

admitted that he himself did not have absolute certainty. The witness of the Spirit provides psychological certitude and moral responsibility, but not an inerrant intellectual system in defense of the Bible.

(3) John Montgomery observes,

The epistemological route by which one arrives at biblical truth does not determine the value of what one arrives at -- any more than the use of a less than perfect map requires one reach a city having corresponding inadequacies. As Harvard logician Willard van Orman Quine has soundly pointed out, one doesn't need to put supports under every inch of a roof in order to hold it fully and completely up. The empirical historical evidences in behalf of Christian revelation are not absolute (no synthetic proof can be), but they are sufficiently powerful to bring us to the feet of a divine Christ who affirms without qualification that biblical revelation is trustworthy.²⁸

Different Interpretations of Scriptural Absolutes Tested by Verificational Procedures

Christianity allows for relativity, not only in the amount of evidence surveyed in a case for its truth, but also in the interpretation of the Bible, once it is accepted as God's Word.

In many passages there are several possible different interpretations: some are very controversial. There are areas in which God has not spoken at all, or not with extensiveness or unquestioned clarity. Even where the Bible speaks extensively on a subject, we must distinguish between the inspired meaning of the passage as given originally, and our present growing understanding of it.

How then do we decide between differing understandings and interpretations? A verificational approach suggests that we take the interpretation that consistently accounts for the greatest number of converging lines of evidence from the grammar, the context, the author's intention or purpose, the historical and cultural setting, the people who first received the message, and the broader theological context. Our knowledge of Scripture is relative in that it is related to how well we have done our homework in all of these respects. But in the final analysis, it is relative to the biblical norms. Some interpretations are better informed than others. So all interpretations are not equally bad or good in an uncharted sea of sheer relativism. Insofar as our interpretations conform to the divine mind known from revelation they are absolutely true. To the extent that our interpretations stray from the biblical norm, they are less probably true.

Doctrines also must be viewed with a degree of relativism, as one studies the development of doctrines in various periods of biblical history in church history. The failure to acknowledge the values of relativism may be clearly seen in relation to Rome's allegedly infallible dogmas. This misguided absolutism, Geoffrey Bromiley has said, is quickly redressed by a little historical relativism.²⁹

The recognition of a difference between the absolute reality of God as revealed in normative Scripture and a given person's present grasp of the truth is nowhere more significant than in missions. As one is transplanted to a very different culture he becomes increasingly aware of the importance