

"... just as in some fossil, curious and beautiful shapes of vegetable or animal life, the graceful fern, or the finely vertebrated lizard, extinct, it may be for thousands of years, are permanently bound up with the stone, and rescued from that perishing which would have otherwise been theirs, so in words are beautiful thoughts and images, the imagination and feeling of past ages, of men whose very names have perished, preserved and made safe forever." (Cited in M.S. Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961 reprint], pp. 73-74.)

The idea is that getting back to the root of a word and seeing its history will tell us (or help us better understand) what its meaning is presently

The problem here is the assumption that words are used by people who know and *intend* the original meaning of the word. But actually, people use words according to their present signification--at least if they wish to be understood. The history of the word therefore is seldom a crucial issue in determining authorial intent.

Word meaning is determined by its present usage, not its history

Qualification: the problem of *hapax legomena* (or lack of context).

(Lit: That which is spoken once)

When there is limited context and one or few occurrences, we must resort to scholarly guess work, which includes word history. But this is kind of a last resort

- 2) Illegitimate totality transfer--a word denotes in each given instance the sum of its values found in other contexts.

Barr criticized Kittel's Dictionary for often doing this

- 3) Prescriptive fallacy: a word has one (and only one) primary denotation.  
(Opposite of the previous fallacy)

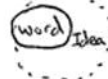
Almost all words are circles, not dots

- Sees words as a ~~substantive~~ (dot) rather than a O(circle)

- A word recently introduced into a vocabulary will be a dot, but as it gets older it expands its area of meaning in a circle

- 4) Word-Idea fallacy: a word is a sufficient carrier of a particular idea or concept.

You cannot assume that a given word carries the whole of a particular concept. The concept could work like this:



ie: Repentance; the concept of repentance occurs in I Thess 1:9-10 though the word doesn't occur

#### c. Approaches

- 1) Diachronic ("through time") - word history, etymological study. Less important for us