

THEO 200, Week #03
Questions about Biblical Interpretation, Part II
(ANSWER KEY)
The University of St. Francis

True/False

1. False The Bible is to be understood literally. (Catechism #110)
False. #110: "In order to discover the sacred authors' intention, the reader must consider the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking, and narrating then current. 'For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetic and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression (DV 12§2)."

2. False As long as we have the Catechism, we need not read the Bible. (Catechism #133)
CCC #133: "The Church 'forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful... to learn 'the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ,' by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ' (DV 25; cf. Phil 3:8 and St. Jerome, Commentariorum in Isaiam libri xviii prol.: PL 24, 17b)."

3. False The authors of Scripture were only instruments under the influence of the Holy Spirit, who dictated to them the words to be written down. (Catechism #106)
CCC #106: God inspired the human authors of the sacred books. 'To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their own faculties and powers so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more' (DV 11)."

4. True Most, if not all, New Testament letters are situational/occasional, written to address specific situations faced by churches.
See Slide #44.
5. True Economic and political issues are important elements of the historical-cultural context.
The Diachronic Method takes into account the Sitz im Leben (the situation of life) of the author, citing out the biases and the parameters in which the author wrote the text(s). This Method also takes into account the biblical audience and the historical, social, religious, political and economic situation of the time. (Slide #100)
6. False Source criticism is defined as the attempt to identify the oldest oral forms underlying the Gospels' written texts.
Source Criticism studies the specific problem of whether there are written documents behind our present text and attempts to identify the oldest written texts from which the human authors utilized in the writing of their own texts. (Slide #104)
7. True The form critic searches for the probable life setting of a passage, otherwise known as its kerygma.
Form criticism breaks the Bible down into sections (pericopes, stories) which are analyzed and categorized by genres (prose or verse, letters, laws, court archives, war hymns, poems of lament, etc.). The form critic then theorizes on the pericope's Sitz im Leben ("setting in life"), the setting in which it was composed and, especially, used. Tradition history is a specific aspect of form criticism which aims at tracing the way in which the pericopes entered the larger units of the biblical canon, and especially the way in which they made the transition from oral to written form. The belief in the priority, stability, and even detectability, of oral traditions is now recognized to be so deeply questionable as to render tradition history largely useless, but form criticism itself continues to develop as a viable methodology in biblical studies. (Slide #107)

8. True Even though we live in the New Testament times as inaugurated by Christ, the Old Testament is still indispensable. (Catechism #121-122)
CCC #121: "The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value (Cf. CV 14), for the Old Covenant has never been revoked."
#122: "Indeed, 'the economy of the Old Testament was deliberately so oriented that it should prepare for and declare in prophecy the coming of Christ, redeemer of all men' (DV 15). 'Even though they contain matters imperfect and provisional' (DV 15), the books of the Old Testament bear witness to the whole divine pedagogy of God's saving love: these writings 'are a storehouse of sublime teaching on God and of sound wisdom on human life, as well as a wonderful treasury of prayers; in them, too, the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way' (DV 15.)"
9. False In communication God's saving truth, Inspiration and Illumination can contradict each other.
In communication God's saving truth, Inspiration and Illumination serve as mirrors to each other. (Slide #26)
10. True Prayer and the Holy Spirit are necessary for biblical interpretation.
(Slide #26)
11. True The level of one's spiritual maturity affects one's ability to hear the voice of the Spirit.
(Slide #26)

Multiple Choice

1. What does the task of biblical criticism involve?
 - a. Discovering the faults and inadequacies of the Bible.
 - b. *The rational analysis of the Bible in order to understand it better.*
 - c. Using principles found in the Bible to analyze other aspects of life.
 - d. Denying the spiritual significance of the Bible.

Unlike our modern day usage of the term, applying a "criticism" to the bible is not done in a pejorative sense. Rather, Biblical Criticism involves the rational analysis of the Bible in order to understand it better. (Slide #98)
2. What Historical-Cultural Elements influence the writing of a biblical text?
 - a. The Biblical Writer & The Biblical Audience
 - b. Historical, Social & Religious Elements
 - c. Political & Economic Elements
 - d. *All of These*

See Slide #100
3. What dangers are associated with studying the background information of the text?
 - a. Inaccurate background information
 - b. Elevating background information above meaning of text
 - c. Evolving into nothing more than an ancient history trivia database
 - d. *All of These*

See Slides #111-113

4. What critical method attempts to identify the oldest oral forms underlying the Gospel's written texts?

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| a. Fundamentalism | c. Redaction Criticism |
| b. Source Criticism | d. Form Criticism |

Form Criticism attempts to identify the oldest oral forms underlying the Gospel's written texts. Form critics claim that the Gospels are made up of individual units such as pronouncement stories, conflict stories, and parables. These individual units are called Pericopes (which means "to cut around")... (Slide #107)

5. What criticism is a form of literary analysis that studies the way authors or editors assembled, rearranged, and reinterpreted their source material in producing documents?

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|---------------------|------------------------|
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Redaction Criticism is a form of literary analysis that studies the way authors or editors assembled, rearranged, and reinterpreted their source material in producing documents. (Slide #110 ff.)

6. Form critics claim that the Gospels are made up of individual units such as pronouncement stories, conflict stories, and parables. What are these individual units called?

- | | |
|------------|--------------|
| a. Kerygma | c. Torah |
| b. Q Units | d. Pericopes |

PERICOPE (not "periScope"; pronounced "peh-RIH-cuh-pee"): an individual "passage" within the Gospels, with a distinct beginning and ending, so that it forms an independent literary "unit." (Slide #33)

7. The term "pericope" is derived from two Greek words meaning what?

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| a. "Lost Piece" | c. "Proclamation" |
| b. "To Cut Around" | d. "Life Setting" |

See Slide #107

8. Although the tradition of the elders originally circulated in oral form only, it was eventually written down in a set of documents collectively known as the what?

a. *Mishnah*

c. Menorah

b. Masada

d. Marcion

MISHNAH: *the tradition of the elders which originally circulated in oral form only but were eventually written down in a set of collective documents.*
(Slide #17)

9. Besides the literal reading of Scripture, the spiritual reading of Scripture is best understood as what below?

a. Scripture leads us to understand events by recognizing their significance in Christ.

b. Scripture ought to lead us to act justly

c. Scripture allows us to view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance.

d. *All of the Above*

e. None of the Above

See Slides #121-123.

Short/Long Answer

1. Concerning Old Testament history, explain the significance of the six dates provided below:

1000 – 50 BC	<i>The Books of the Old Testament are Written</i>
586 BC	<i>The First Destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem - the subsequent exile of the Chosen People</i>
536 BC	<i>The return of the Chosen People - the Temple was Rebuilt</i>
c. 200 BC	<i>The Septuagint was written.</i>
30-100 AD	<i>Christians use the LXX as their scriptures. This upsets the Jews.</i>
c. 100 AD	<i>Jewish rabbis meet at the Council of Jamnia and decide to include in their canon only 39 books, since only these can be found in Hebrew.</i>
c. 400 AD	<i>St. Jerome is commissioned to translate the entire Bible from its original languages into Latin (called the Vulgate). This version of the bible is used by the Catholic Church from this point until the 20th Century.</i>
1556 AD	<i>The Council of Trent reaffirms and lists definitively the canonicity of the 73 books of the Bible.</i>
1948 AD	<i>The state of Israel formally established as an independent country.</i>

2. According to The Catechism, There are three major stages concerning the formation of the gospels (#126). Name them.

- a. *4-6 BC – 27-30 AD (The estimated date of Jesus' Life)*
- b. *30-70 AD (The Apostolic Age)*
- c. *68-110 AD (The Remaining Books of the Bible were Written.)*

3. According to The Catechism (#128-129), describe the relationship that exists between the Old Testament and the New Testament

The New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the new (#129 of CCC; paraphrase of St. Augustine). Jesus Christ is the lens and the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies.

4. Know Your Key Terms

a. Condescension

The manner in which God speaks to us in a way that we can understand. (See CCC #101)

b. Typology

*The illumination of the unity of the divine plan by discerning in God's works of the Old Covenant prefigurations of what he accomplished in the fullness of time in the person of his incarnate Son. In this light, **Jesus Christ becomes the "lens" through which we read the Bible.***

c. Hermeneutics

Also called interpretation or biblical criticism, named after Hermes (the messenger of the Greek gods), who interpreted the message of the gods for humans in a language they could understand. In this context, hermeneutics is the interpretation of Sacred Scripture.

d. Biblical Inspiration

The gift of the Holy Spirit which assisted a human author to write a biblical book so that it has God as its author and teaches faithfully, without error, the saving truth that God has willed to be consigned to us.

e. Biblical Illumination

The ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to enable believers to understand and receive the truth of Scripture.

5. According to an ancient tradition, one can distinguish between two *senses* of Scripture: the literal (via the diachronic method) and the spiritual (via the synchronic method), the latter being subdivided into the allegorical, moral, and anagogical sense. Define each of the five terms (#117):

a. The Literal Sense

The meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation: "All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal."

b. The Spiritual Sense

Thanks to the unity of God's plan, not only the text of the Scripture but also the realities and events about which it speaks can be signs.

1. *The Allegorical Sense: We can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ; thus the crossing of the Red Sea is a sign or type of Christ's victory and also of Christian Baptism (Cf. 1 Cor 10: 2).*

2. *The Moral Sense: The events reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly. As St. Paul says, they were written 'for our instruction' (1 Cor. 10: 11; Cf. Heb 3 - 4: 11)*

3. *The Anagogical Sense: (Greek – from the anagoge, 'leading'). We can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland: thus the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem (Cf. Rev 21: 1 - 22: 5).*

6. In addition to knowing the literary genres of Scripture itself, what other *sources* are needed in order to interpret the Scripture correctly? (see CCC 112-114)

In addition to studying the Literary Genres of Scripture, both the Catechism and the Second Vatican Council state that the interpretation of the scripture cannot be studied without understanding the spiritual message that underlies and unifies the scripture as a whole. As stated in these documents...

1. Be especially attentive “to the content and unity of the whole Scripture”. Different as the books which compose it may be, Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God’s plan, of which Christ Jesus is the center and heart, open since his Passover.

The phrase “heart of Christ” can refer to Sacred Scripture, which makes known his heart, closed before the Passion, as the Scripture was obscure. But the Scripture has been opened since the Passion; since those who from then on have understood it, consider and discern in what way the prophecies must be interpreted.

2. Read the Scripture within “the living Tradition of the whole Church.” According to a saying of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church’s heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God’s Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture (“...according to the spiritual meaning which the Spirit grants to the Church”).

3. Be attentive to the analogy of faith. By “analogy of faith” we mean the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation.

7. In light of paragraph #66 of *The Catechism*, explain how the teachings of the Church can be both static (unchanging) and dynamic (ever changing).

“The Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it

remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries. (Catechism #66).

8. Interpreting the scriptures exclusively through the literal sense poses inherent dangers. Explain the terms below that pose dangers in interpreting the scriptures exclusively through the literal sense.

a. English-Only Fallacy

Studying only the English word rather than examining the underlying Hebrew or Greek

b. Root Fallacy

Assuming that a word's meaning automatically derives from the sum of its etymological parts (to say that "butterfly" means "fly that has landed in butter")

c. Time-Frame Fallacy

Reading a more newly developed meaning of a word back into the Bible; OR insisting that a word's older meaning still holds despite it now being obsolete)

d. Overload Fallacy

Insisting that an appearance of a word will always contain all of its numerous possible meanings.

e. Word-Count Fallacy

Insisting that a word must bear the same meaning every time it occurs.

f. Word-Concept Fallacy

Assuming that by lexicographically studying one word that one has learned all about an entire concept (studying the Greek word for "church" (ekklesia) and assuming one knows all about the concept "the

church" in the New Testament.

g. Selective-Evidence Fallacy

Citing only evidence that supports one's favored interpretation of a word's meaning while dismissing any contradictory evidence

9. In light of paragraph #71-73, describe the three covenants presented in *The Catechism*, including the covenant that is an everlasting one.

God made an everlasting covenant with Noah and with all living beings (cf. Gen 9:16). It will remain in force as long as the world lasts.

God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. By the covenant God formed his people and revealed his law to them through Moses. Through the prophets, he prepared them to accept the salvation destined for all humanity.

God has revealed himself fully by sending his own Son, in whom he has established his covenant forever. The Son is his Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after him.

10. Mark Shea explains that Christ did not come into this world to teach a new ethic primarily (The Ten Commandments are not a radical departure from Christ's instructions for us) or to work miracles. His mission was to die and rise from the dead, "for the life of the world." How do the Gospels (and their focus) confirm this?

Shea explains that if the mission of Christ was to do miracles just so somebody would believe him, then the gospel of Matthew would have ended on Chapter 16 (Shea 129).

Jesus taught ethics. Everybody knows that. The Sermon on the Mount is, among other things, a string of ethical teachings. Yet Jesus did not come mainly to teach a new ethic. The reason we know that is because we know what Jesus taught, and it was, in many cases, nothing new. He reiterated a great deal of what any Jew already knew from the law of Moses or, for that matter, what any Confucian knew from Confucius, as that we should Do the

*Right Thing. Occasionally, as we shall see, he sometimes elevated the old ethical standards to higher applications. **Yet, in all this, he promulgated no radically new ethics, merely an old ethic more profoundly understood.** More often than not, he came, as Samuel Johnson notes that all good teachers of ethics come, to remind more than to instruct. Similarly, he did not advocate some radical break with the creed of Moses. He, like Moses and the prophets, reiterated the basic belief of all Judaism that “the Lord is One” and that we were to worship God alone. Nothing new here either. And this was not what impressed (and enraged) the people around him. So what did?*

Not Wonder-Working Primarily

Some people think that wonder-working was the main thrust of Jesus’ mission. Any talk show host can teach ethics, but only God can do miracles. Therefore, since (as we have seen) Jesus is God, he must have primarily come to do miracles so people would believe that God exists and be good. This seems all the more reasonable given the reaction his wonders excited. People believed in him after he walked on the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 14: 28-33). People wanted to destroy him after he cured a man with a withered hand (Matthew 12: 9-14). There was no middle ground. People accused him of blasphemy or fell at his feet when he worked wonders. So it might appear that this is what the gospels regard as the unique mission of Christ.

However, a wider view reveals a different perspective. For ancient Judea was no stranger to wonder-workers of all sizes and shapes. To the naked eye, the difference between miracle and magic is not readily apparent if you know nothing of the wonder-worker. Simon Magus did all sorts of impressive things which, to the casual observer, looked indistinguishable from the miracles of Jesus (Acts 8: 9-10). And the literature of the period is chock full of magic and miracles from various sources.[48] This, of course, is why the Pharisees made just this charge against Jesus— that he was a deceiver operating by either demonic or human trickery to achieve effects they themselves could not explain (Matthew 12: 24-27).

Of course, on close examination, we find that the testimony for Jesus’ miracles does, in fact, mark him off from the other wonder-workers of the day. His power is displayed quietly and often with a command to “say nothing to anyone” (Mark 1: 44). It is not wreathed round with the elaborate devices of words and invocations customary to establish one’s professional status as a wonder-worker. It is not showy or self-aggrandizing. And, most

striking, his power works, not in obscure out-of-the-way places, but repeatedly, in public, with complete strangers, and without the benefit of elaborate preparations (Mark 5: 21-34). But the miracles, though astounding, do not mark him off as unique by themselves, for he himself acknowledges what all his countrymen believe: that other people work wonders too. Thus, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for claiming “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons” (Matthew 12: 24). But note how he rebukes them. He appeals to the fact that the Pharisees’ own disciples cast out devils too:

[I]f I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. (Matthew 12: 27) So he himself makes clear he is not unique as a wonderworker and it is not this, by itself, that sets his mission apart from all others. What does set his mission apart is, rather, the fact that God was giving him the miraculous power to do these things even when he was “blasphemously” making claims to deity. That is why Jesus continued: But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Matthew 12: 28) In short, prophets like Elijah and exorcists in Jesus’ own day could do wonders by the power of God just as he could. But only he claimed that the miracles were done by his own divine power and were an illustration of that power. The wonders, in other words, were not his main mission, according to Christ, they were the signs pointing to the main mission, just as a road sign points to a destination.

The key text from Shea: “(Jesus) promulgated no radically new ethics, merely an old ethic more profoundly understood.”

11. Explain each of the six covenants that Mark Shea presents and what human organization they represent. Take each of the five covenants (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David) and explain how Christ translates, amplifies, or otherwise fulfills the each of them.

The key text from Shea: "Jesus' entire purpose is to fulfill all that has gone before in the Old Testament. Henceforth, he says, we are to see none other than him and his gospel as the key to unlocking the mysteries of the Old Testament."

Adam (Couple) - God created Adam. He then created Eve from Adam's rib. He decided that they weren't enough, that they needed other animals and plants. When Eve ate from the Garden of Eden, provoked by the Snake, both are banished from the Garden of Eden. This translates to humanity. (Shea 71)

Noah (Family) - God sent a global flood to destroy all evil that had become common on earth after the Fall. After this, God promised Noah (and all humans) to not flood the world again. (Shea 63, 71)

Abraham (Chieftain) - "Abram, as a tribal chieftain, has responsibility for a considerable crowd of people. It is huge, daunting, and seemingly bizarre logistical problem for a man of Abram's stature and status" (Shea 73-74).

1. *He will be made into a great nation.*
2. *This nation will be led into the Promised Land.*
3. *Through Abraham all people of Earth will be blessed.*

Moses (Law Giver) - this shows redemptive history and the events of Israel as a nation. Moses' covenant was threefold. "It involved creed, code and cult" (Shea 84). The Moses covenant depends on peoples' answer to the law He gives through Moses. If they obey they will be His chosen people. By extension, this applies to all people.

David (King) - David's covenant is the promise God makes to him that the Messiah will come (Shea 90). People didn't follow the Moses covenant, so God made a covenant with David to unite them. God promises that when the messiah comes he will release them from all their sins and the covenant will be

restored.

*Jesus (Messiah-King) - God promised an eternal kingdom through Christ, who is of David's lineage. Christ fulfills the previous covenants because he brings them all together within his own promises. Things "linger in the air, unresolved" (Shea 95)
(pages 48-66 of Shea)*