

Just Me and My Bible

In our lesson, Dr. Pratt relates that it's typical for students of theology, in the course of their studies, to try to eliminate theological traditions from their thinking, presumably so that they can get their theology in a pure, unadulterated form, straight from the Word. Seminary students, sometimes disparagingly, call this approach "just me and my Bible!"

In reality, though, this is no mere joke. As self-evident as Christian theology may seem to us today, it is actually the culmination of centuries of disputations, speculations, philosophizing, writings, even political intrigue — a series of innumerable disputes that have taken on every form imaginable. The prospect of students of theology "reinventing the wheel" by ignoring everything that has come before could produce dreadful consequences for Christianity and the church.

Another reality that can't be ignored is that all of us who study the Bible today are the product of numerous political and intellectual movements that could scarcely have been dreamed of at the time the Bible was being written. You are the result of varying and conflicting mixtures of Enlightenment Modernism, Romanticism, Hegelianism, Marxism, Classic Liberalism, Idealism, Existentialism — just about every "ism" that you can name. Many of us aren't aware of how all these movements influence our thinking. As a practical example, this is why much of the Old Testament seems so bizarre and incomprehensible to many students today. As commonsensical as the writings likely appeared to their original audiences, they are based on assumptions that are totally unfamiliar to many of us. A modern person studying these passages without reference to the heritage of their theology can, and often will, fall into error.

The gist of all of this is that we ignore the past traditions of the church at our own peril and the peril of the church. As our lesson points out, the "me and my Bible" approach has led to much of the apostasy we see in the Western church today.