

Why Bible study can be an adventure

"Everyone's a Theologian" (R.C. Sproul)

If you thought that only academic or professional theologians, institutional churches, or leaders of churches are equipped to study theology, or the Bible, then you will be startled by Sproul's take on the matter. However, 'theology' ('theos' means god, and 'logos' means word) hence one *discoursing on the gods*. The variant suffix of logos, 'logy' means study of. So, theology is the word of God, discoursing on God, or the study of God. Accordingly, theology is the territory of every Christian, not the exclusive preserve of self-appointed elites.

If Sproul's claim seems audacious, I think that it is also right. Further, it obligates every Christian to know the Word and interpret it. This idea, however, is sharply condemned by some who assert that individual Christians don't possess the ability, or authority to interpret the Bible, and it promotes a radical individualism that splinters the Christian community. Rather, the ability and authority to interpret the Bible lies with the magisterial authority of the Church, derived from the apostle Peter.

Nevertheless, there are problems with this approach. Peter, the first of the apostles didn't understand some things that Paul, the last apostle wrote. He said that they were mind-wrenching or mind-boggling (2 Peter 3:16). Moreover, Paul stood up to Peter's theological hypocrisy (Galatians 2:11-14). So much for Peter's magisterial authority! If the first Pope didn't know everything, to whom do we appeal next? Interpretively, where does this leave us?

I find Paul's approach in a couple of texts helpful.

In Romans 14, Gentile believers thought that Jews Christians, based on their Jewish upbringing, were over scrupulous on matters of food, festivals, and observance of days. It created enormous tension in the church. Paul knew what was the right theological position for he was persuaded of it by the Lord Jesus (Romans 14:14). However, he recognised that individuals had freedom to take a position on the matter asserting *Let all be fully persuaded in their own minds* (Romans 14:5). Notably, the verb here is **present**, its voice is **passive**, and its mood is **imperative**. So, Paul is commanding that each person be persuaded to mature understanding, but in that it is passive it is an outside work of God, while His people must intentionally harmonise themselves with the word of God. The flip side of that liberty required that individuals *no longer pass judgment on one another* (Romans 14:13).

So, following Sproul, this website has theological eBooks on Israel's landscapes and their biblical significance, a bird's-eye view of Scripture, and one on John's Revelation, in which the Lord wins the wars to end all war. Also, you will find Scriptus papers, which are short papers on various Bible topics, and Q&A papers on questions asked by Bible characters to which I give my answers, and Sandwich papers. I'll leave you to feast on those at your leisure. I take responsibility for my interpretations, while at the same time I provide abundant reference to scholarly articles, and books including those supportive of and divergent from my own views.

But who am I? A nobody really, except that after nearly 65 years as a Christian I place myself firmly in the everybody's a theologian group. Inevitably, like every Christian, I bring to my reading of Scripture a certain amount of interpretive baggage, but I try to put that to one side and listen to what the Bible text says, ask God for enlightenment, and consult scholarly papers widely too. I leave you the reader to judge how well I have achieved my objectives.

So, welcome to this website where everything is free, and I hope that it will inspire you to become a Bible explorer.

Arthur D. P. Sweeney

B.A., M.Com., Th.D., Ph.D., Grad. Cert. Higher Education