

THE DANGER OF DISSECTION THEOLOGY

I have always loved word meanings—because words mean things—whether it be just the etymological tracing of words of the English language or of the Greek and Hebrew definitions. It has always been hard for me to pass up a book with an alluring title that has something to do with word meanings.

I suppose that is why I became a lover of Strong's at an early age in my Christian experience. Somehow saying, "According to Strong's. . ." had a pleasant and, even more satisfying, an authoritative ring to it. Strong's helped me early on to realize that, in regards to Elizabethan English, that words like "suffer" were quite different from my understood twenty-first century homonyms. Indeed, Strong's has come to my aid many a time while belaboring over the meanings of certain scriptures.

I somewhere, due to the euphoria of Strong's, began to think that the real essence of scriptural understanding resided in the ability to follow the ever narrower and more detail focusing of dissecting a word—to separate it from its companions by sliding it under the Greek/Hebrew microscope. And there it could be dissected and then dissected once again allowing its minute mysteries to be revealed.

That's what I thought until it was made plain to me by the inner voice of the Spirit that God did not so much work His revelations in the taking apart but rather in the building together of components. Isaiah stated: *"Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."* While it is necessary, at appropriate times, to investigate a single word, this is sound study procedure, however, that investigation must not dissect the investigated word from its context. Linkage—not disassembly—is the correct process.

It is very possible, in the study of an automobile engine to keep disconnecting parts until one could end up with a single tiny bolt from the dissembled engine. That bolt could be given to someone who is unaware of the disassembly which just transpired with the question, "What is this?" And the resulting answer would most assuredly be "A bolt." "And what does that bolt fit?" To which the unaware person would most likely answer that he had no idea. And could that answer be held accountable for not knowing that it was a part of a 460 cubic inch Ford engine? I don't think so. Surely, if the intention is to give someone the knowledge of an engine one would start with the whole—not with the least—and the most removed part of the engine.

I have witnessed that there is a grave danger in what I call "Dissectional Theology (sp!)" because rather than building on—it continues to drift farther and farther from the context. There are those that have formulated erroneous doctrines from the "partial"—from out-of-context errors. As we well know, it takes the Bible to interpret the Bible.

God teaches the discerning student to *"put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* This "dividing," is the rightful and skillful teaching of the word of truth. The "Word" is not a *singular* word but the *totality* of the Word.

God brings revelation into our hearts and minds by constantly adding to not by subtracting from.
“Line upon line” and “precept upon precept” is the route to revelation.

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