

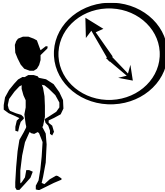
THE BATTLE CREEK BULLETIN

Inside this issue:

<i>The Apostles and Hermeneutics</i>	1
<i>A.M. Sermon Outline:</i>	4
The Grace-Fellowship Doctrine	
Duty Rosters	7
Announcements & For the Record	8



Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
(Or every other week)

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.

Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

The Apostles and Hermeneutics

By Frank Jamerson

Some of the articles that I have read lately have confused ridicule with reasoning. They seem to think that if they ridicule commands, examples, and necessary inferences as the basis of authority, they have given a scholarly refutation of pattern authority. One such article concluded: "It seems to me that we ought to do less interpreting of scriptures and just read and understand them more instead." I wonder how you are going to "read and understand" scriptures without "interpreting" them, and how will you interpret them without understanding how to establish authority?

Reading and understanding Scripture includes accepting what the Bible teaches about how to establish authority. The appeal to commands, approved examples, and necessary inferences were not only used by Jesus to teach God's will, but they were also used by the apostles and other Spirit-guided men of the first century.

Commands

As far as I know, everyone agrees that the plain commands of God are binding upon men. John said: "*And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*" (I John 2:3-4). In the Jerusalem conference over circumcision, James appealed to a statement of fact from Amos and concluded that the raising up of David's tabernacle and the "residue of men" seeking the Lord was fulfilled in the Gentiles entering the church. When Paul wrote the Corinthians, he commanded them to "lay by in store upon the first day of the week," just as he had given "*order to the churches of Galatia*" (I Corinthians 16:1-2). Many other commands could be used, but these are sufficient because this point is not challenged.

Though not all commands are binding on us, when we want to know God's will on a subject, we can look at his commands, or statements of fact, then study the context and compare our situation to that discussed and draw our conclusions. If we were disposed to ridicule commands, we would ask if you brought Paul's cloak and the books and parchments, as he commanded Timothy (II Timothy 4:13). We might even ask if you have washed anyone's feet lately, as Jesus commanded (John 13:14). My point is that if we are to reject examples because not all are binding, and men disagree on which should be followed, then the same reasoning would reject all commands!

Approved Examples

Is the appeal to examples for authority a "church of Christ tradition," or is it an apostolic tradition? We understand that the apostles and others in the first century had to be taught to do certain things before they could leave the example, but we may have a record of the example and not the command. Paul commanded the Philippians to "*be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an example*" (Philippians 3:17).

The Jerusalem conference shows us how the apostles regarded examples. When there had been much discussion of the issue of circumcision, Peter said: "*Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith*" (Acts 15:7-9). The Spirit could have had Peter issue a command for the Judaizers to quit binding circumcision, but he did not. He used an example of Gentiles being accepted without circumcision and concluded that this revealed God's will on the matter. Paul and Barnabas also gave some examples of the same fact, which are not enumerated (Acts 15:12).

It is by example that we learn that elders were appointed in "*every church*" (Acts 14:23). We could learn from the command that they are to be in "*every city*" (Titus 1:5), but the example of what the apostle Paul did reveals God's will for every church. Likewise, we learn when to observe the Lord's supper from an example (Acts 20:7). Some who want to deny examples in the work of the church have tried to hold on to the example of the Lord's supper, but they cannot be consistent and do so. Others have begun denying that the example in Acts 20:7 is even the Lord's supper. Their attitude seems to be "if churches of Christ have done it since the first century, it must be wrong"!

Necessary Inferences

The fact that truth can be learned from necessary inferences should be obvious to anyone who believes that the Bible applies to him. How did he determine that? Was it written to him, or did he draw a conclusion that the same revelation given to others should be applied to him?

There are examples in the Bible of men who drew necessary conclusions from the facts given to them and those conclusions were obviously God's will. Peter saw a vision of animals on a sheet, which he was told to "**kill and eat**," and concluded that he should not call any man "*common or unclean*" (Acts 10:11-16,28). At the Jerusalem conference, he said that God "*bear them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us*," and concluded: "*Now therefore why make ye trial of God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?*" (Acts 15:8,9). This conclusion was necessarily implied from the example and those who wanted to know God's will knew it!

These principles did not originate in the "Restoration Movement," but are found in both the Old and New Testaments. Dungan's book on "Hermeneutics" illustrates necessary inference with the first verse in the Bible. He said: "It is not stated in verse one that God existed; that he had the wisdom and power to accomplish this work; but it is assumed, and, being assumed, no interpreter has a right to call it in question" (p. 92).

The rejection of "pattern authority" is the rejection of the Bible as the source of authority. "Reading and understanding" God's word includes understanding how truth authorizes, and we do not do that by the ridicule of the very principles illustrated in the Bible.

The apostles in Jerusalem did not ask the Judaizers how they felt about admitting Gentiles into the church without circumcision, nor how they thought Jesus might act. They appealed to objective revelation - a statement of fact in Amos and the example

of Cornelius, then drew the necessary conclusion that Gentiles did not have to be circumcised. That

"hermeneutic" is as old as Scripture, and when we want to know God's will on any subject, we had better find a command, statement of fact, approved example or draw a necessary inference. The "new hermeneutics" being advocated today is simply "old Modernism."

