BIBLE READING AND CULTURE

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The Word of God cannot be understood apart from the cultural and linguistic situation in which it was originally given.
Category: Quotes

I guess that an ex-Bible translator shouldn't post a quote like this one, but I think it isÂ excellent and addresses a very significant issue in the church.

> *Ordinary Christians usually assume that in their Bible reading they can get along quite well without hermeneutics. They approach the Bible as if it had been written by only one human and in historical circumstances much like their own. They believe that they have direct access to the message revealed in Scripture, and may even distrust any effort to understand this message in the lightÂ of its original historical context. In addition to adopting this simplistic approach to the reading of the Bible, they often completely neglect the history of biblical interpretation, setting out to understand the written Word as if they were the first to do so.*
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> *Implicit in this approach to Bible reading is the assumption that revelation consists basically of doctrinal statements that can be easily translated from the original languages (Hebrew and Greek) to the reader's own language. It is assumed that on the basis of the translated Bible, and with no historical study, an individual can easily understand the meaning of what he is reading and even arrive at a systematization of the biblical message, a systematization that for him is equal to Christianity itself. It is assumed that knowledge is basically rational and that it is communicated directly from the mind of God to the human mind through the sacred writings. Reality is perceived by means of concepts that are expressed in words. If any room is left for theology, it is for a type of theology that has as its basic task the systematization of the biblical statements regarding God, humans, and the relation between the two.*
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> *When people attempt to go beyond the mere reading of the Bible, they must immediately take into account the problem of hermeneutics. If the central theme of the Bible is God's action in history, which reached its culmination in the person and work of Jesus Christ, then clearly it will be impossible to understand the biblical message apart from its original historical context. Even the most elementary books on hermeneutics point out the importance of the historical background of the Bible for the understanding of its significance. The raw material of theology is not abstract concepts but rather a message concerning historical events the narration and interpretation of which are coloured by the Semitic and Greco-Roman cultures in which the biblical authors lived. The initial task of theology is exegetical, and exegesis demands the construction of a bridge between the interpreter and the biblical authors by means of the historical method, the basic presupposition of which is that* ***the Word of God cannot be understood apart from the cultural and linguistic situationÂ in which it was originally given.****Â (Emphasis mine.)*

FromÂ Mission Between the TimesÂ by Rene Padilla