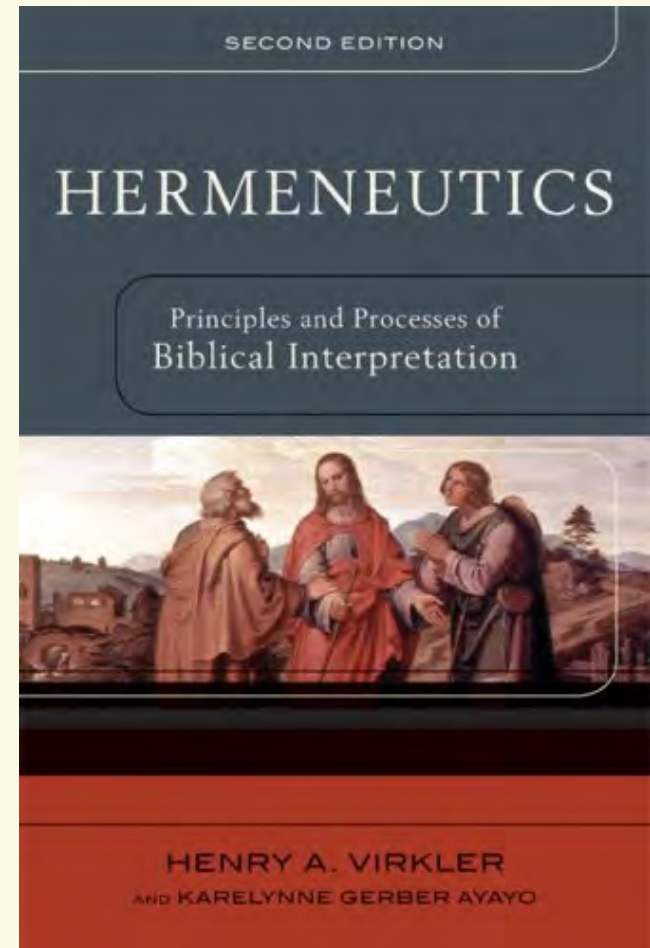
Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics. Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981; 2nd edition 2007.

“One attempt to resolve this dilemma [on the Spirit’s role in interpretation] is based on a definition of the term *know*. According to Scripture, persons do not truly possess knowledge unless they are living in the light of that knowledge. True faith is not only knowledge about God (which even the demons possess [James 2:19]) but knowledge acted on. ...



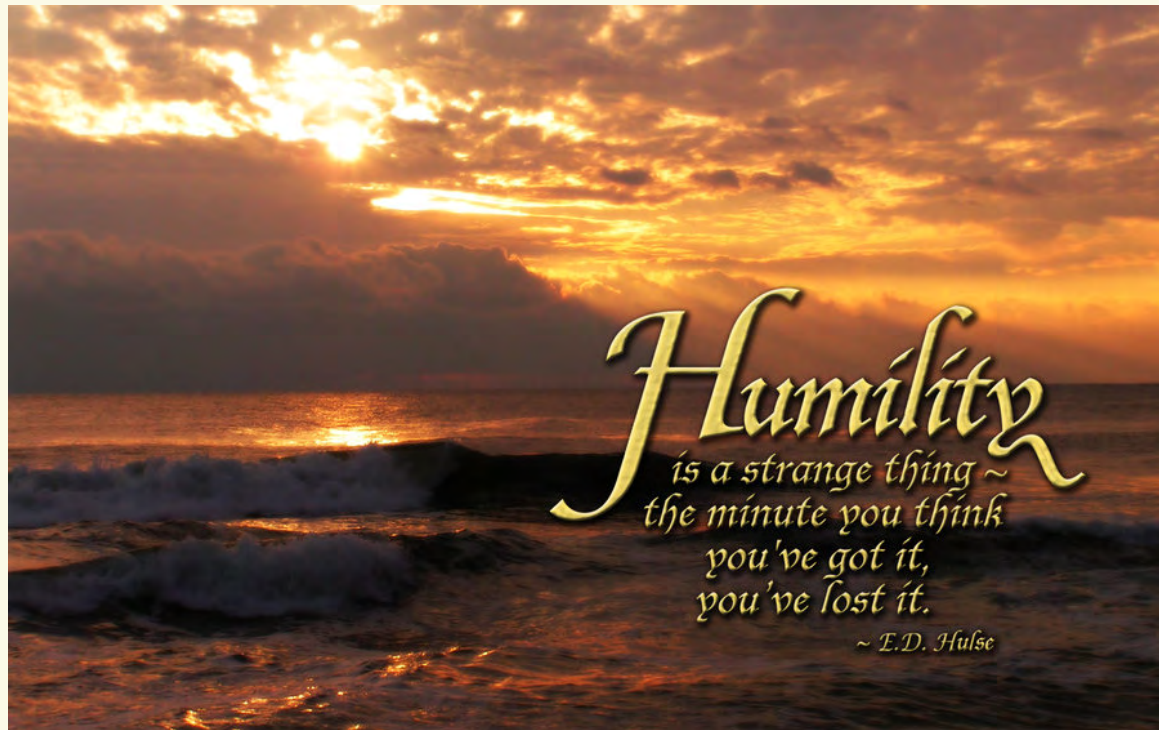
Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics. Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981; 2nd edition 2007.

“... The unbeliever can *know* (intellectually comprehend) many truths of Scripture using the same means of interpretation he would use with non-biblical texts, but he cannot truly *know* (act on and appropriate) these truths as long as he remains in rebellion against God” (page 28)



Consequences of the Holy Spirit Element:

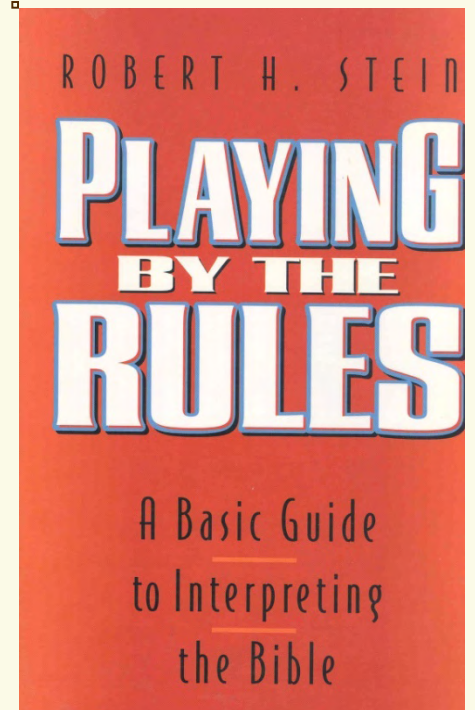
1. The need for humility before scripture



Consequences of the Holy Spirit Element:

2. The need for careful study of scripture

“The role of the Spirit in interpretation is not an excuse for laziness ... To pray that the Spirit would help us understand the meaning of a text because we do not want to spend time studying or using the tools that have been made available to us (such as commentaries, concordances, dictionaries, etc.) may border on blasphemy, for it seeks to ‘use’ the Spirit for our own ends. The Holy Spirit brings to the believer a blessed assurance of the truthfulness of the biblical teachings, but he cannot be manipulated to cover for laziness in the study of the Word of God” (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994: 71)



Consequences of the Holy Spirit Element:

3. The need to keep the Holy Spirit and scripture connected together:

“If we live by the word alone, we dry up.”

“If we live by the Spirit alone, we blow up.”

“But if we live by the word and the Spirit, we grow up!”

Consequences of the Holy Spirit Element:

3. The need to keep the Holy Spirit and scripture connected together:

“The Spirit may blow where,
but not *what*, He wills”

Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a
Meaning in This Text?* (Grand
Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) 429.

