

A STATEMENT REGARDING ACADEMIC STUDY OF THE BIBLE

We who are Christians and committed to the authority of the Bible for faith and practice are faced with a unique challenge with respect to the use of the Bible in academic study. It may be simply stated as follows. The one book which for us is instrumental in Christian experience and nurture above all other books is also the prime object of scholarly objective academic study. I suspect that one who has never felt a tension in this two-fold relationship to the Scriptures has either not really meditated in the Scriptures devotionally, or has not engaged in serious exegetical and critical study in order to interpret the Scriptures properly. Happy is the Christian who has been able to realize such a union of these two goals that he or she finds exegetical and critical study of the Bible ultimately supportive of a more meaningful devotional experience in the Word of God. But such a realization requires a price of conscientious endeavor and patience. We who believe that God has called us to Christian leadership through the avenue of graduate study may also expect the Spirit of God to help us to mature in our recognition of truth and the means whereby it may be attained, as we engage in study with both a critical mind and a prayerful spirit. In harmony with this purpose A Master Plan for CBN University (rev. 1983) states; "the University is a distinctive, graduate-based educational institution holding the highest of intellectual standards, with the transcending purpose of glorifying God and His son, Jesus Christ" (p. 1).

In order to fulfill the above objective of Christian scholarship, many of our Biblical studies courses are designed to stimulate students to think through their beliefs and opinions and to know why they hold them. In the process it may be that to one degree or another they will alter what they had not thought through very carefully before. Exposure to varying opinions and positions provide an opportunity to learn to think more critically and eventually to arrive at stronger convictions in areas of concern. At the same time, such exposure will help students to understand others better [continue next line here]

With whom they may disagree. This is very important if we are to serve those persons whose world extends beyond our "four walls." Such a learning process can be painful at times and results are not always immediate. If others are like I am, we often find it difficult to be aware of our own biases. But when we are willing to question them prayerfully, we can expect the result to be greater understanding of issues that concern us. Furthermore, encouragement comes from the knowledge that truth is our goal.

Students embarking upon a graduate level Biblical studies program at Regent University, are entering a course of study which will be demanding and (hopefully) exciting. Opportunities include the joy of discovery and the privilege of preparing to serve others with Christian truth. By the grace of God may the experience be one of success in integrating scholarly endeavor with spiritual illumination to a significant degree. Surely this ought to be our goal in graduate study within the context of a Christian University.

Charles L. Holman
Professor
School of Divinity
Regent University