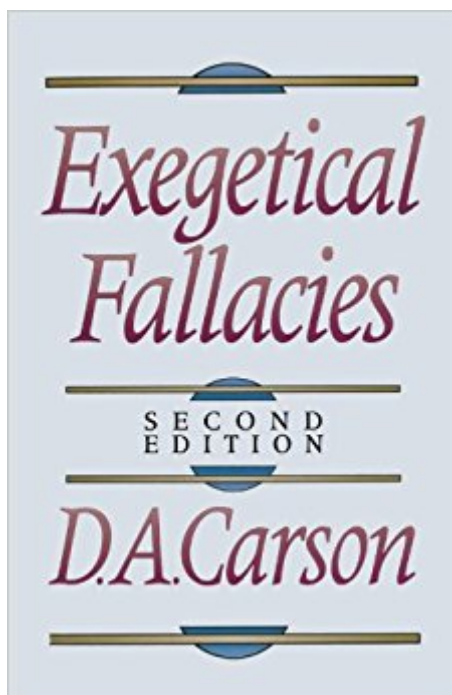


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Exegetical Fallacies



Synopsis

This book offers updated explanations of the sins of interpretation to teach sound grammatical, lexical, cultural, theological, and historical Bible study practices."A must for teachers, pastors, and serious Bible students."--Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

D. A. Carson (PhD, University of Cambridge) is research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, and is the author or editor of more than fifty books, including *The God Who Is There and How Long, O Lord?* He is one of the founders of The Gospel Coalition and an active guest lecturer in academic and church settings around the world.

This book describes and categorizes many fallacies found in Biblical exegesis. His examples are limited to the Greek New Testament, but anyone who works with literary texts in any language could profit from his typology of errors. Most of the errors he discusses get 1-3 pages each, so the book can become a long list of other people's mistakes. Less listing, more grouping, and more links and flows would make the book easier to read. These errors are often discussed without context, so that Carson is not sensitive to what his errorsome colleagues might be trying to do in a larger sense. Ironically, he emphasizes the dangers of removing both substantive and linguistic context from our readings - students who memorize individual Bible verses, or preachers who jump from one bookmark to another are two noteworthy examples of this error. Alas, his orrery of errors tends in

this direction as well. This book is written for preachers and Bible study leaders. It assumes that you know at least some Greek. As Carson points out, preachers and Bible study leaders often know just enough Greek, but not enough to really understand the language. They rely heavily on dictionaries and concordances instead of having a sense of style and the language as a whole. That's about where I am in my Greek, so I appreciated all the warnings!

This concise text focuses on exegetical fallacies, errors in interpretation and argumentation. These fallacies strike at the heart of rightly dividing the word of truth. One need not agree with every example provided, but the categories still remain (see TOC below). It is worthwhile for the serious Bible student to know what is or is not sound reasoning. Examples Under Word-Study Fallacies I have identified my three favorites: 1. Root fallacy -- the meaning of a word is NOT necessarily bound up in its structure. Consider English "understand" which has nothing to do with "under" or "standing". This fallacy leads to word-studies where one uses the etymology of the word to determine its meaning. Consider Greek [dynamis] which means power/authority. It does not mean "dynamite", a destructive instrument. How many times have you heard a pastor wax on about John 1:12 use of power as the "dynamite of God". 2. Fallacy of Semantic Anachronism -- reading the modern meaning back into its ancient usage (2 Timothy 2:15) "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Here "study" does not mean to crack the books, as it does today. In Elizabethan English it means to "make haste, be diligent". Reading the modern usage into this KJV translation is an example of this fallacy. We also confirm this by looking at the Greek source [spoudason] which means "make haste, be diligent." Other examples: martyr, conversation, precede, suffer, ..., these have different primary meanings today which should not be read back into the ancient (17th century) usage. 7. Fallacy of Linking Language with Mentality -- the assumption that language so constrains the thinking processes that people are forced into certain patterns of thought. You've probably heard this expressed as follows "God chose the 1st AD to reveal Jesus so that the NT could be expressed in Greek which is the most precise language." However, language is in the deep structure of the brain and as humans we have been gifted by God with language(s), all of which can express the same concepts, even if it means borrowing/learning new vocabulary. EF is a small text, but not necessarily an easy one. Even if one only manages to tackle the word-study fallacies, he has covered the most common faults in reasoning he is likely to encounter.

I have not completed the book yet, but do feel like I can review from reading to date. Positive

feedback is that tradition vs. Scripture is taken head on. I have found in my time as a Christian that it is a constant battle to interpret Scripture with the mindset of authorial intent and not fall into traditions that men teach. This is a good collection of some of those battles. On the negative side, Carson can be a bit pedantic at times and randomly travels into scholarly discussions without warning, which seem out of place for the intended general audience. However, I highly recommend this book to help anyone who desires to "rightly divide the word of truth."

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