

## **SECTION 13**

### **The Role of the Holy Spirit in Biblical Interpretation**

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### **The Spirit helps the interpreter only in the area of “Significance”:**

- (1) The view of Robert Stein, Daniel Fuller, Scott Hafemann, etc.
  
- (2) Seems to be supported by some Biblical Texts
  - (a) Stein’s and Fuller’s interpretation of 1 Cor 2:14
  
- (3) Helps explain several phenomena
  - a. The largely correct and helpful biblical studies of some unbelievers
  - b. The incorrect and contrasting work of some Christians who claim the illumination of the Spirit
  
- (4) This view is very understandable, clear and measurable.

### **Against the “Significance-Only” view:**

- (1) Not the traditional view of Protestants since the Reformation
  
- (2) Other Biblical texts seem contradict this view (see below)
  
- (3) Does the “Significance-Only” view discount the noetic effects of the Fall? (a semi-Pelagian epistemology?)

### **The Spirit helps the interpreter with both “Understanding” and “Significance”:**

- (1) The traditional view of Protestants since the Reformation.
  
- (2) Seems to be supported by Biblical texts:
  - (a) Matt 13:13-17; Mark 8:18; Rom 1:21-25; Rom 11:7-8
  - (b) John 14-17?
  - (c) 1 John 2:20-27
  - (d) John 20:19-23; Luke 24:40-47
  - (e) 2 Corinthians 3:13-18
  - (f) Eph 4:11-16
  
- (3) Helps explain several phenomena
  - (a) The experience of Christians in understanding the Biblical text
  - (b) The example of many unbelievers who grossly distort or misinterpret the Biblical text

- (4) The Bible does not dichotomize volition and cognition. Proper Mental Understanding and Believing Response are two sides of the same coin in the Biblical view.

**Against the traditional “Illumination and Conviction” view:**

- (1) The helpful biblical studies of some unbelievers.
- (2) The difficulty of quantifying or demonstrating “illumination” in a consistent and persuasive way.
- (3) The difficulty of defining exactly how and to what degree illumination works in believers.
- (4) The diversity of interpretation among genuine believers (though this can be overstated).

## Various Approaches to the Miraculous in Scripture

### 1. The Supernatural Approach

- a. The event(s) really took place.
- b. The event(s) happened as recorded.
- c. The text proclaims a divine event .
- d. Since God performed this event, search for a natural cause is irrelevant.
- e. NOTE: A closed cause-effect continuum denied. Openness in history maintained.
- f. The intention of the text (the author's meaning) is maintained.

### 2. The Rationalist Approach

- a. Presupposition – The event(s) could not have taken place.
- b. The event(s) happened differently than recorded.
- c. The text contains a natural event behind it.
- d. The natural cause of this event can and should be learned.
- e. NOTE: A closed cause-effect continuum affirmed.
- f. The intention of the text (the author's meaning) is not maintained.

### 3. The Mythical Approach

- a. The event(s) could not have taken place (cf. 2[a] above).
- b. The text proclaims a divine event (cf. 1[c] above).

- c. The search for a natural cause is irrelevant (cf. 1[d]).
- d. There is neither a divine nor natural cause, since the text proclaims a myth.
- e. NOTE: A closed cause-effect continuum affirmed.
- f. The "deeper" intention of the text (the author's meaning) is maintained.

**"Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?"  
(a famous article by Rudolf Bultmann)**

"One presupposition that cannot be dismissed is the historical method of interrogating the text (p. 291)."

This involves:

- (1) "It belongs to the historical method, of course, that a text is interpreted in accordance with the rules of grammar and of the meaning of the words (p. 291)."
  
- (2) "The historical method includes the presupposition that history is a unity in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect . . . this closedness means that the continuum of historical happenings cannot be rent by the interference of supernatural, transcendent powers, and that therefore there is not 'miracle' in the sense of the word. Such a miracle would be an event whose cause did not lie within history (pp. 291-92)."