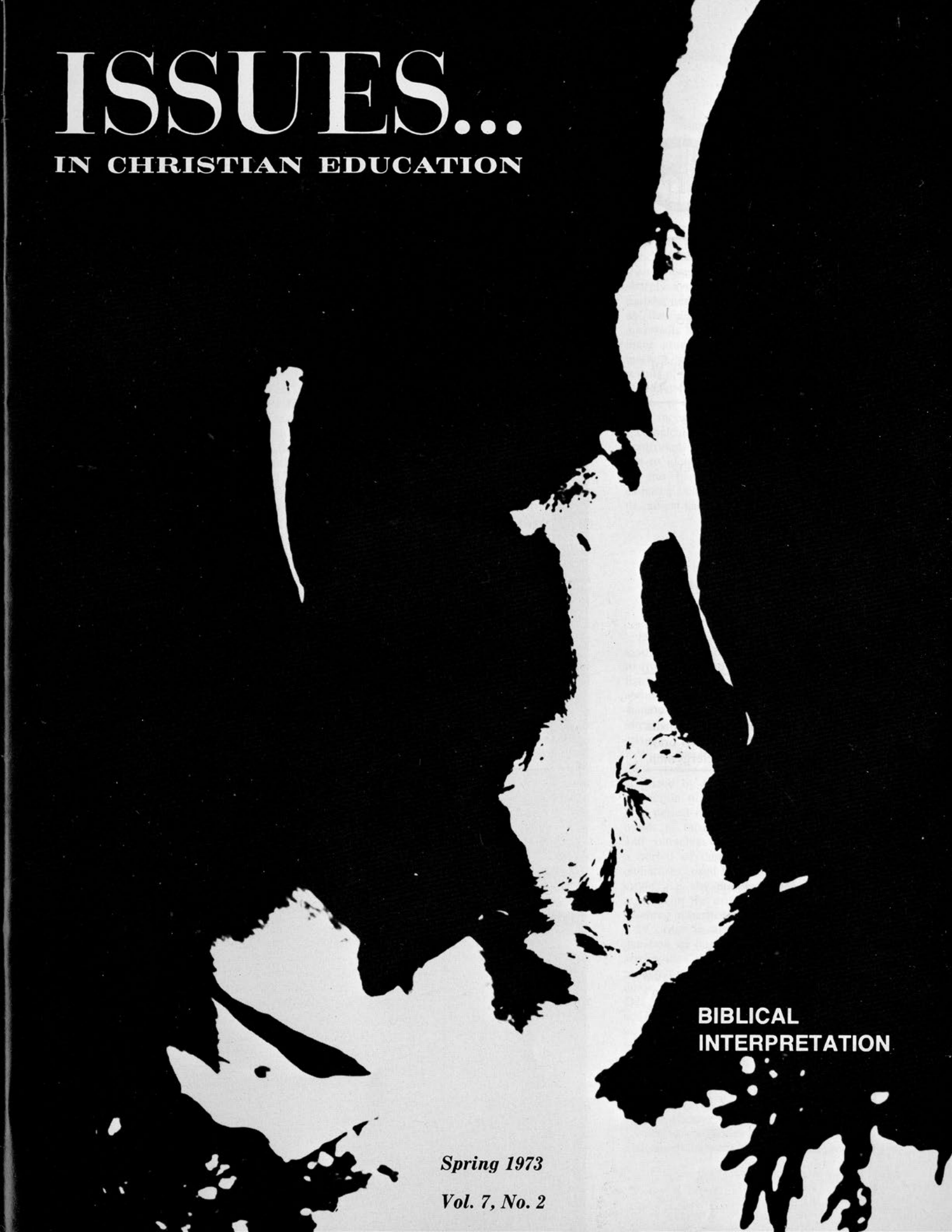
ISSUES...

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

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About Our Authors

The materials in this issue were written by members of the Concordia faculty with the exception of two book reviews written by nonfaculty clergymen.

ABOUT THE COVER

How well can you interpret the visual information on the cover? If it doesn't seem to mean anything to you, turn the cover upside down and look again.

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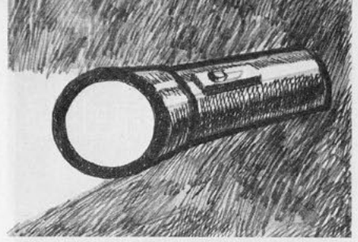
Editor's Notes

Biblical interpretation is currently a special concern of many members of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. As thorough a treatment of this subject as is possible within the space limitations of this journal is presented in the following pages. The contributors have prepared substantive materials that the Editorial Committee believes will be useful to anyone who wants to know what is involved if one is to interpret the Holy Word responsibly rather than emotively.

THE EDITOR

editorials



MINING AND MINTING

The performance of a concert pianist at New York's Lincoln Center is a great accomplishment, but if you sat there and watched, you would feel that he played with such ease and so little effort. However, what you didn't see were the many years of tedious study that went into the mastery of that keyboard.

Likewise, the ability to rightly handle the Word of truth requires many years of study. The Bible is like a mine that contains the wealth of eternal salvation; but this wealth will not be uncovered by the careless or lazy searcher. There is much "mining and minting" that must be done in order to grasp for oneself its great spiritual nuggets and diamonds.

Today, as in ages past, the workers in this mine of God face a thankless, difficult task as they attempt to point out and convince others of the great treasures it contains. And as never before, there is the need for the community of workers to lend its encouragement and support to those publicly working in this mining and minting. Recognizing the difficulty of this work, each miner must use all the best tools at his or her disposal.

Our own community of workers, The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, finds itself closely examining the tools that workers both inside and outside its immediate fellowship are using, especially those tools grouped under the label of the "historical-critical method." Many people seem to be confused about just what this method is; this could be because there is such a wide variety of emphases among its worldwide users. However, there does seem to be a broad general consensus in scholarly journals about what is employed in the method itself. It uses the criteria of "scientific" historical investigation to analyze the Biblical text in terms of language, historical growth, literary form, and theological motivation (redaction or composition criticism). Edgar Krentz, writing about historical-critical scholarship, has said, "The method earns the name 'critical' because it constantly asks about the bias and trustworthiness of the text and its author."

Our Synod's present controversy about the use of these "new tools" is both understandable and justifiable. Although a case can be made for not judging a method by its misusers, nevertheless, an awareness of what the radical users of this method outside the Missouri Synod have produced with it may, in part, explain the apprehension that this writer and others feel toward the historical-critical method. So many radical form and redaction critics have moved beyond a legitimate literary analysis of forms and theological emphases within a Biblical text to an unwarranted value judgment on what is written within these forms (*Sachkritik*, content criticism) that one begins to wonder if their presuppositions are actually inseparable from the method itself. The nagging question keeps coming up concerning whether or not the historical-critical method, more than others commonly used, can too easily be diverted from scientific method and turned into a judgment of truth and falsity.

Of particular concern is the influence of Rudolf Bultmann and the post-Bultmannians on the worldwide practitioners of this method, especially their arbitrarily established assumptions in determining what is "authentic" and "unauthentic" in the Biblical text. Their work has created an unhealthy skepticism regarding what the reader can hold to be truly historical in what is presented by the text as historical. Ernst Käsemann has said, "The work of the Form Critics was designed to show that the message of Jesus as given to us by the Synoptists is, for the most part, not authentic but was minted by the faith of the primitive community in its various stages." Yet a prominent scholar like W. D. Davies has clearly spotted the weakness of this view when he pointed out that the form critics have ascribed to the Christian communities a role in the creation of the tradition preserved in the Gospels that is exaggerated. Certainly the New Testament points not only to expanding virile Christian communities, but also to widely scattered, confused, and immature ones. It is therefore more likely that the creativity that lies behind the Gospel traditions comes not from the mixed- and often muddled-thinking Christian communities, but from a supreme source in a single person, Jesus Christ. The evangelists claim primary source contact with Jesus (1 John 1:3) and to "having followed all things closely" (Luke 1:3) in recording the ministry of Jesus.

The radical redaction critics have assumed that the evangelists themselves composed certain portions of the gospel accounts that actually have no basis in historical fact. Their tendency has been to regard the tradition of the church preserved in the Biblical text as if it were completely parallel to the folklore and myth-making of all primitive communities. One is hard placed to fit into this folk-literature view of the Bible the promise of the Spirit's guidance of the apostles into all truth (John 14:26). Also, little credence is given by these practitioners to how much the early Christians valued for the sake of reliability the factor of eyewitnesses, yet one can trace the idea of witness that occurs more than 150 times in the New Testament. The function of the newly chosen apostle was to be a witness to the Resurrection, and the very idea of witness involves being witness to a real historical event. Paul asked his critics to consult the eyewitnesses (1 Cor. 15:5-8). Both Christian and antichristian eyewitnesses of Jesus' career would have deterred wholesale fabrication and distortion of information.

The fact that those critical of the use of the historical-critical method in our midst continue to identify this method with its radical users elsewhere behooves those who are favorable to its widespread use among us to indicate very clearly and continually how their presentation of the method would very sharply avoid the average pulpit/Bible class/parishioner's use of the method from arriving at the devastating conclusions regarding a verbally inerrant Bible that the most prominent practitioners of the historical-critical method have said are the logical scholarly results of its consistent use (cf. Carl Braaten's comments in *Dialog*, Autumn 1972). Or maybe it would be well for those among us who recognize the need to do a literary-theological analysis of a text but one highly controlled by "Lutheran presuppositions" not to identify their study of the Scriptures as the historical-critical method, thereby avoiding being placed in the same camp as its radical users.

RICHARD SHUTA

RELIGIOUS CRISIS – YES OR NO?

Doubts in the value of religion and in the methods of practicing and applying it seem to trouble a good many of concerned Christians. Not too rarely the ongoing dispute about the right way of religious practice – usually called orthodoxy – is brought to our attention as being in a crisis. Is it really a crisis?

When speaking of an economic crisis, we think usually of a period of depression characterized by falling or skyrocketing prices, restriction of credit, and bankruptcies, and of a period in which fear takes hold of the minds of businessmen and buyers. Do we find ourselves – in matters of religion – in a period of depression that gives way to anxieties caused by a restriction in religious credit, i. e., by doubts in general and by a mistrust in the orthodoxy of practice and of teaching in particular?

In order to give a valid answer to this question we ought to take a short look at the possibilities we nowadays have in our approach to religion and to Biblical interpretation. During the past 25 years, since the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, archaeological activities in the Near East and especially in the Biblical countries have increased. Supported by various nations, archaeologists were able to establish through their excavations milestones in Jewish and early Christian history through their findings in the Dead Sea territory, at Megiddo, at Jerusalem, and at other places.

Linguistic activities have increased as well. The search for truth in the texts has produced

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a large number of Bible translations and linguistic interpretations. Even the interested general public seems to have become more aware of the imponderable flavor that is typical for every language, with its very own expressiveness and special patterns, a fact that presents insolvable problems to translators. In the fields of both archaeology and linguistics we are supplied with more factual detail than any former generation has had. Yet, we feel that much still has to be done in the search for Biblical-historical truth. One or more generations to come will need to explore more, e. g., the patterns of the languages and the metaphors that were used in the time the Biblical texts were first written down. We need more information about the customs of those times to develop an understanding of such linguistic metaphors. These are just two problem areas requiring further study.

Finally, our generation has become more conscious of the uses of psychology in writing. Pamphlets,. statements, etc., on religion and orthodoxy written by our contemporaries could be psychologically analyzed and, with the help of this dissecting neutralization, given a score on an absolute value scale.

Can we really speak of a religious crisis that we are confronted with at present? My personal answer is no. We are extremely favored to witness a time that has brought forth new facts about and insights into Biblical history; furthermore, new questions and new curiosities have and still will come up to explore further areas in historical and interpretative studies. All this speaks against the characteristics of a crisis, which means depression or stagnation. As long as we are involved in a dialog about Biblical history and interpretation, so long we and our religion will be alive.

BERTRUN DELLI

O

HERMENEUTICS AND THE LUTHERAN INTERPRETER

The provocative and stimulating studies before us could well suggest the following: One, orthodoxy and sound hermeneutics have not always gone together, e. g., as when orthodoxy and allegory worked together in the ministry of proclamation.[1] Two, the history of interpretation demonstrates that *presuppositions* may color and direct exegetical effort and guide and influence method and conclusions. More than method dictates presuppositions and conclusions. Three, concentrating only on the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax of Scripture, while well and good, is only preparatory to the larger task of demonstrating how Scripture testifies to Christ.[2] Finally, Scripture and God's Word are not captive to any one hermeneutical method, but remain judge and tribunal before which any method is examined and evaluated.

Even when sound hermeneutical method did not accompany orthodoxy, the Spirit's voice and living witness of the Gospel did not perish. Even in the darkest days of church history the Gospel of God's Word was sounded in her creeds, liturgics, and hymns —even though Scripture seemed silenced by human traditions. Since for Lutherans Scripture is the Word of God but the Word of God is not Scripture, Lutherans recognize that Word may indeed be preached, even in spite of an improper and inaccurate "hearing out" of a particular Biblical unit.[3]

Just as good tools are secondary to the talent and ability of the craftsman, so exegetical tools will produce results no better than the "faith-convictions" of the interpreter. Consequently, Lutherans are more eager to summon their teachers/pastors to a sound Confessional tradition than to discover a method of interpretation by which infallible results are automatically assured.

In an effort to mark off basic Lutheran presuppositions, Missouri Synod Lutherans have reached a somewhat common set of affirmations: (1) The interpreter stands under Scripture—not as a "lord" over it—but below as an obedient servant of the Word. (2) The servant can only speak as he is led by the Spirit of Scripture. (3) Subscription to the Lutheran Confessions, *The Book of Concord,* directs the interpreter to be aware continually that Christ stands as the center of Scripture —not as divine Lawgiver, but as the One who justifies us through His death and resurrection. (4) Subscription and the Confessional witness underscore the fact that one's whole life depends on the Gospel's coming to a person from the outside.[4] Of this reality there is no more powerful a reminder than our baptism into the body of Christ. (5) Christ is not only center, but He is the living voice of Scripture itself. And (6) Confessional subscription focuses our attention on the great treasury of the Ecumenical Creeds. The previous presuppositions are united in the conviction that the Word of God preached performs a twofold function of preaching "Law and Gospel." [5] Our task is not complete with examining grammar, syntax, and vocabulary; but our goal is to "preach Christ and Him crucified." In other words, Lutheran interpretation is always "Christocentric."

History demonstrates that Scripture and God's Word are not captive to any one hermeneutical tradition. This being the case, how do we deal with current methods? One way is to dismiss modern methods, e. g., form-criticism, as Fundamentalism has done.

> Fundamentalism has refused to distinguish between some of the false presuppositions with which some exponents of criticism work and the method itself, thereby depriving itself of one way of becoming a part of the living thrust of Scripture. We can truthfully say that it is form-criticism and tradition-criticism which have helped students of the Scriptures to break away from an attitude toward the Bible text as being hardly more than a storehouse of religious ideas.[6]

Are modern methods "perfect"? By no means. One ingredient of Reformation faith reminds us that men and human institutions (as well as exegetical methods) are fallible. Even traditions are fallible, and Lutherans remind themselves that their own traditions are not infallible.[7] Conscious of this, Lutherans have avoided making any one translation normative and have avoided identification of an infallible commentary. Our confidence lies rather in the conviction that sound Lutheran presuppositions will make an essential difference in how we employ a neutral method of interpretation. While exegetical conclusions will not be identical in all cases among Lutherans, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod does ask of its interpreters this:

> In employing nontraditional techniques or advancing nontraditional interpretations, the Lutheran interpreter, out of love for the people he serves, should clearly demonstrate that he has not violated either the *sola Scriptura* or the *solus Christus* principle.[8]

D. P. MEYER

NOTES

[1] Bernhard Lohse, *A Short History of Christian Doctrine,* trans. F. Ernst Stoeffler (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 24 f.

[2] Martin H. Scharlemann, "Biblical Interpretation Today," *The Lutheran Scholar,* XXIV, 1 (January 1967), p. 9.

[3] Robert Preus, *The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study of the Theology of the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), p. 23.

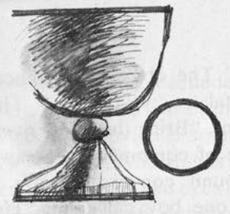
[4] Herbert Girgensohn, *Teaching Luther's Catechism,* I, trans. John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 181.

[5] For further elaboration of Lutheran presuppositions or Confessional *Vorgestaendnis,* see Herbert J. A. Bouman, "Some Thoughts on Theological Presuppositions for a Lutheran Approach to the Scriptures," and Ralph Bohlmann, "Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions," in *Aspects of Biblical Hermeneutics: Confessional Principles and Practical Applications.* Occasional Papers No. 1. *Concordia Theological Monthly.* Papers delivered to a conference of the Council of Presidents and the seminary faculties of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; also CTCR, "A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Biblical Studies," *Convention Workbook* (St. Louis: CPH, 1967).

[6] Scharlemann, p. 9.

[7] K. E. Skydsgaard, *One in Christ: Protestants and Catholics Where They Agree—Where They Differ,* trans. Axel C. Kildegaard (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 67.

[8] Bohlmann, p. 46.



A LUTHERAN APPROACH TO INTERPRETATION

By HARVEY LANGE

The Lutheran interpreter approaches the study of Scripture from the perspective of the Gospel. By the grace of God he has already heard God speak in Jesus Christ and rejoices in the Biblical witness to God's salvation. As a member of the household of God he is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20). He knows the Christocentric intent of Scripture even before he studies a text.

This knowledge of and attitude toward the Biblical account reflects the unique nature, content, and purpose of Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture is the inspired Word of God, God's personal address that was and continues to be instructive for faith and life. Holy Scripture's content consists of two fundamental doctrines, Law and Gospel. The Law exposes men's enslavement to sin and bondage in death. The Gospel proclaims God's gracious rescue in Jesus Christ by which one is forgiven and made alive unto God. Holy Scripture's purpose is to make wise unto salvation and to train up in the godly life.

The Lutheran interpreter sees Holy Scripture as the church's Book, as that unique prophetic and apostolic witness through which God has been pleased to edify and sustain the church's life. Not only has the inspired Scripture strengthened and informed the ongoing proclamation of the Word of God, but it has also defended the Gospel against heretical attack. The intent of this article is to explore the importance and role of this Gospel presupposition in Biblical interpretation and to indicate some implications for several issues in Biblical studies currently debated within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Dr. Martin Franzmann has made an invaluable contribution to the LCMS dialog on Biblical interpretation in his essay, "Seven Theses on Reformation Hermeneutics." [1] In these theses Dr. Franzmann makes clear that the Lutheran interpreter approaches Scripture with a definite theological commitment to "the radical Gospel." [2] This radical Gospel recognizes the condemning law of God and man's utter spiritual tragedy; it proclaims God's gracious salvation fulfilled in Jesus Christ; it calls to new life in Jesus Christ, a life worked by the Spirit through the Gospel itself. One must know the overall soteriological intent of Scripture if he is to interpret correctly. The main doctrine of Christianity is involved at this point, not as one doctrine among many and somehow standing on a higher level than other doctrines, but as that article of faith by which the church stands or falls.

> In the words of the Apology, this article of justification by faith is the "chief article of the entire Christian doctrine . . . without which no poor conscience can have any abiding comfort or rightly understand the riches of the grace of Christ." [3]

When the Ethiopian official asked Philip for comment on a passage from Isaiah 53, Philip did not give a discourse on figurative language nor did he take up the issue of the authorship of Isaiah (Acts 8:26-39). Philip "opened his mouth and beginning with this scripture he told him the good news of Jesus" (Acts 8:35). Philip recognized that the heart of God's past witness via the prophets pointed to Christ and God's promised salvation. Now Christ had come. The promise had been kept. In Jesus God spoke His authoritative Word to every repentant heart, "Son, be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven." Philip used Isaiah to proclaim the radical Gospel.

This stress on the radical Gospel recognizes that linguistic study and historical study are necessary when dealing with Biblical texts. Holy Scripture consists of 66 books written over a period of twelve hundred years. Their makeup as ancient religious documents requires utilizing all the resources available for understanding such texts.[4] However, *if one is to interpret the Biblical text adequately, he must have some conception of Scripture's theological intent as a whole. He must know what the overall Biblical conversation is about.*

For example, take the word *horse.* Several ranchers discuss the quarter horse competition at the Nebraska State Fair. One overhears the comment, "Phil had some

horse!" The obvious reference is to that sleek animal still vital to cutting cattle. The carpenter's call to his assistant, "Bring the horse over here," results in moving a piece of equipment, the sawhorse. Then there is the playground conversation on the basketball court in which one boy calls out, "How many horses do you have, Fred?" That question is unintelligible to someone who knows nothing about that favorite basketball game of "horse." In each case one must have some knowledge of the subject discussed in order to understand the meaning of *horse*.

The same is true with respect to Scripture. *Unless the interpreter understands the radical Gospel, he may be able to read words and understand historical fact, but the spiritual import remains veiled.*

Perhaps working through a number of examples from the Scriptures may be the best way to sharpen this accent on Gospel perspective. Take 1 Peter 4:8: "Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins." The apostle is exhorting his reader who has been born anew through the resurrection of Christ (1:3) and has been made a priest to God through Jesus Christ (2:5) to evidence his new life, especially since "the end of all things is at hand" (4:7). The question is, In what sense does love toward the neighbor cover sin? At the time of the Reformation, Roman Catholic theologians interpreted this passage to support man's meritorious role in justification. To them the apostle Peter taught that by loving the neighbor one in some sense covered his own sins. One's good works hid personal failure. Such an interpretation reflected a basic theological understanding of Scripture: that the believer does in some fashion contribute to his salvation, that one's works do achieve some merit and play a causative role in the continuing enjoyment of God's pardon and life.

The reformers held steadfastly to the righteousness of faith over against the righteousness of works. Their fundamental commitment was to the radical Gospel they heard sounding forth from all Scripture. This Gospel commitment shaped all Biblical interpretation. They did not come to the text *tabula rasa*, with an empty slate. They had heard the voice of God, had trembled at His Word, and had found forgiveness and peace in God's promise fulfilled in the crucified, risen Christ. Therefore 1 Peter 4:8 could only refer to the life transformed by the Gospel. Such a renewed life did good to the neighbor, even to covering over his sins. Forgiveness toward others, reconciliation, putting the best construction on everything characterized the life of one who "has been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God." (1 Peter 1:23)

The interpretation of Paul's classic exposition of love in 1 Corinthians 13 is another challenge to one's theological perspective. How does one handle those concluding words, "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love"? Simply to say, "interpret literally," does not solve the theological question. Is our love toward the neighbor somehow to be placed higher than faith's hold on Jesus Christ? In what sense is love the greatest? Such a passage must be enlightened by the radical Gospel. To attribute some justifying virtue to human love would be to undermine the virtue of justifying faith, which finds its life, strength, and greatness solely in God's once-for-all saving action in the death and resurrection of Christ. On the other hand, to proclaim the radical Gospel as God's power that effects new life and equips for service is to see our love as response to God's grace in Christ.

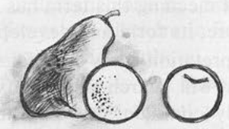
How many teachers have wrestled with the Sermon on the Mount! Here is another one of those texts that show the crucial significance of one's theological stance. Consider Matt. 5:20: "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." What is this greater righteousness that is essential for entering the kingdom of heaven? Is it a more rigorous ethic than Pharisaic piety? Is it a more perfect walk with God, identified by a severed hand or a plucked-out eye (Matt. 5:29-30)? If one looks to works, to Christian obedience, as the key to this greater righteousness, there is trouble. Finally the greater righteousness belongs to God Himself. However, God grants such righteousness to the blessed one whom God has made the salt of the earth and the light of the world. The radical Gospel must be the starting point if one is to interpret evangelically Jesus' lesson on discipleship found in the Sermon on the Mount.

What holds true for the New Testament is equally true for the Old Testament. Admittedly there have always been Marcions in the church. Such have been ready to sever the New Testament community from the Old Testament because they saw only wrath and judgment in Israel's history. Some see a different way of salvation in Israel's history than in the New Testament church. Yet the testimony of the apostles unanimously affirms: "Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). This word of Paul is reechoed in Peter's witness, in James, in Hebrews.

Jesus' damning indictment against the Jews was not their lack of zeal in studying Scripture. These children of Abraham did search the Scriptures. They turned those inspired words and letters inside and out in their effort to learn how to walk rightly before Yahweh. Yet the very Scripture so treasured by the Jews remained closed because they did not stand under the radical Gospel. Those Scriptures testified to Christ. The entire Old Testament found its focus, meaning, fulfillment finally in the Word made flesh. (Cf. John 5:39-47.)

A look at some Old Testament texts will help underscore the importance and role of the radical Gospel for interpretation. One of the fundamental Old Testament incidents that frequently troubles the Lutheran teacher is found in Exodus, God's giving of the Law at Sinai. One can find lessons on this Exodus material that suggest that Israel's righteousness before God was in part their own works. For example, in one series of Bible study guides used in Lutheran circles, part of the lesson on the Exodus material contrasts the old covenant with the new covenant. In this comparison the lesson material indicates that the Israelites were placed under the obligation to comply with all the demands of the moral law. The new covenant, on the other hand, announces Christ's fulfillment of the moral law, thereby freeing man from the need to establish his own righteousness. The implication is that in the Old Testament the Israelite obeyed the Law for himself; in the New Testament Christ obeys the Law for us.

Such an interpretation of the Old Testament material raises serious theological questions. First of all, the comparison implies that the way of salvation God worked for Israel was somehow dependent on works. Such interpretation fails to take seriously the redemptive implications of God's salvation act in leading Israel out of bondage, an act by which God in mercy laid claim to Israel as His chosen ones and so transformed them that obedience became an integral part of their new destiny. Furthermore, such an interpretation does not read the Old Testament as the New Testament writers understood it. The apostle Paul claimed Abraham as a great exemplar of faith (Romans 4), and he interpreted the entire Exodus event Christologically, even identifying Christ as that rock which followed Israel (1 Cor. 10:4). Then there is the issue of obedience. The above comparison seems to suggest that obedience is less important for the New Testament believer. Yet Jesus' interpretation of the Law intensifies God's claim on the Christian.



Old Testament texts that talk about Israel's obedience and treat the people's response to God put to the test the interpreter's understanding of the radical Gospel. The temptation to interpret legalistically and moralistically is ever present. Understanding the soteriological intent of all Scripture is crucial if God's good news in Jesus Christ is to sound forth. Proverbs indicates that the righteous way delivers from death (Prov. 10:2), surrender to wisdom promises blessing and life in abundance (Prov. 3:13-18). How can such passages be squared with the radical Gospel?

One final example for showing the importance and role of the radical Gospel as theological presupposition is found in Proverbs. How can this Biblical book filled with practical directions for everyday living be understood from the vantage point of Gospel? "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7) sounds the keynote in Proverbs. Only that man who stands in awe before God, bowed in worship, who has had eyes opened and ears unstopped to wisdom's proclamation that Yahweh is Lord can understand wisdom's direction. The Augsburg Confession's terse testimony stands against any humanistic, moralistic exposition of Proverbs.

> It is also taught among us that since the fall of Adam all men who are born according to the course of nature are conceived and born in sin. That is, all men are full of evil lust and inclinations from their mothers' wombs and are unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God.[5]

"Unable by nature to have true fear of God" warns us against interpreting Proverbs as purely a this-world ethic created by man out of the good instincts of his inner being. "Fear of the Lord" implies that God has intervened in a man's life with the announcement of judgment. God has established His claim of lordship and led a man to confess, "Woe is me, for I am undone." God has touched his lips with coals from the altar that the sinner may testify, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

But is the promise of this article really valid—or does it reflect some neat scheme to make all the jagged pieces of Scripture fit together even if it means forcing "square pegs into round holes"? Is this talk about the radical Gospel as theological presupposition just one more example of manipulating Scripture to say what one wants it to say?[6] Is this one more example of how tradition and dogmatic formulation have established a tyranny over the text and have stifled the voice of Scripture itself? At this point *there is no other route to go than searching the Scriptures themselves.* Test the presupposition. Search the Scriptures. Delve into Old Testament and see. Is God's redemptive promise really that *fundamentum* which moves through all eras of Israel's holy history, be it patriarchs, the amphictyony, the monarchial period, the grim exile? Is the radical Gospel proclaimed in the motif of kingdom of God, covenant, exodus, sacrifice, blessing? Study the New Testament—gospels, epistles, apocalyptic vision. What is God saying through apostles and evangelists? Is the radical Gospel the key to the entire apostolic Word?

It may be in order to observe that some passages do not necessarily speak forth the grace and love of God as forthrightly and persuasively as others. How does one handle Israel's bloody conquest of Canaan, the imprecatory psalms, Ezra's directive to set aside one's wife if she did not come from a proper family? What does one do with chapter after chapter of levitical prescription or the cry of futility from the preacher? These are dark passages. At times the interpreter may even step back and confess, "I do not know." Admittedly there are a host of varied themes running through the Scriptures.

Nonetheless the Scriptures are a unity. Through the inspired prophetic and apostolic Scriptures God seeks to draw us to Himself. God desires to implant new life in us that we be like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in its season (Ps. 1:3). John could have included many more things in his Gospel, but what he wrote is enough that we "may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we may have life in His name" (John 20:31). The seer shares his vision brought him by an angel that we too might glorify Him who loved us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, and priests to His God and Father. (Rev. 1:5-6)

This unity in Scripture is seen by faith in the promise. Finally the Spirit alone grants wisdom and understanding of the radical Gospel. The rigorous study of the Biblical words and the conscientious research into Biblical history can take the interpreter only so far. When Paul spoke of interpreting spiritual truths to those who were spiritual, he reiterated what Jesus had said to the disciples, "Blessed are the eyes which see what you see" (Luke 10:23). When Peter made his bold confession of the Christ in the area of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus testified, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17). Charismatic gift is written large over insightful interpretation of Scripture. And as one remembers that God remains the great Giver-God who delights in pouring out His good gifts, the interpreter of Scripture can pursue his Biblical study with zeal, confidence, wonder, always knowing that prophetic and apostolic witness will continue to speak things both old and new. (Matt. 13:52)

The theological lens of the radical Gospel has implications for the dialog and debate within the LCMS over issues of Biblical interpretation and doctrine. One of these current issues is identified by such terms as "Gospel Fundamentalism" [7] and "Gospelism." [8] While such terms might have some difference in emphasis in their respective contexts, a common concern is that the Gospel not be used as an excuse for pushing aside the full claim of Scripture upon the interpreter. Some within the Synod understand certain LCMS interpreters who stress the importance of the Gospel perspective as doing this in order to play down the normative role of the canonical text. How can the Gospel and the Scripture be pitted against each other? The purpose of Scripture is to make our gracious God known to us in Jesus Christ. Therefore the radical Gospel allows no playing fast and loose with the Biblical text, but calls the interpreter to obedient listening. No Lutheran interpreter is free to pick and choose as he may please. The CTCR study guide "A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Biblical Studies" articulates this reverence and awe before the Biblical text:

> In conformity with the Lutheran Symbols our church confesses and acknowledges the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures to be the Word of God given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, submits unreservedly to them as the sole source, norm, and authority for the church's teaching, and confidently uses them as the powerful vehicles of the Holy Spirit's continuing operation.[9]
>
> C. Necessary Controls
>
> As legitimate as these methodological principles [document had identified "basic and legitimate elements of the so-called historical-critical method"] are, we regard them as being subject always to the following measures of control:
>
> 1. The authoritative Word for the church today is the canonical Word, not precanonical sources, forms or traditions—however useful the investigation of these possibilities may on occasion be for a clearer understanding of what the canonical text intends to say.[10]

What has unfortunately happened is that some Lutheran interpreters when addressing questions raised by contemporary Biblical research may have communicated an attitude of something less than full surrender to the text. Terms such as "myth," "legend," "oral tradition," "divergent accounts," "editorial comment," which communicate in a technical conversation on literary form and text transmission, often have negative connotations for many pastors and teachers. This writer recalls a training session with Sunday school teachers several years ago on the subject of principles of Bible interpretation. In one session he simply asked the teachers, "What does the term 'myth' say to you?" The overwhelming response was with words like "a fairytale," "make believe," "untrue." These teachers reflected one particular understanding of myth. Their understanding did not reflect the technical meaning this term has in a discussion of ancient literature, its form and development.

Since all interpretation aims at edification, the Lutheran interpreter will search out words and concepts that do effectively communicate the Biblical message. At the same time the hearer or reader bears an equal responsibility toward the speaker or writer. One should make certain that he has understood correctly before he makes harsh judgments that challenge confessional commitment and call into question aptness to teach.

Another aspect of Gospel Reductionism revolves around the issue of historicity and facticity. The impression is given that unless one interprets the Biblical account as literal, factual history, there can be no truth. This issue often focuses on the interpretation of Genesis 1 and Creation, Genesis 3 and the Fall, the book of Jonah, the Exodus accounts, and similar Biblical material. The question of literary form is part of the issue. Does the radical Gospel speak at all to the question of history? Most assuredly. The radical Gospel confesses that God is both the Creator of heaven and earth and the Lord of history. God not only made our world, but continues to be its Creator-King. God even now is leading the affairs of men and nations toward His end. The concept of natural law with its implication that God is on some kind of vacation and removed from the contemporary scene has no place under the radical Gospel.

Furthermore the radical Gospel insists that God carried out His salvation plan in and through specific events within history. In the Old Testament, the call of Abraham, the Exodus, the wilderness wandering, the conquest of the land, the Davidic dynasty, the exile, and restoration belong to that holy history. God acted in and through specific historical happenings. The faith of Israel fastened on these events, for through them God communicated His saving promise and made known His salvation.

That Old Testament drama pointed forward to a still greater chapter in God's plan, the incarnation of the only-begotten Son. Jesus Christ, true God with the Father, shared our flesh and blood. He became a real man that through death He might destroy the devil and crush death's reign over the hearts of man. God raised His Son on the third day, exalted Him at His right hand, and now the church proclaims His coming again in final triumph on the last day. The radical Gospel does not take us out of history, but gives us enlightened eyes that through God's revelation in past historical events we can now see the hand of God at work in our world and rejoice in His saving, sustaining promise.

Because the radical Gospel sees history as God's arena for action and listens to the inspired prophets and apostles making known God's purpose in that history, *this Gospel prepares the interpreter to face the fully historical dimension of the Scriptures themselves.*[11] There is no insistence that Scripture must be read as one particular literary type, such as historical narrative. Genealogy, creation hymn, historical narrative, personal lament, judgment oracle, apocalyptic vision, parable—these forms are all there in Scripture, and God uses them all to speak His truth.

The truth of Scripture is not dependent on literary form per se.[12] To suggest that it is only the factual, eyewitness account that expresses truth is invalid. Poetry with its figures of speech, its highly imaginative phrase, its compelling imagery and stirring rhythm is more expressive of truth than straight prose, especially with respect to feeling and emotion. The language of worship and praise is typically poetic. Would one say that such language is untrue? To call Jesus "Rock of Ages" is not true in a physical sense, but most assuredly true in a figurative sense.

One of the chapters of Scripture frequently discussed in this connection is Genesis 1. As one listens to the discussion, he gets the impression that some would say, unless Genesis 1 is a literal, factual account, it is not true. Is this a valid Biblical position? The Lutheran interpreter who may describe Genesis 1 as a creation hymn because of its language, its repetitious phrases, its structure still affirms the truth of God's creative work.[13] God is the Creator of heaven and earth whether the account is prose or poetry. God created a harmonious, good world with a God-ordained design and purpose whether the account is regarded as historical narrative or a poetic portrait. God made man in His own image remains true in either case, prose or poetry. Truth, facticity, is not linked to literary form per se. And the radical Gospel opens the interpreter to this reality because he sees the Spirit at work through all the varied voices that speak forth for God in Holy Scripture.

In summary, the theological lens for the Lutheran interpreter is the radical Gospel. This crucial evangelical presupposition informs all his listening to Scripture as the Spirit opens him to all God's varied themes and styles within the Biblical witness. The radical Gospel enables the interpreter to pursue his task with vision, with a sense of mission and purpose, with a holy abandon as he lets the text of Scripture speak its own message to him and illumines the paths of God in his own time. What joy and expectation can stir the heart and inspire the mind of one who interprets Scripture under the radical Gospel!

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NOTES

[1] Martin Franzmann, "Seven Theses on Reformation Hermeneutics," reprint from *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XL (April 1969), 235–46. Franzmann develops these theses in "The Art of Exegesis," Compendium Concordia Cassette Series (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972).

[2] Dr. Franzmann's phrase to sum up justification by grace through faith for Christ's sake. Cf. "Seven Theses on Reformation Hermeneutics," pp. 237–39.

[3] Formula of Concord, Art. II, *Book of Concord.*, ed. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 540.

[4] "A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Biblical Studies," Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House), p. 5.

[5] Augsburg Confession, Art. II, *Book of Concord*, p. 29.

[6] "A False View of the Holy Scriptures," *Report of the Synodical President to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: LCMS, 1972), p. 22. Cf. pp. 65–71.

[7] Robert Preus, "Gospel Fundamentalism," *Affirm*, II, 4, pp. 3 ff.

[8] John Warwick Montgomery, "The Unbridgeable Chasm: Gospelism or the Scriptural Gospel?", *Affirm*, II, 7 (Dec., 1972), pp. 1 ff.

[9] "A Lutheran Stance," pp. 5–6.

[10] Ibid., pp. 9–10.

[11] Cf. "It is indeed true that Christian faith rightly sees in the historicalness of God's redemptive work (His entry into and participation in our *saeculum*) a divine warrant for the use of 'secular' means and methods in the study of His Word, including linguistic, literary, and historical analysis of the texts. But at the same time faith recognizes that there is more to history than can ever be adequately measured by 'laws' derived exclusively from empirical data and rational observation." Ibid., p. 10.

[12] "C. Necessary Controls . . . 2. The 'literary form' of the text—even when it can be ascertained with reasonable certainity—is only a clue to understanding, not a criterion of truth." Ibid., p. 10.

[13] Cf. Walter Wegner, "Creation and Salvation: A Study of Genesis 1 and 2," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXXVII, 8 (Sept., 1966), pp. 520–42.

SELECTED HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION[1]

By JAMES H. PRAGMAN

Two major issues have been central in the history of Biblical interpretation: how many meanings may Scripture have? and to what extent must the interpretation of Scripture be governed by an authoritative tradition of interpretation?[2] These two issues continue to agitate the church, and there is little likelihood that they will disappear as matters of concern. Some of the past responses to these two issues have been more helpful than others. In the final analysis, the history of Biblical interpretation is the record of how the church has repeatedly attempted to rediscover the Scriptures.

The Early Church

The history of Biblical interpretation in the first five centuries of the church's history is marked by the contributions of such giants as Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom, Jerome and Augustine. As early as the beginning of the second century, Ignatius of Antioch (d. *ca.* 107) expressed a most important principle of interpretation: the Scriptures are to be interpreted by the light of faith in Jesus Christ.[3] But the history of Biblical interpretation among the early fathers really began after the church was forced to confront militantly anti-Jewish minority groups who challenged the Old Testament as the church's Scripture.

Marcion of Pontus (d. *ca.* 160) endorsed a thoroughgoing dualism that opposed the law-giving and vindictive God of the Old Testament to the loving and forgiving God of the New Testament. Marcion insisted on interpreting the Old Testament literally to emphasize what he considered to be the "crudities" of the Old Testament. Because Marcion professed to find the Old Testament view of God embedded in the New Testament, he revised and edited the New Testament to eliminate the Jewish conception of God from the New Testament. Marcion's New Testament consisted of edited versions of the Gospel of Luke and Paul's Letters.[4]

The church's response to Marcion's literal interpretation of the Old Testament was the gradual development of allegorical interpretation: behind or under the Old Testament "crudities" (e. g., destructive and vindictive warfare, immorality, anthropomorphisms) was a real or spiritual meaning for the people of God. Alongside the development of allegorical interpretation, Irenaeus of Lyons (*ca.* 130–200) asserted that the Bible requires interpretation, that interpretation is the function of the church and not an individual who stands outside the church, and that the Bible is the Bible that is found in the church (not a version possessed by some individual or group).[5] Ultimately, Irenaeus' point of view was expressed by Vincent of Lerins (d. before 450) to mean that interpretation must be made according to the Catholic faith, and the Catholic faith is what has been held "everywhere, always, and by everyone."[6] Thus, the church's faith and doctrine–its "tradition"–was becoming normative for the interpretation of Scripture in the early church.

The concept of multiple meanings in Scripture and the development of allegorical methodologies is a legacy of Alexandria and her theologians, Clement and Origen. Clement and Origen used the general rules of allegory that had been developed by Philo (*ca.* 20 B. C.–A. D. 50) to demonstrate that the insights of Judaism did not differ fundamentally from the wisdom of the ancient Greek philosophers.[7] Clement of Alexandria (*ca.* 150–215), however, was guided by two primary considerations: the rule of faith or dogma of the church, and the desire to explain by allegory truths of Scripture that would remain hidden if Scripture were interpreted literally. Clement used allegory as a means by which Christians who had risen to a higher level of knowledge could attain knowledge that remained hidden from the simple.[8] Clement sought to interpret the Scriptures in terms of what he understood to be the mind of the church.

Origen (*ca.* 185–254), Clement's successor at the Catechetical School in Alexandria, carried forward the development of allegory and multiple meanings in Scripture. Origen was more systematic and comprehensive than Clement had been. Origen came to the conclusion that the Scriptures evidenced various kinds of discrepancies (e. g., in Genesis days are described before the existence of the sun and the moon, etc.); therefore, he concluded, the Scriptures must have a deeper meaning than the merely literal. In his famous work, *De Principiis,* Origen explained his understanding of Scripture.[9] Scripture had a threefold meaning for Origen; that meaning was literal, moral, and spiritual (allegorical).

It bears repeating to note that the development of allegorization was intended to assist the church in preserving and defending the truth of God. By allegorization, the "crudities" and discrepancies and inconsistencies of Scripture could be removed and Christianity's "cultured despisers" could be shown that Christianity and the wisdom of Greece were in harmony. Nevertheless, allegorization at Alexandria also produced aberrations of doctrine. The church responded by denouncing the aberrations, but it did not denounce the method. The apologetic purpose and function of allegorization remained intact, and so did the method itself.

The development of allegorization within the early church was balanced by the literal and grammatical approach to Scripture that developed in Antioch. Two leaders of the Antiochene School of Biblical interpretation were Theodore of Mopsuestia (*ca.* 340–428) and John Chrysostom (*ca.* 347–407). The Antiochene School insisted on the historical reality of the Biblical revelation; as a whole, the school rejected the unhistorical bias of the Alexandrian allegorists.

Theodore of Mopsuestia attempted to approach the Scriptures from a literal and historical point of view. He challenged various Old Testament books and doubted their canonicity (e. g., the corpus of Wisdom Literature contained wisdom that was merely human, etc.). Also, he asserted on historical grounds that only four psalms (2, 8, 45, and 110) were predictive of Jesus Christ. The exegetical work of Theodore was ordered burned by the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, not because his emphasis on the literal and the historical was false, but because he was thought to be responsible for the Christological errors of his pupil Nestorius and because he had challenged the canonicity of some books the church had judged canonical.[10]

Theodore of Mopsuestia's emphasis on literal and historical interpretation was not lost. His associate and contemporary, John Chrysostom, the patriarch of Constantinople, had been schooled in the methods of Antioch and used them in his preaching and teaching. However, John modified the somewhat harsh literalism of Theodore. John attempted to steer a middle course between the fancies of the allegorists and the absurdities of simple literalists.[11]

The literal and historical emphasis of the Antiochene School, however, was not as "clean" as might be expected. Although Theodore of Mopsuestia rejected allegory as a method of Scriptural interpretation, he and the Antiochene School endorsed the concept of multiple meanings in Scripture: the Antiochene School endorsed and used typology. While allegory and typology are different in degree, both approaches assume dual, if not plural, meanings in Scripture.[12] The exegetical results of the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools were not very dissimilar.

St. Jerome (*ca.* 342–420), one of the four great doctors of the church, is remembered in the history of Biblical interpretation for producing the Vulgate, a text of Scripture that could claim to be the best scholarship of the time. St. Jerome originally interpreted the Scriptures allegorically. However, when Origen came under suspicion for the orthodoxy of some of his views, Saint Jerome began to modify his interpretive methods, adopting the literal and historical approach of the Antiochene School.[13] To some extent, St. Jerome is responsible for preserving and transmitting the interpretive principles of Antioch to subsequent generations of interpreters.

Another of the great doctors of the church, St. Augustine (354–430), discussed several principles and rules of interpretation. First, "Whoever seems to himself to have understood the divine Scriptures in such a way that he does not build up that double love of God and neighbor, has not yet understood."[14] Second, the authority of Scripture cannot be tampered with by the interpreter.[15] St. Augustine examined certain rules of interpretation, attributed to the Donatist Tichonius, that were current in his day. St. Augustine commends them with some reservations in Book III of his *Christian Doctrine.* While St. Augustine counseled students of the Bible to become thoroughly acquainted with the forms and expressions of Biblical language, he also urged the student to pray that he might understand the Scriptures.[16]

While St. Jerome summed up and transmitted the achievement of Antioch to subsequent generations in the church, St. Augustine modified the allegorical interpretation of Alexandria while retaining Alexandria's emphasis on the dogma and tradition of the church as they related to the exegetical task.[17] The history of Biblical interpretation in the early church comes to a close with the work of St. Jerome and St. Augustine.

The Medieval Church

In the medieval church, the Alexandrian emphasis on multiple meanings in the Scriptures gained general acceptance among interpreters. The Antiochene emphasis on the literal and the historical survived, but the cloud of suspicion over Theodore of Mopsuestia did not vanish.[18]

A fourfold sense of Scripture became very popular and was firmly established in the medieval period. This fourfold sense was taught by means of a popular jingle:

> The letter shows us what God and our fathers did;
> The allegory shows us where our faith is hid;
> The moral meaning gives us rules of daily life;
> The anagogy shows us where we end our strife.[19]

The literal sense *(sensus historicus* or *literalis)* of the Scriptures was to be obtained by a simple explanation of the words of the text. Allegory *(sensus allegoricus)* used simile to find a reality other than the literal meaning of the text (e. g., "David rules in Jerusalem" means allegorically that "Christ reigns in the Church Militant"). The moral meaning *(sensus tropologicus)* provided instruction in or correction of morals. Finally, anagogy *(sensus anagogicus)* led to the contemplation of heavenly things. Thus, the word "Jerusalem" could be understood in a fourfold way: literally, it meant the city by that name; allegorically, it represented Holy Church; morally, it signified the faithful soul; and anagogically, it denoted the life of those who dwell in heaven.[20]

Another significant development in the medieval period was the desire of Christian interpreters for instruction from Jewish scholars to assist them in the interpretation of the Old Testament. Perhaps the awareness of a fourfold Jewish system of meaning in the Old Testament tended to confirm the medieval church's approach to the Scriptures.[21]

While the Victorines—Richard, Hugh, and Andrew of St. Victor—in the 12th century made use of the learning they gained from the rabbis in the interpretation of Scripture, earlier efforts by Johannes Scotus Erigena (d. 877) had attempted to emphasize the necessity of close textual, linguistic, and historical studies.[22] Nevertheless, most of the Biblical interpretation that occurred in the medieval period relied on the conclusions and methods of the early fathers. Medieval interpreters, as a whole, did not develop new directions in interpretation. The concept of multiple meanings in Scripture was not dislodged from its place of prominence: allegory was preferable to the bare literal word.

It remained for the greatest theologian of the medieval period, St. Thomas Aquinas (*ca.* 1225—1274), to refine the church's understanding of the relationships between the several senses of Scripture. Aquinas vindicated the importance of the literal sense of Scripture. According to Aquinas, the literal sense was the full meaning of the author of Scripture. When the literal sense of the text had been determined, the interpreter could derive and base other meanings on the literal meaning of the text.[23]

One additional medieval interpreter must be mentioned: Nicholas of Lyra (1279—1340). Nicholas is an important connecting link between the medieval period and the Reformation. A well-known, but perhaps not quite accurate, jingle made the relationship between Nicholas and the Reformation very clear:

> If Lyra had not piped
> Luther had not danced.

Nicholas of Lyra followed Aquinas in emphasizing the literal sense of Scripture, but he also accepted the fourfold meaning of Scripture. Lyra's system of Biblical interpretation was current in the University of Erfurt where Martin Luther was a student.[24]

While the Victorines, Aquinas and Lyra, illustrate a medieval interest in the literal and historical meaning of Scripture, most medieval interpreters embraced the concept of multiple meanings and particularly allegory. Allegory made it possible for the interpreter to find in Scripture what the doctrine and tradition of the church indicated was in the Scripture.[25] Tradition interpreted the Bible, and allegory was the method: allegory was alchemy. Traditions and methods may change, but they produce the same result when they are permitted to determine the interpretation of Scripture: the strangulation of the Word. Exegesis has become separated from theology, and theology reigned supreme in the medieval church.

The Reformation

It has been suggested that if Luther belonged to a modern theological faculty, he would probably not be a professor of systematic or dogmatic theology or even a professor of New Testament exegesis: rather, he would be a professor of Old Testament exegesis.[26] Luther wanted both his friends and his enemies to understand him as a Biblical theologian. In 1512 Luther received the degree of *Doctor in Biblia;* this degree, more than anything else, was his authorization for the work of Reformation.[27]

In his story of Luther's exegetical writings, Jaroslav Pelikan has isolated four components of Luther's exegesis: the Scriptures as the Word of God, the tradition of the church, the history of the people of God, and the defense of doctrine.[28] While space does not permit a detailed exposition of these four components, it may perhaps be helpful to note what Luther meant by "the Scriptures as the Word of God."

The phrase "Word of God" in Luther's writings usually referred to the oral Word of proclamation, the spoken Word of preaching. Thus, "Christ did not command the apostles to write, but only to preach" and "The church is not a pen-house but a mouth-house." [29] The Scriptures were "Word of God" in a derivative sense for Luther:

> The proclamation was entitled to be called the "Word of God" only if it recited these deeds which were the "Word of God." And to do this task of reciting and thus to be the "Word of God" the oral proclamation had to rely on the "Word of God" as Scripture.[30]

According to Luther, the written Scriptures served a twofold function: first, to sustain the oral proclamation of the Word of God; second, to preserve the proclamation from error.[31]

Luther and the other reformers also asserted that Holy Scripture is the only and final source of revelation for Christians—neither the church nor the pope nor traditions can determine the sense of Holy Scripture—and, consequently, Scripture is to be explained by Scripture itself. Luther also asserted that the Word of God has but one meaning, a simple and clear meaning, although Luther still used allegory in his interpretive work for devotional purposes. Finally, Luther's work in translating the Bible into German had great significance in the history of Biblical interpretation.[32] In his prefaces to the books of the Bible, Luther made it clear that he accepted the conclusions of St. Jerome and other early fathers about the dubious canonicity of some Biblical books. From that point of view, Luther engaged in theological criticism of some Biblical writings. The Letter to the Hebrews stated that a second repentance was impossible, but that was incompatible with the demand for repentance in the Gospels and in Paul's Letters. The Letter of James was incompatible with the Pauline understanding of justification. The Revelation to John was completely fantastic and out of character with the rest of the New Testament; moreover, it ignored the central Christian message. Consequently, in Luther's editions of the New Testament the books he had subjected to historical and theological criticism (Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation) were placed at the end of the New Testament and were not listed with the other New Testament writings in the table of contents.[33]

Luther used historical and grammatical methods of study, not as an end in themselves, but as a means to the understanding of Christ. Christ was the center to which all of Scripture pointed, and Christ was the light by which all of Scripture was to be understood. Luther tore Scripture from the grasp of an authoritative church tradition and placed it in the hands of believers, but this did not mean that the believer was free to interpret the Bible subjectively. Historical and grammatical study of the Scriptures was necessary because such study led the believer to the center, to Christ. According to Luther, Romans and Galatians, St. John's Gospel, and 1 Peter contained the kernel of Christianity, a kernel that any believer could grasp without difficulty.[34]

John Calvin was more diligent and careful as a scholar of Scripture than Luther had been. He produced commentaries on all but eight of the Old Testament books and on all New Testament writings, with the exception of Revelation, which he confessed he could not understand.[35] In practice, Calvin interpreted the Bible in its plain, literal meaning. However, he also recognized that the literal meaning might on occasion be allegorical. Calvin maintained that Scripture itself, rather than a Christocentric interpretation of Scripture, was authoritative for Christian faith. Faith itself must determine the individual's acceptance of Scripture, and the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit would confirm the truth of such interpretation.[36] By emphasizing the primacy of faith and the Holy Spirit in interpretation, Calvin tended to open the way for subjectivism in interpretation.

The reformers, and Luther in particular, returned to exegetical methods that were less rationalistic and more ancient than those used in the medieval church. Luther reunited exegesis and theology, removing the medieval separation that had developed in the centuries before the Reformation.

The 17th and 18th Centuries

It can be said that the immediate successors of the great reformers did not make original contributions to the development of the science and art of Biblical interpretation. The reformers' heirs organized, arranged, and systematized the thought and discoveries of the reformers—that contribution was important—but in the process some of the freedom, spontaneity, and originality that had characterized the reformers was lost. Protestant theologians were struggling for survival in France or they were engaged in bitter controversies over doctrinal, political, or ecclesiastical matters in Switzerland, the Netherlands, the German states, England, and Scotland. Meanwhile, the Council of Trent (1546) had declared that Catholic interpretation had to fit into and coincide with inherited tradition.[37]

Nevertheless, new forces and ideas were stirring. Three significant developments opened the way for the modern period of Biblical interpretation. First, geographical investigations by the Portuguese and others and the discoveries of Copernicus (1473—1543) overthrew the Ptolemaic conception of the universe. After these discoveries were condemned by the pope, natural scientists began to turn away from the Bible as the document that provided a scientifically accurate picture of the universe. Second, textual investigations by such renaissance scholars as Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus, among others, and the rise of new epistomological theories by Descartes and others caused Biblical interpreters to look at their texts from different perspectives. Third, the systems of Lutheran and Calvinistic dogmaticians produced exegetical reactions that expressed doubts about the correctness of the dogmaticians' understanding of Scripture. This reaction produced a variety of important investigations in textual and exegetical matters.[38]

The scholars and students of the Scriptures who are associated with the history of Biblical interpretation in the 17th and 18th centuries are numerous; only a few of them can be given brief mention. The philosophers Thomas Hobbes (1588—1679) and Baruch Spinoza (1632—1677) illustrated the growing influence of rationalism and the declining authority of the Scriptures and the church in intellectual life. In his *Leviathan* (1651) Hobbes saw the Scriptures not as the revelation of God in history or as the source of theology. Rather, Scripture was a book of rules, regulations, and moral principles for the life of the Christian community.[39] Spinoza, in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), attempted to separate philosophy from theology so that philosophy could be freed to carry on its pursuits without the hindrance of ecclesiastical authority. Spinoza freed human reason from the claims of theology: theology became moral theology, and the Scriptures were interpreted as historical documents.[40]

Other scholars, accepting the conclusions of Hobbes, Spinoza, and other philosophers, applied rationalistic principles and scientific methods to the interpretation of Scripture. Richard Simon (1638—1712) and Richard Bentley (1662—1742) applied the hermeneutics of Spinoza and the scientific methods of ascertaining

internal evidence to the Scriptures.[41] Jean Astruc (1684 to 1766) studied Genesis and concluded that Genesis contained several major and minor documents; others, such as Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), followed Astruc and formulated in subsequent years the documentary hypothesis of the composition of the Pentateuch.[42] Johann Semler (1725–1791) recognized the historical nature of the development of the canon and insisted that historical investigations were essential for a correct interpretation of the Scriptures.[43]

The Deists of the Enlightenment–particularly Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781)–also investigated the Scriptures from a perspective that insisted on the separation of faith and reason.[44] The mind of rational man became the criterion of truth, even in the Scriptures. The age of unhistorical, rational theology dominated the 18th century, even though some interpreters–such as J. A. Bengel (1687–1752)–continued scholarly study of the Scriptures from the point of view of faith and devotion.[45]

The 18th century has been described as an "interim period" in the history of Biblical interpretation.[46] The theological approach of the Reformation and its heirs was no longer accepted, but the critical conclusions of the rationalists and the Deists were too abstract and too negative to sustain the life of faith and theology. Nevertheless, as the 18th century made way for the 19th century, it did not seem that the history of Biblical interpretation would return to a simpler and more direct–less philosophical–appreciation of the Scriptures.

The Nineteenth Century

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834) did initiate a change in direction. He combined the rationalistic principles of exegesis with a Christocentric faith, while replacing the authority of the Bible with "that which flows immediately from the person of Jesus Christ."[47] Schleiermacher's emphasis on the authority that comes from the person of Jesus initiated the 19th century's quest for the historical Jesus, a search that was carried out under the canons of rigid scientific historical inquiry. The search for the "Jesus of history" was carried out by several radical critics, David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874)–who published his *Life of Jesus* in 1835–and Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860),[48] among others. The net result of this course in interpretation was "historicism," which replaced the "assured results" of scientific inquiry for the truth of the Gospel recorded in the Bible. It was not until Albert Schweitzer published *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (English translation, 1910)[49] and Karl Barth published his commentary on *Romans* in 1919[50] that the historicism of the 19th century was called into question and corrected:[51] the Biblical writers were not "objective" historians, but men of faith preaching Christ the Savior.

Further discussion of Biblical interpretation in the 19th century rightly lies within the purview of another article in this issue of ISSUES, for the developments of that century have led to the establishment of current methods and trends in Biblical interpretation.

Conclusion

This article began by noting that two major concerns have been central in the history of Biblical interpretation. The history of Biblical interpretation has revolved around the question of meaning and the control of interpretation (e. g., "tradition," dogma, reason, philosophy, a scientific worldview, etc.) so that it produces a certain meaning. Those two issues have not vanished: they remain to confront every interpreter of the Scriptures. Those issues remain contemporary–always.

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NOTES

[1] This article intends to provide a survey of some major issues and developments in the interpretation of Scripture that have been important in the history of the church. This survey, of necessity, is selective and thus neither complete nor thorough. Hopefully, this article will spur the interested reader to investigate the history of Biblical interpretation in depth.

[2] K(endrick) Grobel, "Interpretation, History and Principles of," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick *et al.* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), II, 719.

[3] James D. Wood, *The Interpretation of the Bible: A Historical Introduction* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1958), pp. 34–35.

[4] On Marcion, see F. L. Cross, editor, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 854. Also, see Robert M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (revised edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), pp. 60 ff.

[5] Robert M. Grant, "History of the Interpretation of the Bible: I. Ancient Period," *The Interpreter's Bible*, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, *et al.* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c. 1952), I, 108–109. Wood, *The Interpretation of the Bible*, p. 47.

[6] Grant, *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, 109.

[7] Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 75 ff.

[8] Wood, *The Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 51–52.

[9] Ibid., p. 56.

[10] Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 93–96.

[11] Grant, *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, 111.

[12] Grobel, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, II, 720.

[13] Wood, *The Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 62–63.

[14] Quoted in Grant, *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, 112.

[15] Wood, *The Interpretation of the Bible*, p. 66.

[16] Ibid., pp. 68–70.

[17] Grant, *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, 113.

[18] Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1941), has presented a thorough review and analysis of interpretive developments in the medieval period.

[19] "litera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia." Harry Caplan, "The Four Senses of Scriptural Interpretation and the Mediaeval Theory of Preaching," *Speculum*, IV (1929), 286.

[20] Caplan discusses the fourfold sense of Scripture, with examples, in his article: Ibid., IV, 283.

[21] Wood, *The Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 73–74. Caplan, *Speculum*, IV, 289–290, and Grobel, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, II, 721, review the medieval Jewish fourfold system of meaning in the Scriptures: *peshat* (the obvious literal meaning), *remez* (the typological or allegorical meaning), *derash* (a rational-philosophical meaning derived from research according to specific rules), and *sod* (a secret, mystical meaning).

[22] John T. McNeill, "History of the Interpretation of the Bible: II. Medieval and Reformation Period," *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, 118–19.

[23] Wood, *The Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 80–82. See also McNeill, *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, 122.

[24] Wood, *The Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 82–83.

[25] James D. Smart, *The Interpretation of Scripture* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 15.

[26] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Luther the Expositor: Introduction to the Reformer's Exegetical Writings (Luther's Works: Companion Volume)* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), pp. 45–46. This suggestion was made by Heinrich Bornkamm in his book *Luther Und Das Alte Testament* (1948).

[27] Pelikan, *Luther the Expositor*, p. 49.

[28] Ibid., *passim*. Pelikan describes these components in chapters 3 through 6 of his book.

[29] Ibid., pp. 63–64, quoted from Luther's Church Postil of 1522.

[30] Ibid., p. 68.

[31] Ibid., pp. 68–70.

[32] Werner Georg Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, translated from the German by S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee (New York: Abingdon Press, 1972), pp. 20 ff., discusses three fundamental contributions that Luther made to the interpretation of Scripture. These contributions are summarized in this paragraph.

[33] Ibid., pp. 23–26.

[34] Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 132–33.

[35] McNeill, *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, 124.

[36] Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 133–34.

[37] Samuel Terrien, "History of the Interpretation of the Bible: III. Modern Period," *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, 127.

[38] Ibid., I, 127 ff., discusses these developments in manageable detail.

[39] Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 145–46.

[40] Ibid., pp. 146–50.

[41] Terrien, *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, 130.

[42] Ibid., I, 130–31.

[43] Ibid., I, 131.

[44] Ibid.

[45] *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 156.

[46] Wood, *The Interpretation of the Bible*, p. 121.

[47] Quoted by Terrien, *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, 132.

[48] Ibid., I, 132–33.

[49] Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 174–77. The title of the original German edition, published in 1906, was *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*.

[50] Smart, *The Interpretation of Scripture*, pp. 276–77.

[51] Clarence T. Craig, "Biblical Theology and the Rise of Historicism," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXII (1943), 281–94.

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TRENDS IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

By Manfred Kwiran

Our century has been a century of hermeneutical discussion. Often misunderstandings and vicious and demonic battles have encouraged more monolog than dialog and have kept the church on a tightrope experience. Attempts to bring some kind of perspective to the debate might be precarious; nevertheless, in order to know one's own procedure in interpretation and to know its limits all procedures and limits in interpretation should be known.

I. Introduction

There is no question that interpretation is necessary and that every interpreter employs certain methods to uncover the meaning of the text. The question today among scholars is which interpretive methods and tools are adequate in dealing with a text and the intention of its author? Only after establishing the meaning the author intended to convey can one speak meaningfully to our century. This debate is especially crucial since the past has shown that interpretive tools often did become masters and led scholars to force texts to say much more or much less or exactly what a culture wanted to hear.[1]

Behind the actual interpretation of the Biblical text is one's understanding of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the science of laws and principles of interpretation and explanation of a given literature. In Christian theology it is applied to the study of the general principles or methods whereby the intended meaning is ascertained from historical documents of proclamation addressed to a particular community. Revelation is always historical by definition.

Too often we are tempted to live off the past by trying to stand where Luther stood. This usually means that we, on the one hand, misuse previous interpretations and force them into the 20th century, or we try to force everyone to return to the 16th or 17th century. In either case we have failed to speak responsibly and responsively before God and man.

When one accepts the Bible as being God's Word or "verbally inspired" Scriptures, one must treat the texts transmitted with utmost care and courtesy and due respect. This does mean at once that one will have to be very critical and historical.[2] These documents are precious and demand thorough scrutiny. They were given historically and have to be seen situationally and contextually. Criticism means that we try to establish to the best of our abilities with present-day tools and methods the exact meaning of the text. Criticism is not automatically to be understood as being "negative." Criticism has a twofold function: first, to establish critically whether that which is before us is really genuine and what it claims to be; second, to extract from it positive meaning for our age.[3]

In other words, we must "search the Scriptures" again and again, allowing the text to fulfill its function and speak decisively to us and through us. This means that the text or manuscript is authoritative, especially so if the literature is Biblical and the theologian is the interpreter. The text tells not only of its necessity for interpretation, but also what language is employed, literary media used, intention conveyed, and possibly which critical methodology can be helpful, and what its limitations are.[4] Best methods and tools are prompted and "created" by the texts themselves. It needs to be underscored that principles and methods of interpretation develop in time of need in order to fight misuse, misunderstanding, and the mishandling of texts. Our objective in this article is to trace briefly the origins of the so-called historical-critical method, sometimes used as a collective term for all of modern interpretation methodology, but historically better understood as a separate method of interpretation. We shall focus on literary, form, and historical criticism. Finally, recent concerns and issues will suggest problem areas that need to be dealt with.

II. Biblical Criticism, the Historical-Critical Method, Its Origins

A. *Protestant Orthodoxy and 17th Century Rationalism*

Protestant Orthodoxy in the late 16th century brought a tight emphasis of "right belief" and correct propositional truths which were assented to by faith. Protestantism became scholastic and rational in approach. "The whole Bible dictated by God to the original writers should be believed. The presence of the Holy Spirit that the early reformers had maintained was operative through the Bible enlightening the interpreter, was believed to be restricted to the original authors of the sacred Scriptures."[5]

Rene Descartes in his work *Discourse on Method* stressed the importance of human reason and initiated the development of modern rational philosophy.[6] Instead of being in the service of theology, reason was allowed to assume the role of independent authority in judgment of the Bible. Representatives of 17th-century rationalism were Baruch Spinoza, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke. But it was to be the Enlightenment of the 18th century which placed reason critically over against the church, Bible, and traditions.[7] The Bible was now merely one of many ancient religious records.

B. *The Enlightenment*

Johannes Semler (1725–1791) differentiated between theology and religion. He already presented a "historical" critique of parts of Scripture that never before had been questioned. Religion was personal and private, but theology was a discipline using critical methodology. Semler can rightly be called the "Grandfather of Historical Criticism." He claimed a variety of viewpoints and contradictions in the Bible. His contemporary, E. Lessing (1729–1781), suggested that true religion needs no evidence, but was rather the internal experience of truth itself. Lessing could no longer base his faith on uncertain historical truths and felt the pressure of an unbridgeable gulf between faith and reason. With Hegel's philosophy of self-confidence man had "come of age." Philosophy was now the true religion, and religion was for the simple-minded masses. Self-confidence meant confidence of mind.[8]

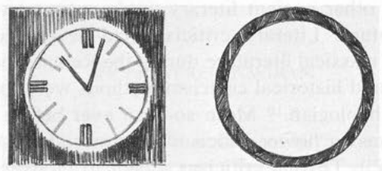
C. *The 19th Century and Historicism*

But the real negative criticism had to wait for the 19th century. In spite of a few earlier radical voices the emphasis had been on the divine aspect of Scripture. An antithesis and preoccupation with the human side was inevitable and resulted in 19th-century historicism.[9] Slowly, but surely, methods already being used in evaluation of other ancient literary works were now applied to Scripture. Literary criticism had developed in the study of classical literature during the Renaissance. Now literary and historical criticism methods were to be used by the theologian.[10] More so than ever before the emphasis was on "lower criticism" (known today as "textual criticism"). Textual criticism sought to recover the text of the autographs (original manuscript) by comparing all available manuscripts. Errors that had occurred in copying such as leaving words and sentences out, additions, or interpolations were to be deleted. This method, textual criticism, used since the Reformation, was now to be sharpened. The higher critics built on the work of the textual researchers and were dependent on them. Higher critics were concerned with the original historical situation as witnessed by the content of a given document.

While many fundamentalist groups use lower or textual criticism today, they are overly polemic against any more in-depth study that the higher critic suggested. Some of the fears are justified after liberalism's performance in the last century. But one assumes too much when one claims that higher criticism is always predetermined to negative and destructive results. Indeed, methods were misused and proclaimed master over the texts, but this is not a reflection on the tools and adequacy of methods so much as it reflects the misuse of those methods and tools. The higher critic is interested in determining several very specific things: *who* wrote the document (authorship), *when* and from *where* was it written, *who* were the recipients, *what* was the purpose, *which* sources were available to and used by the writers, *what* was his emphasis (e. g., justification by faith, salvation history, etc.).

Such inquiry is not in itself sacrilegious. It can be very helpful for us today to establish the real meaning of the text for its first hearers/readers. The interpretive task, however, is not finished with textual criticism because Scripture is not a static/lifeless but rather a living/dynamic document. Scripture did not fall from the sky like the tablets of Mormon. Its divine/human complexity has to be recognized in its fullest historical/literal significance, and anytime one ventures into a worthwhile task there are risks and the possibility for human error.

One of the results of higher criticism can be seen in the source criticism of the first three gospels, which most Christians no longer seem to question;[11] a related but more precarious, hypothetical venture has been the documentary hypothesis known generally as JEDP sources of the Pentateuch. The men primarily responsible for the work of the two-source hypothesis were the conservative scholar Bernhard Weiss and Julius Holtzmann, often referred to as the "Father of Liberalism." [12] Interestingly enough, F. Chr. Baur, who is today known as the "Father of Historical Criticism," never accepted some of these conclusions.



That the interpretive task is never finished and previously accepted conclusions might have to undergo drastic changes can be seen in the "life of Jesus" research.[13] Many researchers of the last century attempted to reconstruct a biography of the man Jesus. Already H. E. G. Paulus (1761–1851) in his *Life of Jesus* (1828) attempted a rational treatment, opposing and hoping to correct his father's spiritualism. He wanted to get at the historical and objective facts *(bruta facta)* behind the gospels. Unfortunately, in his eagerness to correct his father, he paid little attention to the significance of the textual form of the gospel message.

Paulus' contemporary, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), lectured in 1829 on the "Life of Jesus," published posthumously in 1864.[14] It was based on his favorite gospel (John). His Jesus was not a historical person, but rather the "Christ" of his own invention, the Christ of faith, which could neither be proven nor destroyed by historical research. Religion was to be based on religious feeling of an absolute dependence on God; Jesus was the best example. The Bible was the record of this experience and, like other literature, might contain errors and contradictions.

David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874) heard Schleiermacher's lectures in the late 1820s. Being influenced by Hegel's dialectic (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) he saw a Hegelian thesis in Orthodoxy's literal acceptance of the documents and its supernaturalism. The antithesis was the purely rational approach to the Bible, which rejected those sections that were not subject to recovery as objective facts. Trying to be of help and seeing meaning and significance in "religious myth" as expressed by religious ideas in historical narratives, he published his *Life of Jesus* (1835/36).[15] Here he presented nothing radically new, but he made the mistake of having it published. Much of the content of this work had been said before by scholars in the lecture halls. To Strauss' surprise he found himself being bombarded from left and right and having to spend the rest of his life on the defensive.

D. *The 20th-Century Critique of Liberalism*

It was to be Albert Schweitzer who now reviewed and criticized all previous life-of-Jesus research; unfortunately he was less critical of his own scholarly work. The book *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1910) [16] suggested that 19th-century scholars had read their own presuppositions into the text and recovered skeletons. For Schweitzer, Jesus was a stranger in our century. Jesus displayed apocalyptic confidence that the end of the world was near, and His ethic did not fit into our time. Schweitzer would be surprised to see how many scholars have come to appreciate the significance and relevance for our time of apocalypticism.[17] For Schweitzer, Jesus had died as a failure.[18]

Karl Barth (1886–1968) brought the emphasis of "kerygmatic interpretation" and pneumatic exegesis. Liberalism of the 19th century with its optimism on the brotherhood of man and God's kingdom on earth (Ritschl) was to have its greatest setback with World War I. Theology reexamined its past findings. Karl Barth called for a renewed study of the Scriptures. He showed the relevance of the Biblical message for modern man in his *Epistle to the Romans* (1919).[19] He wanted to hear out the text by listening to the proclamation of the early Christians. Biblical criticism was not rejected, but the control it had arrogantly assumed over the text was now dismissed.

William Bousset (1865–1920) in his *Kyrios Christos* (1916) [20] suggested that one needed to return to the early times and compare the New Testament context with the wider context of environment. Use of sociology and comparative religion became known as the religio-historical method,[21] which is still used today to compare the New Testament with the Dead Sea Scrolls and Gnostic literature from the Coptic library in Egypt (Nag Hammadi).

Another emphasis in research came with a continued search for the existential situation of the early church *(Sitz im Leben)*. Its goal was to regain insight into oral tradition prior to the writing of Scripture. Word-of-mouth forms of the gospel were scrutinized. The method came to be called *form criticism*. Each form has its own history, and it was assumed that there was enough material for examination. New insights into the meaning of a text can be gained by establishing forms and their history; the emphasis can be on a given tradition. Form criticism attempts also to recover the motives and interests that brought about a certain form *(redaction criticism)*.

Rudolf Bultmann (1884–) and Karl Barth led theology into the 20th century and have not yet, in spite of modification, been replaced.[22] Bultmann was one of the founders of the form critical approach. He published his essay "New Testament and Mythology" (1941), presenting programmatically his methodology practiced during previous decades. Says Batey:

> Bultmann maintains that the meaning of the kerygma is contained in those mythical categories common to the first century concept of a three-storied universe, with heaven above, hell and demonic powers beneath, and man in the middle influenced from both directions. Though myth speaks of the world and transcendent reality in seemingly objective terms, its real purpose is not to present a scientific picture of the world but to set forth man's understanding of himself in the world and those transcendent powers which influence his life. Myth should neither be taken literally nor rejected as superstition; myth should be interpreted existentially, i. e. anthropologically and not cosmologically.[23]

Demythology [24] desires to preserve the existential meaning of the Bible for faith and yet to dismiss those mythic categories no longer meaningful for modern man. Bultmann, too, spoke out against 19th-century liberalism and historicism, especially in its quest for the historical Jesus. He does not deny that he too uses the historical-critical method. But the guiding principle in his interpretation is that the historical Jesus understood Himself existentially. Bultmann's 19th-century scientific world-view, which he falsely claims as modern, is not of our science. His overly optimistic view of modern man determined his conclusions. While he wanted to free theology of historicism, his emphasis (antithesis) that Scripture witnesses to man's self-understanding forces the text to echo the interpreter's wishes and fails to call man's self-understanding into question. Modern man has become the criteria for that which is essential and that which is not.[25]

In the process of demythology, or dehistoricizing the Gospel, everything seems to be lost to a new Gnosticism for the elite. Bultmann's understanding of *Jesus* (1929) [26] does not do justice to the New Testament, nor is his interpretation of the Gospel of John adequate. His own student Ernst Käsemann called forth the "new" quest for the historical Jesus.[27] Käsemann showed in a lecture (1953) [28] that Bultmann had divorced the kerygma from the necessary historical perspective:

> To separate the Christ of faith presented in the kerygma from the earthly Jesus can only lead to moralism or mysticism and open the way for the revival of the ancient heresy of docetism, which completely denied the humanity of Jesus.[29]

Here is an example where Bultmann's students, primarily Käsemann and Günther Bornkamm, have been working on a corrective. Denouncing Bultmann is not enough. One has to be able to discern his positive contributions and do better. All methods of interpretation of our day are still very much dependent on research begun last century.[30] Criticism means careful, in-depth, methodical study and does not a priori imply negative or destructive results. "All literature invites criticism; all important literature demands it, if the writing in question is to be used reliably (as for history or law) or worthily (as for artistic production) or in genuine reverence (as for religious or ethical guidance)." [31]

III. **Three Interpretive Methods**

A. *Literary Criticism*

Literary criticism is concerned with the authorship of a given writing. The literary critic asks questions about the composite nature of a work. He tries to recover the identity of extant sources that might have been used in the writing of a document.[32] Today Biblical scholars are also interested in criticism of fiction, poetry, and philosophy of language (philology and linguistics). Literary criticism is an attempt to understand literature. It studies details of diction, rhythm, sentence structure, and style. The goal is ascertaining the special qualities of the Scriptures. This requires mastery of the language of the work under study. "The exposition must be grammatico-historical." [33] He has to know the grammar and changes over centuries. He has to be aware of the changes in words and their meanings from one decade to another. J. H. Otwell gives an example of this in comparing the King James Version and the Revised Standard in their rendering of Ps. 119:147: "I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried; I hoped in Thy word" (KJV). "I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in Thy words" (RSV). Is one translation correct and the other not? Not at all. Language has changed. Both are correct if one knows that in *1611* "to prevent" meant "to act before something else happened." [34] Language has to be understood historically.

Another aspect of the literary critic's work is the importance of *style*, which can also be of tremendous help to the form critic. One example of this work can be appreciated if we read aloud or listen to the following portions of Scripture (Amos 4:10-13):

> 10) I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt;
> I slew your young men with the sword;
> I carried away your horses; and made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils;
> yet you did not return to me, says the Lord.
> 11) I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,
> and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning;
> yet you did not return to me, says the Lord.
> 12) Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel;
> because I will do this to you,
> prepare to meet your God, O Israel!
> 13) For lo, he who forms the mountains, and creates the wind,
> and declares to man what is his thought;
> who makes the morning darkness,
> and treads on the heights of the earth–
> the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name!

It is evident that Amos 4:10-12 has a different style than Amos 4:13. Now let us look at Amos 5:8-9 and 9:5-6:

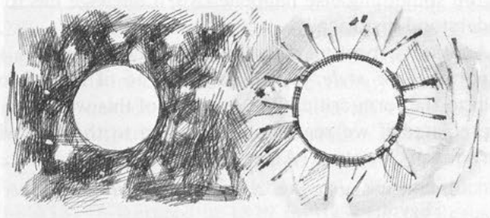
> 5:8) He who made the Pleiades and Orion,
> and turns deep darkness into the morning,
> and darkens the day into night,
> who calls forth the waters of the sea,
> and pours them out upon the surface of the earth,
> the Lord is his name,
> 9) who makes destruction flash forth against the strong,
> so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

9:5) The Lord, God of hosts
he who touches the earth and it melts,
and all who dwell in it mourn,
and all of it rises like the Nile,
and sinks again, like the Nile of Egypt;
6) who builds his upper chambers in the heavens,
and founds his vault upon the earth;
who calls for the waters of the sea,
and pours them out upon the surface of the earth—
the Lord is his name.

On basis of similarity in style can we suggest that Amos 4:13, 5:8-9, and 9:5-6 could have belonged together at one time and that they might be part of a hymn? The literary critic would take us one step further, directing our attention to Isaiah 40:21-23:

21) Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundation of the earth?
22) It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;
who brings princes to nought,
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

Can one assume from style alone that Amos 4:13, 5:8-9; 9:5-6 is closer to the style of Isaiah 40:21-23 than to Amos 4:10-12? If we can say yes, we have understood what literary criticism is all about.[35]



Biblical literature is made up of many different literary media carrying God's Word: Luke 2:1-7 (historical narrative); Judges 5:15b-18 (historical event in poetic form); Isaiah 55:12b (worship encouraged by personification); Judges 9:8-15 (historical allusion through use of fable to make a point); Psalm 80:8-12 (allegory); Eccl. 12:1-7 (symbolism); Luke 15 (parables); Gal. 4:21-31 (allegory); Genesis 24 and Ruth (short story); Isaiah 5:1-7 (parable); Ezekiel 17 (parable); Judges 5 and Psalm 23 (poetry); Job and Psalm 27 (dramatic reporting); Eccl. 3:1—4:8 (essay); Isaiah 9:2-7 (prophetic rhapsody); Jer. 51:11-19 (prophetic invective); Isaiah 44:9-20 (satire); Jer. 4:19-31 (lament); Prov. 11:14 (reflective); Josh. 23, Amos 3, and Acts 26 (oratory); Acts 2 (sermon); 1 Kings 17 (miracle); Deut. 6, 26:5-11, 1 Cor. 15:3-5(7) (creeds).[36] Establishing the literary media and form does not judge historical fact or persons mentioned, but determines the particular media used in a given passage to convey God's revelation to man.[37] Knowing some details about usage of literary media allows the text's intention to come through rather than regain what one always wanted to have the text say before having studied it.

B. *Form Criticism*

A closely related method of interpretation is *form criticism:*

> The meaning of words varies also according to the way or literary *form* in which they are used. Here again the Bible provides particular difficulties. We are familiar with the various literary forms in our own literature—the drama, the comedy, the novel, the poem, the historical work, and so on, but we are not so conversant with those of the ancient world. Nevertheless the close study of the ever increasing wealth of literature from the ancient Middle East is helping to fill the gaps. It is only when we understand, and in the measure that we understand, the ways in which the ancients expressed themselves that we will be able to grasp adequately the meaning of the sacred writers.[38]

Form critics analyze our written Gospels in order to recover the process by which they came about.[39] The form critic tries to show that Jesus' message as given by the synoptics is colored by the faith of the early Christians in line with John 21:25: "There are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." Inspired writers were selective in what and how they transmitted the "Good News." But perhaps even more *apropos* is Heb. 1:1: "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but now He has spoken to us by a Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world." Form criticism tries to find the literary form the oral tradition went through as passed from mouth to mouth, assuming that when certain laws of oral tradition are applied to Biblical texts one eventually can recover the earliest form of that tradition (example: oldest NT creed form 1 Cor. 15: 3-5).[40]

Extreme form critics create doubts about the historical value of the records, and Jesus becomes a product rather than the creator of faith. Says Ladd:

> Despite the radical use which has been made of this method, it contains valid elements. To discover them, we must look again at the Gospels and try to discover precisely what they claim for themselves. Our final authority is the Gospels themselves, not theories about them; and we must try to sort out the apparent historical literary facts from the unwarranted, unproven assumptions held by the extreme form critics. When this is done, we will find that at the most crucial point form criticism, in spite of many form critics, in fact supports an evangelical faith . . . it is quite certain that the gospel was in fact preserved for a generation in oral form before it was reduced to writing.[41]

Form criticism is concerned primarily today with the individual units of stories and sayings of the synoptic material. Redaction criticism is the most recent and more elaborate specialized method growing out of form criticism. Explains Dan O. Via Jr.:

> The redaction critic investigates how smaller units—both simple and composite—from the oral tradition or from written sources were put together to form larger complexes, and he is especially interested in the formation of the Gospels as finished products. . . . Its goals are to understand why the items from the tradition were modified and connected as they are, to identify the theological motifs that were at work in composing a finished Gospel, and to elucidate the theological point of view which is expressed in and through the composition.[42]

Some of the insights of redaction criticism have been helpful. The method is still in its beginning stages.

Let us show how form criticism works. Here comparative religion analyses and the religiohistorical method, which compares patterns, similarities, and dissimilarities in cultural contexts, can be of great help.[43] Original readers knew the context we might have yet to recover. A study of other religious systems of Israelitic time might enable us to see the background assumed by words and literary media used. Religiohistorical criticism tries to correct the readers' ignorance. It has helped us realize that Israel had an "oral culture." While writing was in use they memorized far more than 20th-century man does, and they used their memories better than we do. There are definite forms that can readily be detected and determined. For example, as one studies the psalms, one realizes that its most important form is the hymn. This form has usually three parts: (1) calling people together for praises of God; (2) stating why God should be praised; and (3) again calling people to praise God. Psalm 150 has only the first part, Psalm 114 the second. Most other psalm-hymns have all three parts.[44] Psalm 117, the shortest of the psalms, is such as example:

1) Praise the Lord, all nations!
Extol Him, all peoples!
2) For great is His steadfast love toward us;
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.
3) Praise the Lord!

Form criticism like literary criticism shows us the extent of man's creativity in writing a manuscript.

C. *Historical Criticism*

This method of higher criticism tests reports of events presented in a manuscript for their accuracy. (A fundamentalist automatically raises the flag of objection to it.)[45] Reconstruction of Israel's history is attempted to give further insight into and to help date those sections that are not necessarily historical reporting. Contemporary literature and extra-Biblical sources are used in this endeavor. In other words, historical criticism desires to see consistency of data within a book, within the total writing of an author, and within the canon. Such a critic studies agreements, disagreements, similarities, and dissimilarities between Biblical literature and non-Biblical writings. That only relative probability is attainable need not discourage the Biblical student since no more than this can be established by examining any historical account of the past. Several definite rules have proven valid guides for the historical task:

> A reliable report is not written before the event happened. Details which did not exist when the event is said to have happened imply that the report was written at the time of the latest of the details. Trustworthy reports of the same event will agree in many ways, and their disagreements can be explained. Internal contradictions indicate either an unreliable narrative, or a narrative made by blending two or more, once independent and conflicting, stories. All materials reflecting a strong, consistent bias must have the bias discounted. The presence of fanatic, fanciful elements—features which contradict our knowledge of the way in which the universe operates—makes a narrative questionable.[46]

The historical critic attempts to separate literature that is reporting facts from the rest. Historians often lack important pieces of information in given historical narratives. Much of the historical critic's work seems to be piecing together parts of a mosaic to gain the whole story. His work is never finished. He moves from the known to the unknown.

One example of his work might deal with Gen. 14:14. Here we are told Abram followed one of his enemies as far as Dan. We know that Dan was an Israelitic tribe that was located northwest of Jerusalem on the coast. Being pushed north out of its territory, this tribe captured a city called Laish and renamed it Dan. This story is told in Judges 17:1—18:31. The historical critic would say Gen. 14:14 could not have been written (in the present form) before the tribe existed and especially not before it had renamed Laish. Since the text is a casual reference to a city that his readers were familiar with, we cannot give the date of the passage. But we can hold that it was written after the renaming of the city and thus centuries after Abram since the tribe was made up of his distant descendents.[47]

The historic critic uses the basic assumption that no document can be understood apart from an accurate insight into its cultural, historical, and general religious setting. Not only have environmental studies been emphasized, but it goes hand in hand with archaeology, which has already performed excellent service in helping supply the often missing context. On the one hand archaeology has given us background related to Biblical history (Babylonian records), and on the other it has often quieted negative criticism and verified Biblical data by clarifying obscure references and supplying missing links in Israelitic history.

While our best New Testament manuscripts are from the 4th century A. D. the oldest Hebrew manuscripts date from the 9th century A. D. This was true until 1947. In the spring of that year a goatherd found a cave in the cliffs of the Dead Sea near Jericho. In the cave were found about 20 scrolls in earthen jars. These were then identified as Hebrew manuscripts, the most important of them being Isaiah dated from the second or no later than the first century B. C. "This impressive manuscript, consisting of 24 feet of sheepskin ten and one half

inches wide, contains the entire Hebrew text of Isaiah." [48] This text was already used to revise the RSV. Fourteen changes were made, which were, however, of minor significance, but the general conclusion is that it has confirmed the accuracy of the Masoretic text of the 10th century.

If we look at the Old Testament, there is evidence that a Hebrew library was available to the early reader to which we today have no access. A few examples are:

Num. 21:14 lists the book "The Wars of Jehovah," which is the source of his poem;
Num. 21:17-18 quotes the "Song of the Well," an early poem;
Judges 5:1 ff., "The Song of Deborah";
Judges 9:7 ff., "The Fable of Jothan or Trees";
Joshua 10:13, "The Book of Jashar" is mentioned;
1 Chron. 29:29, "The Book of Nathan";
1 Chron. 29:29, "The Book of Gad";
2 Chron. 9:29, "The Book of Iddo";
2 Chron. 12:15, "The Book of Shemaiah";
2 Chron. 20:34, "The Book of Jehu."

If one goes to the New Testament, one recalls the variety of opinions among scholars on how many letters were written by Paul to the Corinthians; the estimate varies from two to six.

The historian is very emphatically needed. Many theories and alleged conclusions may be questioned, but only an irresponsible person would suggest that there are no questions to be wrestled with. Indeed much still has to be done. One has to be aware that "inspiration" has little room in a purely scientific endeavor, and this needs to be checked by the theologian. That the laws of nature are absolutely uniform and inviolable law is an important assumption for many a critic and, if held statically (like in 19th century), leaves no room for the miraculous, which permeates the Biblical accounts.[49] The historical method must not be permitted to determine the nature of revelation, which it can only give of and by itself.[50] Sometimes the historian might have to admit that a given section is beyond his present capacity to investigate, beyond historical explanation and analogy (1 Cor. 15:23-26). Some sections of Scripture might defy present-day historical tools and methods of investigation and yet be historical fact. Here we have to recall the limits of historical criticism when speaking about the mighty acts of God which are given in the gospels themselves when they note that God's revelation in Jesus Christ was not self-evident to His observers. Sometimes the historian will reach a "no verdict."

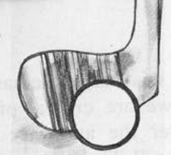
The basic criticism, whether it be of literary, form, or historical criticism, is that the intention of the writers of Scriptures was not to present literature, pure ancient history, nor evidence, nor forms, but to report and proclaim how God was dealing with His people, how He addressed them, and how He called even our most sophisticated critical and noncritical interpretations into judgment again and again.[51] A purely objective understanding of history does not do justice to understanding the meaning of history, whether religious or secular. But the old battle cry of fundamentalists, which focuses on the presuppositions and "enslaving assumptions" of their opponents, is not adequate. They have to realize that there is no such thing as pre-supposition-less or purely *objective* interpretation.[52] Today the major task in interpretation is not discovery of new meaning, but attaining more depth in reappraisal of previous criticism and discovery of more in-depth understanding and appreciation. This is all the majority of the critics are attempting to do.

When Helmut Thielicke was speaking in America, he had dialog with fundamentalists. He emphasized that even men like Bultmann have as their intention the establishment of the "then" situation and the meaning of the texts in order to speak responsibly for God to the "now" of modern man. Even though one does not share Bultmann's conclusions, one hopefully shares his intentions. One fundamentalist and self-styled conservative, when asking Thielicke a question concerning historical criticism, is unfortunately an example of "noncritics":

> *I have not yet read Bultmann.* But I have heard some horrible things about him—for example, that he regards the Gospels as nothing more than legends and myths and that he does not believe in the resurrection. And he is a historical-critical student of the Bible.[53]

The answer is not to judge the method or tool by the misuse it might have experienced at the hands of some theologian. Indeed the answer is not even to judge the theologian, but to do further research and to accept the challenge to do better. The cloak of fundamentalism, verbal inspiration polemics, and anticritical study of the Scriptures might have the reverence for God's Word at heart, but is often guided by pure laziness concerning "searching the Scriptures" and by an anti-intellectualism in the ministry. These have far-reaching ramifications.[54] Historical criticism can be scholarly and can be done in due reverence for the sacred text. Only the doubter of Scripture's validity would object to a critical historical investigation.

Historical criticism can be of great help in our appreciation of God's Word as we realize how God caused the Scriptures to be written, to be compiled, to be formed, transmitted, and proclaimed. Indeed, the dimension of "being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21) as speaking and writing occurred has to be upheld as a challenge to us all as we attempt to find better methods and modify and correct present interpretive tools. No one historical critical method dare become the authoritative presupposition that the text is to serve. Rather the method serves the text.[55] In the final analysis Scriptures claim to declare things that are often without analogy, things that cannot be explained as the result of evolutionary development. There are things that are true and real regardless of the critical estimate of the interpreter. Present-day tools and methods might not be sharp enough nor as yet fully adequate to measure that which seems not to fit into our "scientific" realm of comprehension.[56] With a clearer understanding of the "then" situation we can more readily proclaim God's Word in the "now," using the Reformation dictum, "It is written," and knowing much more about it than the fathers ever did.



IV. Recent Trends, Traditional Methods, Observations

The first part of our century was busy trying to establish a critical stance toward Biblical studies of the 19th century.[57] Even now we are dependent on the research of the past, modifying and correcting theories previously held. Christological studies have dominated our century. This is not a bad focus. It will keep us, hopefully, always busy. A second area of interest is the history of the Gospel tradition and the refinement of redaction criticism. We have had several shifts: from the life-of-Jesus research of the last century to an antithesis that focused on an appreciation of the gospels as witness to God's revelation in cultic forms, to a renewed quest for the historical Jesus today.

The Pauline corpus has been a third area of concentration. The Gospel of John is still under heavy debate and study. Old Testament archaeology has made many contributions to recovering missing links in Israel's history. The trend in present-day research is to a more conservative dating of Biblical manuscripts; since our texts are fairly well established, the emphasis has now moved to the content and substance and applications to life "then" and "now."

Several questions dominate research today: (1) What is the nature of religious language and the possibility of God-language (inspiration)? (2) What is the relationship between faith and fact—theology and science? (3) What was life like in early Christianity? And (4) a continuous reevaluation of hermeneutical studies, of methods, and of the adequacy of past interpretations.[58] This means that Bultmann's hermeneutic is no longer the dominant factor, even though it is one still to be dealt with. His students have questioned and corrected him. The new insight is that our primary task is not to build schools or clubs of likeminded interpreters; our task is not to adhere stubbornly to an interpretation of the past, but to realize that "searching the Scripture" is never finished.[59] The newest method called "redaction criticism" asks about the creative activity of a tradition and a writer trying to learn about his theology. The early church read the Old Testament as men of their time and did not seem to see the absolute necessity to restructure the manuscripts before them. A restudy of "canon" and "revelation" and their relationship is needed today.[60]

A valid interpretation and its hermeneutic principle will not overlook God's creative activity in the proclamation and recording of His "Good News." By allowing the text to speak, outdated and inadequate methods can undergo a radical transformation. The text gives us not only clues, but offers its own hermeneutic. "Being the inspired Word of God and dealing with God's revelation in Jesus Christ, i. e., with God's redemptive activity in history, the Bible provides its own hermeneutics, the hermeneutics of revelation." [61] The Reformation principle is still valid: *Scripture interprets Scripture.* There is a unity of divine/human authorship in content and purpose.[62] The text is always in charge, whether in Biblical or non-Biblical literature. Neither the method, the interpreter, nor the church dare suggest one finished and authoritative interpretation. This would be the greatest disservice to God and man and disrespectful of the Scriptures. God's Word does not need our protection; our words continually need God's forgiveness, God's strengthening, God's correction.

Our present presuppositions dare not place us into bondage, nor into the *naivete* that we have no need for improvement.[63] A continued reexamination of presuppositions and a sacrifice of our most precious treasures dare not hinder God's Word.[64] The Bible is inspired *and* historically given and conditioned. Moule sees three factors that need to control Christian interpretation: (1) pre-Christian Judaism; (2) Jesus' unique use of the Old Testament; and (3) that the voice of prophecy was again to be heard.[65] Luther knew the difficulty of interpretation:

> Now the method to which I referred is the one which the pious King David teaches in the 119th Psalm; and which, no doubt, was practiced by all the patriarchs and prophets. In the 119th Psalm you will find three rules, which are abundantly expounded throughout the Psalm. They are called: *Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio,* Prayer, Meditation, Trials.[66]

Luther knew that God's Word is an always *new address* to man. Luther did not separate the Word from the Spirit, but his major guidance was the incarnate Christ (John 1:14). He defended himself against the pressures from the left (Rome and the Pope or "antichrist") and against the pressures from the right (Spiritualizing Enthusiasts). Against the literalists he spoke of a free and living Word-message, which is Christ-centered. To the Spiritualists he showed that the Word for man had related itself to us in concrete texts. "For Luther the Bible is primarily an object of hearing, not of seeing; something acoustical, not optical. This disposes of the theoretical and doctrinal biblicism." [67] Neither left nor right has an option on God and His Word.

Today, as in centuries before, the struggle and "searching" continues. On the one hand, there is a tendency to speak nebulously about gospel-kerygma without due respect for historical content and intent. On the other hand, frozen "facts" are historicized to the extent of idolatry, and theology is a matter of objects and informa-

tion one assents to. The necessary tension between message *and* history, faith *and* reason, spirit *and* letter must remain, so that in an overemphasis on one, one does not lose everything.

Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations following the request of a synodical convention did a remarkable job in presenting the *valid* usage of the historical-critical method:

1) Establishing the text;
2) Ascertaining the literary form of the passage;
3) Determining the historical situation;
4) Apprehending the original meaning of words;
5) Understanding the passage in its total context out of which it emerged.

The commission also showed the value of necessary controls:

1) The authoritative Word is the canonical Word and not precanonical sources, forms, or traditions;
2) The literary form of the text is only an aid and clue to understanding;
3) In the use of historical techniques the interpreter is guided by Christ, the Lord of history;
4) The "then and there" interpretation needs to be balanced with its integral relationship to all of Scripture and in its meaningfulness for us today;
5) The divine/human character of Scripture must be upheld.[68]

Our investigation of current trends and methods validates CTCR's approval and caution.

The Formula of Concord recognizes only the prophetic and apostolic writings of OT and NT as the "only rule and norm" for teaching and preaching.[69] Oscar Feucht has stated these general interpretive guidelines:

1) Take the words of Scripture in their normal, literal, intended sense unless preceding or following verses compel a figurative understanding.
2) Let the Bible interpret itself. Do not read your opinions into it. One passage casts light on another, the clear verse on the difficult. Use reference (parallel) passages, concordance, and dictionary.
3) Never tear a passage out of its connection.
4) No passage should be understood in a way that contradicts another clear statement of Scripture.
5) Interpret the Scripture historically (in the light of history).
6) Interpret the Scripture evangelically (in the light of the Gospel and the person of Christ).[70]

Feucht presents a very simple and yet very helpful summary for every Christian to follow. This is what the critic desires to do whether he uses highly sophisticated or less sophisticated methods of literary, form, and historical criticism. We have shown that past studies have often been too overly concerned with the "then" and assumed that philosophical presuppositions (Hegelian, Heideggerian, Marxist) are better or more scientific than revelational ones. It would be a waste of precious time were we to preoccupy ourselves with the mistakes and misuses of the past. The future is there for the taking as we are critical of ourselves while standing always under the authority of the Word because it is God-given.[71] The texts call us anew to *listen* as we translate God's action-message in history for man. No exegesis is adequate unless the interpreter places "himself into that community which has been called into being to actualize in worship the history and experience of God's people." [72]

Conclusions

An attempt to understand historical criticism must necessarily understand its development. That methods can be helpful in recovering the real meaning of a text need not be dismissed by the fact that methods can be misused. One needs be enslaved neither to historical criticism nor to fundamentalism in one's interpretation. Many scholars no longer see "lower" and "higher" criticism at odds. Higher criticism is not a finished methodology of interpretation, nor do all scholars agree on every point with one another; perhaps they never should in this life where no interpretation ever is finished. Biblical critics do not claim to have all the answers, but they are searching.[73]

What is our direction then? For one, the methods of fundamentalism are inadequate.[74] We pointed out that tools can become masters, but they can also be very useful and are God's continuous gifts to man. No honest interpreter can predetermine his conclusions or results in spite of the presuppositions of necessary faith. NT and OT scholarship fails in its task when it excludes God's claim of decision. The NT asserts that the interpreter must be a believer (Mark 4:11; John 7:16 f.; 2 Cor. 3:15 f.). The critical historian has to realize that he and his method are called also into judgment every time he confronts the revelation-text. The "curious inability to be thoroughly historical in method" might very well be an indication of the specialty of the literature before us.[75]

Indeed, results of Biblical studies cannot be guaranteed in advance without making the interpretive task a farce. Left *and* right extremes have done this. Any attempt to strive for an official exegesis leads back into Roman bondage and undermines God's Word as the only authority. The time has come to realize that criticism can bring positive contributions. No one has an edge on "proper" methodology. "There is coming to be a fresh awareness of the limitations of criticism and critics, something that might be called a retreat from fancy to fact. The ancients were not always stupid; our contemporaries are not always intelligent." [76] No philosophical or cultural "coming of age," papal encyclicals, nor revolutionary fantasies should blind us to dead-end streets. Critics have become self-critical; man stands under the cross of grace. He has been called to "come and die" as a requisite for resurrection. This is not a bad example to follow.

NOTES

[1] Leonhard Goppelt, "Theological Bible Study," in *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church,* ed. Julius Bodensieck (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1965), p. 239, points out that interpretation was a community endeavor rather than the responsibility of an individual or individuals. See also: Andrew K. Rule, "Hermeneutics," *Encyclopedia of Religion,* ed. V. Ferm (Paterson, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1959), p. 383.

[2] Rudolf Schnackenburg, "Zum Offenbarungsgedanken in der Bibel," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 7 (1, 1963), pp. 2–22.

[3] For examples and an overview of the historical-critical method in NT and OT, see the essays by E. Schweizer and W. Zimmerli respectively: E. Schweizer, "Die historisch-kritische Bibelwissenschaft und die Verkündigungsaufgabe der Kirche," *Evangelische Theologie* 23 (1–2, 1963), pp. 31–41; W. Zimmerli, "Die historisch-kritische Bibelwissenschaft und die Verkündigung der Kirche," *Evangelische Theologie* 23 (1–2, 1963), pp. 17–31; also: K. Elliott, "Rational Criticism and the Text of the New Testament," *Theology* 75 (625, 1972), pp. 338–43.

[4] An example where the text finally is in judgment of the critics is briefly surveyed by the following: J. M. Robinson, "The Quest of the Historical Jesus Today," *Theology Today* 25 (2, 1958), pp. 183–97; P. Grech, "Recent Developments in the Jesus of History Controversy," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 1 (2, 1971), pp. 190–213; F. Herzog, "Possibilities and Limits of the New Quest," *Journal of Religion* 43 (3, 1963), pp. 218–33.

[5] Richard Batey, *New Testament Issues* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 4.

[6] Ibid., also: M. E. Andres, "The Historical-Critical Method in the 17th Century and in the Twentieth," *Colloquium* 4 (2, 1971), pp. 92–104.

[7] Peter Beyerhaus, "The Holy Spirit in Biblical Exegesis," *Clergy* (Tapes: a Cassette Series for the Parish Pastor) 2 (October 1972), St. Louis: CPH, 1972.

[8] Manfred Kwiran, *The Resurrection of the Dead* (Basel: Reinhardt, 1972), pp. 11 f.

[9] Wilhelm Mundle, "The Crisis of Theological Historicism and How It May Be Overcome," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 33/7 (1962), pp. 389–400; also Clarence T. Craig, "Biblical Theology and the Rise of Historicism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 62 (1943), pp. 281 ff.

[10] Richard Batey, *op. cit.,* p. 5.

[11] William A. Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), pp. 72 ff.

[12] Manfred Kwiran, *op. cit.,* pp. 82–96 (Holtzmann), 115–28 (B. Weiss).

[13] Calvin L. Porter, "Principles of New Testament Interpretation," *Encounter* 25 (1964), pp. 41–49.

[14] Günther Backhaus, *Evangelische Theologie der Gegenwart* (München/Basel:Reinhardt, 1967).

[15] Richard Batey, *op. cit.,* p. 7; also Manfred Kwiran, *op. cit.,* pp. 45 ff.; most recent work on early Strauss: Gotthold Müller, *Identitat und Immanenz. D. F. Strauss* (Zürich: EVZ, 1968).

[16] Originally published as *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906). Trans. W. Montgomery as *Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: Black, 1910); New York: Macmillan, 1948, 1961; see also his *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913, 1951 6).

[17] See especially: Carl E. Braaten, "The Significance of Apocalypticism for Systematic Theology," *Interpretation* 25 (4, 1971), pp. 480–99; his *Christ-Counter Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972); H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (London: Lutterworth, 1944); Klaus Koch, *Ratlos vor der Apokalyptik* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1970).

[18] Manfred Kwiran, *op. cit.,* pp. 195 ff.

[19] Karl Barth, Römerbrief (Bern: Bäschlin, 1919); translated as *Epistle to the Romans* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933).

[20] Wilhelm Bousset, Kyrios Christo. *Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfaengen des Christentums bis Irenaeus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913).

[21] Manfred Kwiran, *op. cit.,* pp. 144–231; also E. Vogt, "Entdeckung neutestamentlicher Texte beim Toten Meer?" *Orientierung* 36 (11, 1972), pp. 138–140.

[22] See Daniel P. Fuller, "How Modern Theologians Interpret the Bible," *Eternity* 14/9 (1963), pp. 31–35; 14/10 (1963), pp. 27–31.

[23] Richard Batey, *op. cit.,* p. 11.

[24] See John Macquarrie, *The Scope of Demythologizing* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960); Joseph Cahill, "The Scope of Demythologizing," *Theological Studies* 2301 (1962), pp. 79–92.

[25] Peter Beyerhaus, *op. cit.*

[26] Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus* (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1929); English transl. *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934, 1958 2).

[27] Much has been written on the subject. As brief introduction the following would serve: Hugh Anderson, "Existential Hermeneutics. Features of the New Quest," *Interpretation* 16/2 (April, 1962), pp. 131–56; John B. Cobb Jr., "The Post-Bultmannian Trend," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 30/1 (Jan., 1962), pp. 3–12; Eduard Lohse, "Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus in der gegenwärtigen neutestamentlichen Forschung," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 87/3 (1962), cls. 161–174; Eduard Lohse, "Die Bemühunger in der neueren protestantischen Theologie Auferstehung," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 6/2 (1962), pp. 256–68.

[28] Ernest Käsemann, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus," *Zeitschrift fuer Theologie und Kirche* LI (1954), pp. 125–53; Engl.: "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," *Essays on NT Themes* (London: SCM Press, 1964).

[29] Richard Batey, *op. cit.,* p. 12.

[30] Manfred Kwiran, *op. cit.,* pp. 5 ff. My critique of 19th- and 20th-century theologians was presented in *The Resurrection of the Dead* and need not be repeated in detail here.

[31] Kenrik Grobel, "Biblical Criticism," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), I, p. 407.

[32] William A. Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), p. iii; one of the best works on literary criticism is still S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891, 1913), pp. 131–35 for examples; further C. A. Simpson, *The Early Traditions of Israel: A Critical Analysis of the Pre-Deuteronomic Narrative of the Hexateuch* (New York: Macmillan, 1948); Norman Habel, *Literary Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

[33] Ludwig Fuerbringer, *Theological Hermeneutics. An Outline for the Classroom* (St. Louis: CPH, 1924), p. 22–41, also p. 2, note 2.

[34] J. H. Otwell, *I will be your God* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), p. 21.

[35] Ibid., pp. 22–23; first suggested by Bernhard Duhm, *The Twelve Prophets: A Version in the Various Poetical Measures of Original Writings* (London: Black, 1912), pp. 66 f.; originally *Die zwoelf Propheten: in den Versmassen der Urschrift* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1910).

[36] See especially John H. Leith (ed.), "The Creeds and their Role in the Church," *Creeds of the Churches* (Chicago: Aldine, 1963), pp. 1–11.

[37] See also James Muilenberg, *Specimens of Biblical Literature* (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell Co., 1923), pp. xxi ff.

[38] Lionel Swain, "The Interpretation of the Bible," in *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (New York: Nelson, 1969), p. 62; additional literature Gene M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); Edgar V. McKnight, *What Is Form Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970).

[39] Rudolf Schnackenburg, "Zur formgeschichtlichen Methode in der Evangelienforschung," *Zeitschrift fuer Katholische Theologie* 85 (1, 1963), pp. 16–32.

[40] Ernst Lichtenstein, "Die älteste christliche Traditionsformel," *Zeitschrift fuer Kirchengeschichte* 63/1 (1950), pp. 1–74.

[41] G. E. Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1967), p. 148.

[42] Dan O. Via Jr., "Foreword," in *Literary Criticism of the New Testament*, by W. A. Beardslee, *op. cit.*, p. iv; see also Norman Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), p. 66.

[43] An example would be 2 Kings 18:14-16 and its comparison with an Assyrian source. See Leo Oppenheim, tr., "Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts," in J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), p. 288.

[44] J. H. Otwell, *op, cit.*, pp. 33 f.

[45] See Eric Wahlstrom, "Historical Criticism, the Bible and the Word of God," *The Lutheran Quarterly* 2/3 (August 1950), p. 299: "This fundamentalist approach fails to present an adequate solution on two counts. In the first place, it necessitates a denial of the legitimacy and relevancy of historical criticism. Scientific investigation into the origin of the books of the Bible is labeled sacrilege. In the second place, it must be admitted that, if the claim of the fundamentalists is true, no accurate revelation exists today. The answer that our present text is admittedly close to the original and that the variations are not important is not sufficient. Since the autographs are not extant, how can anyone be certain or prove that the present text even approximates the original? The absolutism involved in the fundamentalist position is rendered meaningless by the admission that no absolutely authentic text exists." See further James Barr, "A Note on Fundamentalism," *Old and New in Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 201–206.

[46] J. H. Otwell, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

[47] J. H. Otwell, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[48] Fred G. Bratton, *A History of the Bible* (Boston: Beacon, 1959), p. 76.

[49] Richard O. Bender, "Historical Criticism and the Bible," *The Lutheran Quarterly* 17/1 (Feb., 1965), pp. 25–42.

[50] G. E. Ladd, *op. cit.*, p. 189; for D. Bonhoeffer's acceptance of historical criticism, see W. Woelfel, *Bonhoeffer's Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), pp. 213–22.

[51] See G. Ebeling, "Significance of the Critical Historical Method," *Word and Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), pp. 49 f.

[52] James Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 185: "The interpreter does not begin his work with his mind empty. This has often been observed by theologians in their arguments against the ideal of objectivity and the need of 'theological presuppositions' . . . . The fact that the interpreter's mind is not empty, but full of all sorts of ideas, experiences, customs and expectations, though it cannot be denied, cannot exactly be welcomed with joy, for it is the source of much of our trouble. It is artificial to talk about approaching the text with an empty mind; but, indeed, it is artificial to talk about 'approaching' a text at all. Almost all of one's interpretative work in the Biblical field is not an 'approach' to a new text, but a reappraisal of the possibilities for meaning in a text which we, and hundreds of others, have already interpreted many times before; or, if we have not interpreted it, we have been sufficiently conscious of its presence to take account of it in the handling of other passages, and in this way to give it at least a kind of indirect interpretation."

[53] Helmut Thielicke, "The Historical-Critical Study of the Scriptures. A Conversation with Fundamentalism," *Between Heaven and Earth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 15, emphasis mine; see also A. Gabriel Hebert, *Fundamentalism and the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957); Milton L. Rudnick, *Fundamentalism and the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: CPH, 1966.)

[54] James Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 200: "Anti-intellectualism in the ministry is one of the most serious enemies of the Church today. The way in which anti-intellectualism in the Church can affect the life of a nation has been well depicted by Richard Hofstadter in a notable recent book [*Anti-intellectualism in American Life*]. Such anti-intellectualism eventually rebounds upon the Church, in the form of contempt for the ministry, refusal of young men to enter into such a calling, alienation of educated teenagers from the Church, and many other such ills. Anti-intellectualism has the effect of subjecting the minister's calling more and more completely to the expectations of the church culture as it is; and this, as we have seen, is a principal cause for loss of relevance and failure to learn from scripture in the Church. Anti-intellectualism pressures in the Church damage and spoil the theological education, teaching students to neglect it before they have ever received it; they press upon the minister with 'practical' responsibilities; they press upon his study time with the utilitarian pressure toward that which seems directly productive of sermon material."

[55] H. S. Souger, "The Utilization of the New Testament Background in the Interpretation of the New Testament," *Review Expositor* 68 (3, 1971), pp. 383–95.

[56] Leonard Goppelt, "Theological Bible Study," ibid., p. 242.

[57] Clarence T. Craig, "Current Trends in New Testament Study," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 57 (1938), pp. 359 ff.

[58] Richard Batey, *op. cit.*, p. 13; also Norman Parrin, "The Challenge of New Testament Theology Today," in *New Testament Issues*, ed. R. Batey (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 15–34.

[59] J. Sp. Weiland, "Alte und Neue Hermeneutik " *Orientierung: Neue Wege in der Theologie* (Hamburg: Furche, 1968), pp. 86 f.

[60] See Donald H. Juel, "Current New Testament Scholarship in the United States," *The Lutheran Quarterly* 22/4 (Nov., 1970), pp. 351–73.

[61] K. Runia, "Dangerous Trends in Modern Theological Thought," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 35/6 (June, 1964), 342.

[62] See Ralph A. Bohlmann, "Let Scripture Interpret Itself," *Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: CPH, 1968), pp. 99–109.

[63] See P. Stuhlmacher, "Neues Testament und Hermeneutik–Versuch einer Bestandaufnahme," *Zeitschrift fuer Theologie und Kirche* 68 (2, 1971), pp. 121–61.

[64] P. S. Minear, "Between Two Worlds; Eschatology and History," *Interpretation* 5/1 (1951), p. 39.

[65] C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (London: Black, 1962), p. 58; see also CTCR document, "Jesus and the Old Testament."

[66] Quoted by W. H. T. Dau, "Luther's Theological Method," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 13/11 (Nov., 1942), p. 838.

[67] G. Gloege, "Luther's Use of the Scriptures," in *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church* ed. Julius Bodensieck (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1965), I, p. 254.

[68] CTCR, "A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Bible Studies," LCMS *Convention Workbook* (St. Louis: CPH, 1967), pp. 395–96; also printed separately, pp. 9 ff. See also: Oscar Feucht, "The Bible: Understanding It," *The Lutheran Witness* (Nov. 26, 1972), pp. 462–83; see also his book *Learning to Use Your Bible* (St. Louis: CPH, 1971); Herbert Mayer, *Interpreting the Holy Scriptures* (St. Louis: CPH, 1967); W. Arndt, "Die moderne Kritik auf dem Gebiet des Neuen Testaments," *Lehre und Wehre* 69/12 (Dec., 1923), pp. 353–55 (literary criticism); pp. 355–60 (religiohistorical criticism): Arndt feels that the hypotheses of these criticisms are manipulating the text to fit their own theories; more recent studies in our Synod include: "Aspects of Biblical Hermeneutics: Confessional Principles and Practical Applications, Occasional Papers, No. 1," *CTM* (1966).

[69] F. C. I/1 in Th. G. Tappert (9 ed.), *The Book of Concord* (Saint Louis: CPH, 1959), p. 464.

[70] Oscar Feucht, "The Bible: Interpreting It," *The Lutheran Witness* (Dec. 17, 1972), p. 515.

[71] See also Robert Kyser, "Rudolf Bultmann's Interpretation of the Concept of Creation in John 1:3-4: A Study of Exegetical Method," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32/1 (Jan., 1970), pp. 77–85.

[72] Martin H. Scharlemann, "Biblical Interpretation Today," *The Lutheran Scholar* 24 (Jan.–April, 1967), p. 23.

[73] Lionel Swain, *op, cit.*, p. 61.

[74] Martin H. Scharlemann, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

[75] Werner C. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), pp. 405 f.; also Ludwig Fuerbringer, *op. cit.*, p. 24 #44.

[76] R. M. Grant, "The Study of Early Christianity," in *Religion*, ed. Paul Ramsey (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 152.

book reviews

THE ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN, by Thomas McPherson. Macmillan Press, LTD., 1972. 78 pp.

This monograph is but a part of the larger series in *New Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*, edited by W. D. Hudson. The "Argument from Design" as argument is in one form or another a claim that reason can on the basis of specific instances or the whole universe itself, inductively move to the conclusion that such "observables" are the result of a Designer.

Thomas McPherson guides the reader through both weak and strong forms of the argument, the latter forms making more sweeping conclusions regarding either the destiny of the universe or the nature of its Maker. The basic dimensions of the argument are related in order: the question of purpose, analogy, and finally its empirical basis. McPherson's study is suggestive, as far as this reviewer is concerned, and has tremendous import for teachers of religion: one, popular and uncritical forms of the argument attempt to "prove too much" and come off as nothing more than "hasty generalizations"; and two, simply giving-up-on-the-argument in the face of critical and sceptical rebuttals by such men as Immanuel Kant and David Hume may suggest that "belief in a Creator" is irrational, and what is worse, it might imply that God's providential care and ordering is itself a faulty Biblical claim.

Lutheran teachers as well as pastors have traditionally been quick to insist that "faith" is indeed a miracle wrought by the Spirit, faith which lays hold of God's grace mediated and incarnate in Jesus Christ, but Lutherans have been no less insistent that "God did not leave Himself without witness . . ." (Acts 14:16-17). While no serious advocates of the argument have ever felt that through the use of sound argument atheists and unbelievers would suddenly embrace the Christian faith, advocates have insisted that conviction that there is a Designer is not one reached solely through the propositional witness of prophets, apostles, and Scripture; but such conviction could rest upon sound, reasonable inference from evidence observable in the universe.

What is such evidence? What constitutes legitimate inference? What are inductively sound inferences? Thomas McPherson attempts to answer such questions, identifying for the reader those forms of the argument that prove themselves more defensible even in the face of hypercritical and sceptical views. McPherson shows himself to be an able teacher and communicator, and a disciplined and capable mind. The monograph is demonstration of such qualities within McPherson, and the study should serve well as a catalyst for building similar qualities within the Christian tradition itself.

D. P. MEYER

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 15 in German Protestant Theology from F. C. Baur to W. Künneth, by Manfred Kwiran. Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Kommisionsverlag, 1972. 397 pp.

As the subtitle indicates, this book is a survey of the exegesis of the resurrection chapter. "Within the subject matter of the resurrection of the dead," says Kwiran, "lies the foundation and content of faith and life for the Christian."

The period of German Protestant theological thought analyzed is that of the 19th and 20th centuries. The book is a revision of Kwiran's doctoral dissertation, presented to the theological faculty of the University of Basel. Although it becomes involved in minute details on occasion, it is a fine demonstration of scholarly research. The book is a handy resurrection theology catalog reference of approximately 20 German theologians.

When one is accustomed to flawless printing, the photocopy process of a not-so-flawless typewritten source makes reading somewhat difficult in certain sections. Also, an occasional German sentence structure does not lend itself to easily understood English thought patterns. Nevertheless, Kwiran demonstrates that he is a very competent scholar, and the extra effort required of the reader is rewarded in the receipt of new dimensions for old concepts.

The author was born in Pomerania, fled before the advancing Russians in World War II, and then immigrated to the United States. Upon graduation from Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Kwiran completed his doctoral work at Goltingen.

The book reveals the diverse interpretations the German theologians held on resurrection. For some the resurrection was embarrassing, insignificant, "humbug," a mistaken belief, a story that needs interpreting. Kwiran reviews the renewed concern of the 20th century concerning eschatology and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and includes a theology of his own. He stresses the resurrection as the completion and validation of the work of atonement. The cross and the resurrection are one. But our faith, he says, is not based on the evidence of or the fact that Christ did rise. Rather it is based on Jesus Christ:

"The Christian places his faith in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, who was crucified and rose from the dead. Our faith is not based on salvation facts, but rather on the person of Christ to whom the definite witnessed facts happened." (P. 356)

ERWIN J. KOLB

THE THEOLOGY OF POST-REFORMATION LUTHERANISM: A Study of Theological Prolegomena, by Robert D. Preus. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970. 464 pp.

What distinguishes one thought world from another, according to Susanne K. Langer, author of *Philosophy in a New Key,* is not so much a matter of different answers as it is a matter of the kind of questions that are seen as significant.

As Preus presents them, the central question of the theologians of Lutheran Orthodoxy seems to have been: How can we fix God's eternal truth in a system of "mental postulates" that will correspond exactly to the world of external reality?

This perfectionistic approach, coupled with a desire to preserve the medieval world-view that they felt was reflected in Scripture, helped drive the wedge through Western man that still divorces Sunday sentiment from weekday work and feeling.

Preus assures us that we cannot "lay to Gerhard's charge . . . any responsibility for the Enlightenment." He is correct! The work of the theologians of Orthodoxy helped assure that when the medieval synthesis broke down and the Enlightenment was born, the new knowledge and science that emerged had to view itself as secular.

The book builds toward the affirmation of a Bible inerrant in all matters, secular or religious. Curiously enough, the Bible thus affirmed is a nonexistent one. It is the Bible as it issued from the hands of the authors in the original autographs: autographs that a wise God, for whatever reason, chose not to preserve for His children.

Did Preus write this book to suggest that 16th- and 17th-century Lutheran Orthodoxy is the answer to present Missouri Synod questions? Can the Missouri Synod successfully return to and live in a thought world that had not yet encountered the questions raised by contemporary science, process philosophy, Freudian psychology, or contemporary methods of literary research?

In moments of nostalgia the past frequently seems much safer than a threatening present or an unknown future. Yet, is it not the part of faith to trust God's faithfulness for the future as well as His presence in the past?

Though not always scintillating, the reading of this book is nevertheless recommended. It is a near-perfect example of one extreme in Lutheran thought.

ALTON C. DONSBACH

THE TWO NATURES IN CHRIST, by Martin Chemnitz. Translated by J. A. O. Preus. Concordia Publishing House, 1970. 542 pp.

Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586), born a few years after the Reformation era, was inaugurated by the publication of Luther's theses at Wittenberg, became one of the most significant figures in the elaboration of a distinctive Lutheran theology. Chemnitz, who had heard Luther preach and had followed the lectures of Melanchthon, was perhaps the greatest of those theologians who unified and, as it were, codified the insights and particular emphases of the early Reformers and transmitted them to the Lutheran Church. Martin Chemnitz's work in this field is so significant that a 17th-century axiom declares his relation to Martin Luther in the words: "If Martin (Chemnitz) had not

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come, Martin (Luther) would scarcely have survived. (Si Martinus non fuisset, Martinus vix stetisset.)"

Chemnitz is known to historians of theology for his work in drafting the Formula of Concord, a fundamental Lutheran confessional document. His serious theological works include a four-volume critical examination of the Council of Trent, *The Two Natures in Christ,* and the incomplete, posthumous *Loci Theologici. The Two Natures in Christ* is not as polemical and perhaps not as famous as the critique of the Council of Trent; but it is a very significant work now made available for the first time to an English-speaking audience.

Luther often had harsh words for scholastic theologians. His follower, Chemnitz, adopted their vocabulary and style, and in large measure agreed with their doctrine on Christ. One interesting feature of his book is the particularly Lutheran doctrine of the omnipresence of the humanity of Christ. This doctrine, provoked by some of Luther's disputes about the Eucharist, became the subject of much debate in 16th-century Lutheran circles. Chemnitz defends a moderate Lutheran view.

Chemnitz presents his doctrine on the Incarnation in a precise, carefully elaborated style, citing frequently Scripture, councils, and the fathers of the church. He makes many references to scholastics in general and cites in particular Peter Lombard and Durandus. Although he refers occasionally to St. Anselm or St. Bernard, he never mentions the great medieval doctors—Bonaventure, Albert, and Thomas; nor does he make reference to men like Scotus and Occam, who greatly influenced late medieval theology.

J. A. O. Preus, president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, has translated this theological classic in a pleasing style, maintaining the flavor of the carefully phrased original. He has enhanced its value by the footnotes that indicate, in modern form, the sources of Chemnitz's frequent quotations. N. Alfred Balmer has prepared three indexes: subject and name, Scripture, Greek and Latin terms.

The work is intended for serious scholars, especially those interested in the development of Christology within the Lutheran tradition. They will be grateful to Dr. Preus for making this work available in English.

JUSTIN HENNESSEY

Why do people fight so much? Why do they get into so many endless arguments? Our sinful nature? That's certainly at the root of it. The Old Adam? It's true that some people just naturally like to argue. But that's only part of it.

Basic to many of our verbal hassles is the problem of communication. Man, particularly in Western society, is becoming better and better educated. He's learning more and more English, math, and science. Yet he still keeps getting tangled up in the web of his own poor communication process. He hasn't learned how to speak and listen in such a way that what one man transmits is exactly what the other man receives.

We speak about breakthroughs in medical science, breakthroughs in ecology, breakthroughs in interstellar space. But our greatest need is for a breakthrough in the communication process.

Why does communication break down so frequently? Because, contrary to what many people think, it's a very complicated process.

Communication involves words. That sounds simple. After all, words have specific meanings. Yet, all one has to do is look up any word in the dictionary and one source of trouble quickly manifests itself. Virtually all words have anywhere from two to ten different meanings. Every time we carry on a conversation the speaker may mean one thing with his words, while the hearer understands something else. In ordinary daily conversation, this isn't such a serious problem. The situation usually helps to suggest what meanings our words are intended to convey. But when we get into the more profound, philosophical, or even theological areas of discourse, the opportunities for talking past each other become enormous.

Add to this the fact that words themselves are not the only conveyors of meaning when we talk. Word meanings are qualified by tone of voice and word inflection, as well as by facial and body gestures.

The assumption that all I have to do is mouth some words and any person of average intelligence should know exactly what I mean is the basis for countless breakdowns in the communication process.

What is needed? We need to do more than articulate carefully. It's not enough just to follow Shakespeare's advice, "Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounce it to you, trippingly on the tongue."

We need to be sensitive to the ambiguity inherent in virtually all symbols, especially the ambiguity of words. We need to keep checking the correlation between spoken meanings and heard meanings. One of our favorite questions ought to be: "Am I understanding you correctly?" Unless we develop an obsession for congruent meanings in human conversation, we are doomed to endless wranglings about words which are assumed to be identical but which, in fact, are being used in different ways, without—unfortunately—the parties to the debate realizing it.

W. Th. Janzow

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