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A CASE STUDY IN EXEGETICAL METHODOLOGY
GEORG STOECKHARDT AND JOHANN PHILIP KOEHLER
ON EPHESIANS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology

by
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May 1971

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Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Short Title	2
.....	3
.....	4
.....	5
.....	6
.....	7
.....	8
.....	9
.....	10
.....	11
.....	12
.....	13
.....	14
.....	15
.....	16
.....	17
.....	18
.....	19
.....	20
.....	21
.....	22
.....	23
.....	24
.....	25
.....	26
.....	27
.....	28
.....	29
.....	30
.....	31
.....	32
.....	33
.....	34
.....	35
.....	36
.....	37
.....	38
.....	39
.....	40
.....	41
.....	42
.....	43
.....	44
.....	45
.....	46
.....	47
.....	48
.....	49
.....	50
.....	51
.....	52
.....	53
.....	54
.....	55
.....	56
.....	57
.....	58
.....	59
.....	60
.....	61
.....	62
.....	63
.....	64
.....	65
.....	66
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.....	68
.....	69
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.....	71
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.....	73
.....	74
.....	75
.....	76
.....	77
.....	78
.....	79
.....	80
.....	81
.....	82
.....	83
.....	84
.....	85
.....	86
.....	87
.....	88
.....	89
.....	90
.....	91
.....	92
.....	93
.....	94
.....	95
.....	96
.....	97
.....	98
.....	99
.....	100

STOECKHARDT AND KOEHLER ON EPHESIANS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Vitae	2
Karl Gerog Stoeckhardt	2
Johann Philip Koehler	6
Influence on Synodical Life	10
Commentaries on Ephesians	11
Hermeneutics	15
Surveying the Study	16
Appreciations and Evaluations	18
Georg Stoeckhardt	19
Johann Philip Koehler	23
II. TWO DIFFERING VIEWS OF EPHESIANS	26
Georg Stoeckhardt	26
Johann Philip Koehler	35
III. THE VIEW OF SCRIPTURE	42
Johann Philip Koehler	42
Georg Stoeckhardt	51
Stoeckhardt and Koehler	58
IV. THE CIRCLE OF LANGUAGE	60
Text	60
The Nature of New Testament Greek	66
Word Study	68
Grammar and Syntax	74
Literary Style	77
Summary	79
V. THE CIRCLE OF HISTORY	81
Isagogical Matters	81
The Use of "History" in Interpreting Ephesians	86
Summary	103
VI. THE CIRCLE OF THEOLOGY	105
The Interpreter Himself	105
Georg Stoeckhardt	106
Johann Philip Koehler	108
Scripture Interprets Itself	109
Georg Stoeckhardt	109
Johann Philip Koehler	112

One Simple Intended Sense	115
No Norm Beyond Scripture	118
Reason	119
Tradition	119
The Analogy of Faith	121
Dogmatics	122
 VII. CONCLUSIONS	 126
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 129

specialized decisive leadership and whose influence has continued through the years. In The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod a listing of such men might include Dr. C. F. W. Walther,¹ Dr. Franz Pieper,² Dr. Georg Stoeckhardt,³ and others. In the Wisconsin Synod the list would certainly include Dr. Adolf Wennecke,⁴ Professor August Pieper,⁵ Johann

¹Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther (1811-1887) was a leading figure in the organization of the church body now known as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and was its first president. He served as professor of theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from 1850 until his death. He also served as editor of Der Lutheraner and Lehre und Leben.

²Franz August Otto Pieper (1857-1911) was professor of theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1878 until 1907, when he became president of that institution. He served as president until his death. He was also president of the Missouri Synod, 1899-1911. His most influential work was his three-volume Christliche Dogmatik.

³For a sketch of the life of Georg Stoeckhardt, see below, pp. 2-6.

⁴Adolf Wennecke (1835-1908) taught at the seminary of the Wisconsin Synod when that school was located at Watertown, Wisconsin, 1868-1876. He was called to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1876, but declined the call for reasons of health. He served as pastor of St. Matthew's congregation, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1876-1899, and concurrently as director of the reestablished seminary of the Wisconsin Synod, then located at Milwaukee, after 1876. He taught dogmatics and homiletics. He served as editor of the Evangelisch-lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt and was active in founding the Theologische Quartalschrift. His multi-volume dogmatics was published posthumously.

⁵August Pieper (1857-1947) was the brother of Franz Pieper. He served as professor at the seminary of the Wisconsin Synod, then located at Watertown, Wisconsin, from 1907-1940. He taught leprology and Old Testament exegesis. He published a commentary on Isaiah 40-66, as well as other articles in the Theologische Quartalschrift.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In every church body there have been certain individuals who have exercised decisive leadership and whose influence has continued through the years. In The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod a listing of such men might include Dr. C. F. W. Walther,¹ Dr. Franz Pieper,² Dr. Georg Stoeckhardt,³ and others. In the Wisconsin Synod the list would certainly include Dr. Adolf Hoenecke,⁴ Professors August Pieper,⁵ Johann

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⁵August Pieper (1857-1947) was the brother of Franz Pieper. He served as professor at the seminary of the Wisconsin Synod, then located at Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, from 1902-1940. He taught isagogics and Old Testament exegesis. He published a commentary on Isaiah 40-66, as well as many articles in the Theologische Quartalschrift.

Philip Koehler,⁶ and John P. Meyer.⁷ Some of these men distinguished themselves as organizational leaders, some as theologians, and some in both areas of church life.

The two individuals whose labors have been of the greatest significance for the development of an exegetical tradition within the synods which formerly constituted The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America are Dr. Georg Stoeckhardt and Professor Johann Philip Koehler. To understand their contributions to the study of the Scriptures, one must first offer a brief biographical sketch of each scholar.

Vita

Karl Georg Stoeckhardt⁸

Karl Georg Stoeckhardt was born February 17, 1842, at Chemnitz, Saxony. He received his early education at a private Lateinschule (academy) at Tharandt, Germany, and from private tutors. From 1857 until 1862 he attended the Fuerstenschule at Meissen. In 1862 he entered the University of Erlangen with the intention of studying

⁶For a sketch of the life of Professor Johann Philip Koehler see below, pp. 6-9.

⁷John P. Meyer (1873-1964) served as professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1920-1964, continuing in active service until two weeks before his death. He was president of the seminary 1940-1953. He taught dogmatics and New Testament exegesis. He published a commentary on 2 Corinthians entitled Ministers of Christ.

⁸All information not otherwise credited in the biographical sketch of Dr. Georg Stoeckhardt is taken from Otto Willkomm, D. th. Georg Stoeckhardt (Zwickau, Saxony: Johannes Herrmann, 1914), pp. 15-28.

theology.⁹ In the fall of 1863 he transferred to the University of Leipzig, where he studied for five semesters. In 1886 after successfully completing the examinations, Stoeckhardt, in accordance with the custom prevailing in Germany, moved to Berlin in order to attend the lectures of some of the important theologians who were teaching at that university.¹⁰ After a serious illness in the same year, Stoeckhardt went to Neuendettelsau, where he made the acquaintance of Pastor Wilhelm Loehe.¹¹ The latter interested Stoeckhardt in the development of the Lutheran church in the United States.

Shortly after his contact with Loehe, Stoeckhardt became a tutor in a school for girls. He instructed in religion as well as in other subjects. During the summer of 1867 he attended the University of Marburg, where he heard August Vilmar¹² lecture. In May 1868, he passed an examination before the consistory at Dresden. When the girls' school in which he was teaching was to be closed, Stoeckhardt gave serious consideration to becoming a missionary to India. When his

⁹At the time when Stoeckhardt was a student at the University of Erlangen, Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann (1810-1877) was one of the leading theologians on the faculty. The influence of von Hofmann upon Stoeckhardt reveals itself in the fact that in his commentary on Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Stoeckhardt quoted von Hofmann 73 times, 49 of these citations being favorable, the remainder offering interpretations to which Stoeckhardt offered objection.

¹⁰He especially mentioned Steinmeyer, Hengstenberg, Dorner, and the historian von Ranke in his letters. (Willkomm, p. 17)

¹¹Johannes Konrad Wilhelm Loehe (1808-1872) served as pastor at Neuendettelsau, where he established a deaconess motherhouse. He was very active in recruiting and training pastors to serve in the United States. After a disagreement with the Missouri Synod concerning the doctrine of the church, he helped to establish the Iowa Synod.

¹²August Friedrich Christian Vilmar (1800-1863) was a Lutheran theologian, firmly committed to the Lutheran Confessions.

parents offered objections, Stoeckhardt applied instead for a teaching position at the University of Erlangen. Since this position required that he pass another examination, Stoeckhardt needed opportunity to prepare for the examination. He received a call as assistant pastor at the German Lutheran Church des Billettes in Paris. He was permitted to serve there only a few months because of the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. When the Republic was proclaimed, a German in Paris found himself in real danger. Stoeckhardt, therefore, fled to Belgium. He then became pastor to wounded and dying soldiers in the hospital at Sedan.

After this experience he returned to Erlangen to complete his work for the forthcoming examination. His dissertation topic dealt with Isaiah 8:20-9:6. The work was accepted by the faculty, and in June he successfully passed his oral examination. He began his work on the faculty at Erlangen as private tutor in Old and New Testament exegesis in the fall of 1871 and continued it until the fall of 1873. He also taught religion in the Gymnasium at Erlangen. In the meantime he prepared a dissertation for the degree of licentiate in theology, the topic of which was "The Son of Man." The Erlangen faculty rejected it because it was not "scientific" enough. He then submitted the same dissertation to the theological faculty at Leipzig, which then granted him the degree which he desired.

After receiving his degree, he returned to Saxony and received a call as diakonus at Planitz, near Zwickau. Shortly after his induction into office on October 7, 1873, difficulties arose between Stoeckhardt and the consistory over questions of church discipline. He wished to institute the practice of personal announcement for communion, since

he was deeply disturbed by the low spiritual level of the people under his pastoral care. He disagreed publicly with the position of the consistory; on June 15, 1876, he was suspended from office. He responded by announcing his resignation. Shortly afterwards he joined St. John's congregation at Planitz, which had been established as a free congregation in 1871 by Pastor Friedrich Ruhland. Stoeckhardt was soon called as assistant pastor. Together with Ruhland he began the publication of Die Ev.-Luth. Freikirche. During his tenure as assistant pastor, Stoeckhardt was also active in preparing boys and young men for progymnasial studies. In 1878 Holy Cross congregation, St. Louis, Missouri, called him as its pastor.¹³ He accepted this call and was installed October 13, 1878. In addition to serving as pastor of Holy Cross congregation, Stoeckhardt also became professor extraordinarius (lecturer) at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He taught both Old and New Testament exegesis.

After Walther's death, Stoeckhardt received a call to a full professorship at Concordia Seminary to teach biblical interpretation. His lectures covered Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, the Minor Prophets, Messianic prophecies, the Gospel according to Luke, the Gospel according to John, Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians,

¹³Earlier that year Dr. Walther had expressed a hope to Pastor Ruhland that Stoeckhardt would receive the call to a newly-created professorship at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Walther, however, was disappointed in this wish, because Franz Pieper received the call. (William Elmer Goerss, "Some of the Hermeneutical Presuppositions and Part of the Exegetical Methodology of Georg Stoeckhardt". Unpublished Doctor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1964, pp. 129-130.)

1 Timothy, Hebrews, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John.¹⁴ He treated Ephesians during 1894-1895, 1898-1899, 1904-1905, and was lecturing on it at the time of his death on January 9, 1913.¹⁵ In 1903 Luther Seminary, Hamline, Minnesota, honored him by conferring on him the degree of doctor of divinity.¹⁶ Stoeckhardt was a prolific writer and contributed extensively to Lehre und Wehre, the theological journal of the Missouri Synod; Der Lutheraner, the official organ of the synod; and the Magazin fuer Ev.-Luth. Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie. He published commentaries on Isaiah 1-12, selected Psalms, Romans, Ephesians, and 1 Peter, as well as Bible histories of the Old and New Testament.¹⁷

Johann Philip Koehler

Professor Johann Philip Koehler exerted a profound influence on the theological development of the Wisconsin Synod. He was born January 17, 1859, at Manitowoc, Wisconsin.¹⁸ His father, the Rev. Philip Koehler, was one of the leading spirits in the Wisconsin Synod's move toward a soundly Lutheran confessional stance.¹⁹ Shortly after

¹⁴Goerss, pp. 142-143.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 143.

¹⁶"Stoeckhardt, Georg," Lutheran Cyclopedia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954) p. 1011.

¹⁷For a comprehensive bibliography of Stoeckhardt's writings see Goerss, pp. 473-535.

¹⁸Faith-Life, October 1951, p. 4.

¹⁹Jo[hann] Ph[ilip] Koehler, "The History of the Wisconsin Synod," Faith-Life, October 1939, p. 7. This article appears in consecutive issues from February 1938 through January 1944.

his son's birth, the elder Koehler accepted a call to Hustisford, Wisconsin, where the younger Koehler received his elementary education.²⁰ He attended Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin. After his graduation from that school he transferred to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, where he studied under both Dr. Walther and Professor Georg Stoeckhardt, who at that time was both lecturing at Concordia Seminary and serving as pastor of Holy Cross congregation.²¹ In the summer of 1878 he served as vicar to Pastor Adolf Hoenecke at St. Matthew's congregation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.²² After graduation from the seminary he became his father's assistant,²³ and in 1881 he received a charge of his own at Two Rivers, Wisconsin.²⁴

In 1888 he received a call to his alma mater, Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin, to serve as Inspektor (dean of students).²⁵ His teaching assignments included religion, history, Latin, German, and Hebrew.²⁶ During his tenure at Watertown he apparently had the opportunity to develop his theological stance, as is evident from his

²⁰Faith-Life, October 1951, p. 4.

²¹Ibid.

²²Koehler, October 1942, p. 8.

²³Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt, August 15, 1880, p. 192. This statement is a correction of the information which appears in the article on Koehler by Leigh D. Jordahl, "John Philip Koehler", The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), II, 1223.

²⁴Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt, January 1, 1882, p. 71.

²⁵Koehler, December 1941, p. 7.

²⁶Ibid., February 1942, p. 7.

writings from this period, a synodical essay on adiaphora and the essay on the interpretation of Scripture in Scripture.

In 1900 the Wisconsin Synod called him to its seminary, then located at Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee.²⁷ He became the junior colleague of Dr. Adolf Hoenecke, the acknowledged theological leader of the synod. Shortly after Koehler's coming to the seminary the synod also called Pastor August Pieper of Milwaukee.²⁸ Together Koehler and Pieper developed a basic theological approach which has been called the Wauwatosa Theology or the Wauwatosa Gospel.²⁹ This approach will reveal itself in Koehler's commentary on Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

In 1908 Dr. Hoenecke died, and Professor John Schaller of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, received the call as director of the seminary.³⁰ Upon Schaller's death in 1920 the directorship devolved upon Professor Koehler.³¹

During the following years tensions developed between Koehler and Pieper. These reached a climax as a result of the way in which a case of church discipline was handled by the West Wisconsin District of the Wisconsin Synod and the stand of the faculty at Wauwatosa toward a

²⁷Ibid., December 1941, p. 7.

²⁸Ibid., September 1942, p. 8.

²⁹Leigh Donald Jordahl, The Wauwatosa Theology, John Philip Koehler and the Theological Tradition of Midwestern American Lutheranism (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1964), pp. 1 and 78.

³⁰Koehler, November 1942, p. 15.

³¹Ibid., December 1943, p. 8.

conference paper by William F. Beitz. After a long series of acrimonious confrontations with synodical officials and boards, Professor Koehler was suspended from teaching in 1929 and deposed from his professorship in 1930.³² In 1933 his membership in the Wisconsin Synod was terminated.³³

During his years at the Wauwatosa seminary, Professor Koehler instructed in the areas of New Testament exegesis, hermeneutics, church history, liturgics, and hymnology.³⁴ His published works during the time of his professorship include a commentary on Paul's letter to the Galatians, a textbook of church history, and the first volume of a history of the Wisconsin Synod. He contributed extensively to the Theologische Quartalschrift. Every volume from 1904 to 1928 contains contributions by him.

After he was removed from his professorship he made his home at Neillsville, Wisconsin.³⁵ He became a member of the Protestant [sic!] Conference, an organization of pastors and laymen who had been suspended from membership in the Wisconsin Synod as a result of a series of controversies which afflicted that body during the second decade of the present century.³⁶ His major literary works during this period include

³²Jordahl, The Wauwatosa Theology, p. 97.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Faith-Life, October 1951, p. 4.

³⁶For a study of the events which led to the ousting of Professor Koehler, see Jordahl, The Wauwatosa Theology, pp. 278-321.

the commentary on Ephesians which will be treated in the present study, a rewriting (in English) and completion of his history of the Wisconsin Synod, as well as a commentary on the Gospel according to John. In addition he contributed numerous articles and book reviews to Faith-Life, the journal of the Protes'tant Conference, of which his son, Karl, was the editor. He died on September 30, 1951.³⁷

Influence on Synodical Life

Both Stoeckhardt and Koehler exercised formative influences on their respective synods. Stoeckhardt's influence was exerted through the generations of students which he instructed at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and through his published works. As long as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States remained basically German in its orientation, Stoeckhardt continued to exercise his influence through his published commentaries, which were to be found in many pastors' libraries. Even today large numbers of the clergy of the synod have been trained by teachers who have adopted Stoeckhardt's basic exegetical methodology.

Koehler's influence upon the Synodical Conference was proportionately smaller, since the student body at the Wauwatosa seminary was always much smaller than that at St. Louis. Koehler also did not publish as many books as Stoeckhardt. The readership of the Theologische Quartalschrift, in which most of Koehler's writings appeared during the time of his

³⁷Faith-Life, October 1951, p. 4.

teaching career, was also quite small.³⁸ His influence was exerted primarily on those students who imbibed his basic theological approach and methodology. The Protestant Conference claims to perpetuate the theological ideals which Professors Koehler and Pieper developed at the Wauwatosa seminary during the early years of this century. The Wisconsin Synod of today also recognizes the influence which Koehler and Pieper had on the theological approach which, they claim, is distinctive of that synod's seminary.³⁹

Commentaries on Ephesians

Since, fortunately, both Stoeckhardt and Koehler wrote commentaries on Paul's letter to the Ephesians, it is appropriate that a study of their exegetical methodology should begin with an analysis of their hermeneutics as exemplified in their respective commentaries on this biblical book.⁴⁰

³⁸ Immanuel P. Frey, "Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1863-1963," Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, LX (1963), 199, offers a table showing the enrollment at the seminary from 1893 until 1963. During Koehler's years at the seminary, the highest enrollment was 63 students.

³⁹ After years of silence following Koehler's removal from the seminary, during which Professor Koehler's name was not mentioned in official Wisconsin Synod publications, a rehabilitation of Professor Koehler has begun. His essay "Gesetzlich Wesen unter uns" was read at the 1959 convention of the Wisconsin Synod (The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States. Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Convention, August 5-12, 1959, at Saginaw, Michigan [Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1959], pp. 120-164). A translation of Koehler's article "Das eigentliche Thema des Epheserbriefes," Theologische Quartalschrift, XIII (1916), 103-116, was made by Irwin J. Habeck and was published in Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, LXV (1968), 116-121. In his history of the Wisconsin Synod seminary Immanuel P. Frey speaks very highly of Koehler's contributions to the development of that institution. Frey, LX, 209-212.

⁴⁰ Georg Stoeckhardt, Kommentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Epheser (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), passim. Joh[ann]

Stoeckhardt's published commentaries deal with the portions of the Bible on which he lectured at Concordia Seminary. It seems probable, therefore, that his commentary on Ephesians developed from his classroom lectures on this book of the Bible. He lectured on this letter on several occasions during his years at Concordia Seminary.⁴¹ His commentary was published in 1910, only a few years before his death. It may, therefore, legitimately be considered his mature statement of his interpretation of Ephesians.

Koehler's commentary originated as a series of conference papers for the meetings of the Protestant Conference.⁴² It was then published in Faith-Life, the monthly publication of the Protestants.

Koehler's special interest in Paul's letter to the Ephesians can be documented as being of long-standing. His essay for the convention of the Synodical Conference in 1905 centered about Ephesians 4:4-6.⁴³

P[hilip] Koehler, "Pauli Hochgesang von Christo, Auslegung des Briefes an die Epheser," Faith-Life, January 1936, pp. 5-10; February 1936, pp. 9-14; March 1936, pp. 6-11; April 1936, pp. 3-8; May 1936, pp. 4-10; June 1936, pp. 5-9; July 1936, pp. 5-10; August 1936, pp. 6-11; September 1936, pp. 4-8; October 1936, pp. 5-8; November 1936, pp. 3-8; December 1936, pp. 4-7; January 1937, pp. 6-11; February 1937, pp. 6-10; March 1937, pp. 8-12; April 1937, pp. 4-9; May 1937, pp. 5-10; June 1937, pp. 6-12; July 1937, pp. 4-8.

⁴¹Supra, p. 5.

⁴²Faith-Life, May 1931, p. 14.

⁴³J[ohann Philip] Koehler, "Seid fleissig zu halten die Einigkeit im Geist," in Evang.-Luth. Synodalkonferenz von Nord-Amerika, Verhandlungen der einundzwanzigsten Versammlung, Chicago, August 15-21, 1905 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1906), pp. 5-40.

An essay, written in 1910, on "The Gospel of Christ, the Only Truth," deals extensively with several passages in Paul's letter to the congregation in Ephesus.⁴⁴ In an article on "The Real Theme of the Letter to the Ephesians," published in 1916, he laid out the outlines of his basic interpretation of this letter.⁴⁵

Koehler's interest in hermeneutics, which frequently surfaces in his commentary, is also of long standing. In a conference paper which he produced while he was still teaching at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin, he discussed the "interpretation of Scripture in Scripture."⁴⁶ As a result of his participation in the intersynodical free conferences of 1903-1906 Koehler published two articles in the Theologische Quartalschrift on the "analogy of faith."⁴⁷ In addition, he made a study of the words of institution of the Lord's Supper, using

⁴⁴Johann Philip Koehler, "The Gospel of Christ, the Only Truth," translated from the German by Henry Albrecht, Faith-Life, July 1963, pp. 5-7; August 1963, pp. 4-6; September 1963, pp. 11-14; October 1963, pp. 5-7, 10; November 1963, pp. 5-7; December 1963, pp. 4-6. Unfortunately the writer has been unable to secure a copy of the German form of this essay and, therefore, has had to rely on the translation which appeared in Faith-Life.

⁴⁵Koehler, Theologische Quartalschrift, XIII, 103-116.

⁴⁶Johann Philip Koehler, "Schriftauslegung in der Schrift," Faith-Life, August 1935, pp. 9-14; September 1935, pp. 5-8; October 1935, pp. 4-6; November 1935, pp. 5-9; December 1935, pp. 6-8. Even though written while Koehler was still at Watertown, he did not publish it until after his removal from the faculty of the Wauwatosa seminary.

⁴⁷Joh[ann] Ph[ilip] Koehler, "Die Analogie des Glaubens, eine hermeneutische Untersuchung," Theologische Quartalschrift, I (1904), 18-36, 75-90, 131-169. Joh[ann] Ph[ilip] Koehler, "Zur 'Analogie des Glaubens,'" Theologische Quartalschrift, II (1905), 105-125.

them as a case study in hermeneutics.⁴⁸ In the 1912-1913 catalog of the Wauwatosa seminary he published the outline of a proposed textbook on biblical hermeneutics.⁴⁹ In the next issue of the catalog he offered the first chapter of that work.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, so far as can be determined, Koehler never brought that work to completion.

Someone may object that Koehler's commentary on Ephesians is not truly representative of his exegetical work while he was instructing at the seminary of the Wisconsin Synod, since it was published only after he had been removed from office. In answer to that objection, it can be observed that Koehler had achieved his basic interpretation of this letter while he was still active as a member of the Wauwatosa faculty, as is evident from a comparison of his article on "The Real Theme of the Letter to the Ephesians," with his commentary on the same letter. In retirement a man's basic stance ordinarily will not develop far beyond what it had been during the years of his active career. In addition, it should be noted that Professor Koehler never gave up his basic commitment to the Lutheran Church and its confessional position. Even

⁴⁸ Jo[hann] Ph[ilip] Koehler, "Die Exegese von 'Das ist mein Leib' ein Beispiel der Hermeneutik, welche der lutherischen Theologie eigen ist," Theologische Quartalschrift, IV (1907), 65-83.

⁴⁹ Johann Philip Koehler, "Biblische Hermeneutik, Vorlage fuer den Seminarunterricht," Katalog des Theologischen Seminars der Allgemeinen Ev.-Luth. Synode von Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan u.a. St. bei Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1912-1913 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1912), pp. 13-27.

⁵⁰ Johann Philip Koehler, "Die heilige Schrift als Grundlage aller Theologie," Katalog des Theologischen Seminars der Allgemeinen Ev.-Luth. Synode von Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan u.a. St. bei Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1913), pp. 14-35.

though he had been suspended from his professorship and removed from the clergy roster of the Wisconsin Synod, Koehler continued to look upon himself and his fellow-Protestants as committed Lutherans.

Hermeneutics

Since the problem of hermeneutics has come to the fore in current theological thought, it is desirable to assess the hermeneutical contributions of two of the formative theologians of the Synodical Conference, and to do this on the basis of a case study of two commentaries on the same biblical book. It would be amiss, however, to look for these exegetes to provide answers for the problems which are currently in the forefront of theological discussion. These questions were not the concern of either Stoeckhardt or Koehler, and therefore these men cannot legitimately be expected to provide answers to these problems. Their circle of hermeneutical concerns was that of classical Lutheran hermeneutics.⁵¹

The basic problem which underlies this study is: What hermeneutical principles led two exegetes, with basically the same confessional

⁵¹The textbook which Stoeckhardt used for his classes in biblical hermeneutics was that by Carl Gottlob Hofmann, Institutiones Theologicae exegeticae in usum academicarum praelectionem adornata (St. Louis: Officia Synodi Missouriensis Lutheranae, 1876), which presents a systematic survey of the principles of biblical hermeneutics from a confessional Lutheran viewpoint. Koehler's personal copy of that book is in the personal library of the Rev. Dr. Edgar Krentz of the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Unfortunately, Koehler made very few annotations in the text, except for copying out of the biblical citations. Koehler's outline of his proposed work on hermeneutics also indicates that he intended to deal with the same basic principles of interpretation as were treated by Carl Gottlob Hofmann.

commitment, operating with the same biblical text, to produce two commentaries which differ from one another in so many ways. The differences between the two commentaries, it should be observed, are not merely in format, but the differences extend to content and interpretation as well.

Surveying the Study

In the present introductory chapter the lives of Stoeckhardt and Koehler have been sketched and the background for the production of their two commentaries on Paul's letter to the Ephesians has been offered. The second chapter demonstrates that there are basic differences in emphasis and approach between these two commentaries. Dr. Stoeckhardt looked upon the doctrine of the church, of the Una Sancta, as the key to Paul's thought in the letter to the congregation at Ephesus. Professor Koehler, in contrast, found the Pauline phrase en Christō to offer the key to this letter. In the second chapter of this study a brief summary of the line of thought which each exegete discovered in Ephesians will be presented.

The third chapter of this study has as its purpose a description of the doctrine of Scripture held by each of the scholars whose commentaries are being investigated in this study. Both Stoeckhardt and Koehler declared their acceptance of a doctrine of verbal inspiration, but a closer examination of their presentation of this doctrine will reveal that Stoeckhardt and Koehler each had differing emphases when they used the term.

In his "Essays in Hermeneutics," Professor Martin H. Franzmann suggested that the exegete must pass through three concentric circles in order to understand the text which he is interpreting. These three

circles are the circle of language, the circle of history, and the circle of Scripture (or theology).⁵² These three circles, then, will furnish the outline for the concluding chapters of the present study. The discussion of the use of the circle of language will include a consideration of Stoeckhardt's and Koehler's principles of textual criticism, as well as a study of their understanding of the nature of the language in which the New Testament was written. In addition, an attempt will be made to show how each of the exegetes undertook to ascertain the exact meaning of the words which Paul used in writing his letter to the Ephesian Christians. This chapter will also contain a discussion of the use which Stoeckhardt and Koehler made of the principles of Greek grammar in their respective commentaries. Since one important aspect of a man's writing is his literary style, this chapter also contains a comparison between Stoeckhardt's and Koehler's appreciation of the importance of literary style for exegesis.

Professor Koehler regarded exegesis as a branch of historical theology.⁵³ In the case of the interpretation of the Bible, the document to be interpreted is the Word of God. As such, it is not to be subjected to correction on the basis of human opinions. But at the same time, the document was written at a certain point in time, by an individual who had a past, to a group of people who had experienced certain events and who lived in a particular cultural milieu. The question of which the

⁵²Martin H. Franzmann, "Essays in Hermeneutics," Concordia Theological Monthly, XIX (1948), 598.

⁵³Joh[ann] Ph[ilip] Koehler, "Die Bedeutung der historischen Disziplinen fuer die amerikanische lutherische Kirche der Gegenwart," Theologische Quartalschrift, I (1904), 206.

fifth chapter treats is how Stoeckhardt and Koehler employed the resources of the circle of history in their interpretations of the letter to the Ephesians.

The final, and crucial, circle to which Professor Franzmann referred is the circle of theology. This circle deals in particular with the aspects of interpretation which derive from the fact that the Bible is the Word of God. What does this fact mean for the Lutheran exegete? What principles are legitimately followed, and which principles of interpretation must be rejected because of the character of the Bible? The decisive difference between Dr. Stoeckhardt and his pupil, Professor Koehler, will emerge at this point, if at all.

The method which will be followed in this case study in exegetical methodology is to examine the primary documents themselves. The two chief sources for this study are Stoeckhardt's Kommentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Epheser and Koehler's "Pauli Hochgesang von Christo; Auslegung des Epheserbriefes," which appeared serially in Faith-Life between January 1936, and July 1937. The other writings of these scholars will come into consideration as the occasion warrants, for the purpose of shedding light on the principles of hermeneutics which emerge from a study of these commentaries.

Appreciations and Evaluations

The contributions of both Stoeckhardt and Koehler have already been discussed and evaluated in a general way by previous scholars. A brief survey of their evaluations and appreciations is in order at this point.

Georg Stoeckhardt

In a series of three articles, which appeared in the Theological Quarterly shortly after Stoeckhardt's death, Professor W. H. T. Dau evaluated the contributions of his colleague to the life of the Lutheran church in the United States.⁵⁴ Stoeckhardt's activity, according to Dau, was to aid the church in the preservation of the blessings which it had received.⁵⁵ The means for conservation was proper indoctrination of the members of the church, particularly through doctrinal articles in Der Lutheraner.⁵⁶ Dau praised Stoeckhardt highly as a preacher, especially because of the biblical content of his sermons.⁵⁷ In particular, however, Stoeckhardt's real contribution was in the area of biblical interpretation. He believed it to be his first obligation to lead students of the Bible

into a comprehensive and penetrating knowledge of the principal writings of the divine revelation, and of making them thoroughly familiar with those books of the Bible which embody in the most striking form the marrow and essence of the saving doctrine.⁵⁸

The major portion of the article on the subject of Stoeckhardt's exegetical methodology is an Englishing of a large portion of Stoeckhardt's introduction to his commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans.⁵⁹

⁵⁴W. H. T. Dau, "Dr. George Stoeckhardt," Theological Quarterly, XVII (1913), 65-75, 136-153; XVIII (1914), 16-23.

⁵⁵Ibid., XVII, 70.

⁵⁶Ibid., XVII, 72.

⁵⁷Ibid., XVII, 140-143.

⁵⁸Ibid., XVIII, 17-18.

⁵⁹Ibid., XVIII, 20-21.

Otto Willkomm, who had been a fellow-student of Stoeckhardt at the University of Leipzig, wrote a biographical sketch of Stoeckhardt's life.⁶⁰ In his discussion of Stoeckhardt's activity in the United States he depended to a large extent upon Dau's articles, as he himself admitted.⁶¹ This work is valuable as offering the viewpoint of one of Stoeckhardt's colleagues in the Freikirche.

In 1949 the Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly published a biographical article about Dr. Stoeckhardt by the Rev. Dr. Emil Biegner.⁶² This article depended to a great extent upon Willkomm's biography and the material which Dau had published as early as 1913. It has, therefore, little independent value as a biographical source for a study of Stoeckhardt's biography.

In 1954 Richard Baepler submitted a bachelor of divinity thesis to the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, on the subject of a comparison of the hermeneutics of J. C. K. von Hofmann with those of Georg Stoeckhardt.⁶³ He discovered noteworthy parallels between von Hofmann and Stoeckhardt. Baepler was of the opinion that "Stoeckhardt clearly has developed a sense of history and of historical development which one would expect from student of von Hofmann."⁶⁴ Baepler also

⁶⁰Willkomm, p.16.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 8.

⁶²E[il] Biegner, "Karl Georg Stoeckhardt, D. Theol., 1842-1913," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXI (January 1949), 154-166.

⁶³Richard Baepler, "The Hermeneutics of Johannes Christian Konrad von Hofmann with Special Reference to his Influence on Georg Stoeckhardt" (Unpublished Bachelor of Divinity Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1954).

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 46.

saw a parallel with von Hofmann's theology in the approach of allowing the Scriptures to speak their own message.⁶⁵ In the theologies of both men the Bible played a significant role.⁶⁶ At the same time, Baepler recognized the differences between them on the nature of revelation, the purpose of the Bible, and the place of the personal subject in theology.⁶⁷ A significant difference in Stoeckhardt's theology, when compared with von Hofmann's, is the lack of emphasis in the former's theology on the role of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁸

Two other evaluations of Stoeckhardt deserve special mention. One is the doctoral dissertation, presented to the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, by William E. Goerss. In this study the writer described in some detail Stoeckhardt's doctrine of Scripture. He discussed the doctrine of revelation and inspiration of the Bible. He showed decisively that Stoeckhardt taught a doctrine of verbal inspiration.⁶⁹ He then elaborated Stoeckhardt's principles of hermeneutics. According to Goerss, Stoeckhardt held that the interpretation of Scripture must be consistent with the use which the Holy Spirit intended, and that aim is to build up people in faith by means of the Scriptures.⁷⁰ The purpose of the Holy Scriptures is to reveal Christ. Therefore, all

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 47.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Goerss, p. 39.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 47.

exegesis has a practical spiritual purpose.⁷¹ In the present study there will be opportunity to evaluate the correctness of Dr. Goerss' findings as they apply to the interpretation of one particular portion of the New Testament, the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

The other evaluation of Stoeckhardt is of particular significance for this study, because it came from the pen of Professor Johann Philip Koehler. Koehler regarded his teacher as a "Bible theologian" (Schrifttheologe).⁷² For him this designation was a term of approbation. He could speak of Stoeckhardt as the most acute (Scharfst) theologian of the Synodical Conference.⁷³ He wrote:

Just because of his clearly evangelical stance no one preached the Law more sharply than he. Thus, too, no one adopted a stand more decisively for a doctrinal position than he did. . . . I raise the question whether Stoeckhardt's uninhibited manner of being about the Gospel without any extraneous concerns--a manner which reminds one of Luther's approach and which immediately impresses one as being the correct one, as nearly four hundred years of history have shown--should not bring it about that we transmit to our children the heritage of the Reformation without falsifying it or abridging it in any way, so that God would still grant us time in which His Word might take root in our land.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² J[ohann] P[hilip] Koehler, "Dr. G. Stoeckhardt," Theologische Quartalschrift, X (1913), 58.

⁷³ Ibid., X, 59.

⁷⁴ Ibid. "Eben wegen seiner klar evangelischen Stellung hat keiner das Gesetz schaefer gepredigt als er. So hat auch keiner mit groesserer Entschiedenheit auf der behaupteten Lehrstellung bestanden als er. . . . Sollte die unbefangene Art Stoeckhardts, sich um das Evangelium zu bemuehen, die so ganz ohne anderen Beigeschmack an Luthers Art erinnert, und die so unmittelbar als die richtige anspricht, wie die Geschichte seit bald 400 Jahren gelehrt hat, es nicht fertigbringen, dass wir das Erbe der Reformation in unverfaelschter und nicht abgeblasster Art unsern Kindern ueberliefern, dass uns Gott nochmal eine Zeit gaebe, da sein Wort eine gute Statt haette in diesem Lange?" Unless otherwise noted, the writer has made his own translation of all quotations from the German.

In spite of such high praise Koehler did not hesitate to disagree with his teacher's results in particular points of interpretation, as is evidenced by Koehler's review of Stoeckhardt's commentary on the first epistle of St. Peter.⁷⁵

Johann Philip Koehler

Koehler's activity has also come under discussion in various journals and dissertations. Dr. Jaroslav J. Pelikan, who at the time of writing the article was a member of the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, offered a brief memorial in the "Theological Observer" column of the Concordia Theological Monthly shortly after Koehler's death. He emphasized especially Koehler's contributions to historical theology, in particular his Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte, which Pelikan termed "the outstanding work of its kind to come out of American Lutheranism, regardless of synod."⁷⁶

An evaluation of Koehler from the viewpoint of the Protestant Conference appeared in Faith-Life some eleven years after Koehler's death. It was written by Joel Hensel. As one might expect, the article

⁷⁵ J[ohann] Ph[ilip] Koehler, "Book Review: Kommentar ueber den Ersten Brief Patri. Von. D. G. Stoeckhardt," Theologische Quartalschrift, X (1913), 63. He questioned, for example, Stoeckhardt's refusal to allow for Peter's presence in Rome, which Koehler attributed to Stoeckhardt's fear that such an admission would serve as a support for the claims of the Roman church that Peter was the first pope (Ibid., X, 63-67). He also questioned Stoeckhardt's views on the office of the priesthood of believers (Ibid., X, 69).

⁷⁶ J. J. Pelikan, "John P. Koehler, 1859-1951," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXIII, No. 1 (1952), 50.

is highly laudatory in tone. The emphasis in this article, too, was on Koehler's approach to history. Concerning Koehler's Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte Hensel wrote:

His scholarship as revealed therein is not a mere compendium of facts, but rather a comprehensive survey and analysis of all human life, thought, and emotion, with their strong emphasis of general history, particularly the development of culture in its manifold forms.⁷⁷

In this article Hensel offered the Protestant interpretation of the reasons for Koehler's dismissal from the faculty of the Wisconsin Synod seminary.⁷⁸

In the centennial history of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Immanuel P. Frey discussed the period when the dominant theologians on the faculty at Wauwatosa were August Pieper and Johann Philip Koehler. Their approach to theology was the historical-exegetical one. "The aim," said Frey,

was to lead the students into the Scriptures directly and to evaluate everything according to that standard. Theoretically, that had always been the policy in the orthodox Lutheran church, but in practice the shortcut was often taken.⁷⁹

Frey evaluated Koehler's contribution to the seminary as follows:

Professor Koehler at first glance impressed the students as an austere man and as of a reserved nature, but at the same time he had a gift for talking with the students and influencing them privately. His chief talent seemed to be the laying down of the fundamental principles of the Gospel. It appeared at times that he intentionally did not make his statements too specific, so that the students would do their own thinking. Consequently, they were not always likely to understand him at first but after months, perhaps even years, the fuller meaning would gradually

⁷⁷ Joel Hensel, "A Brief Study of John Philip Koehler," Faith-Life, July 1962, p. 6.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Frey, LX, 211.

dawn upon them. His lectures were never dull but always stimulating. He put great stress on the revelation of God's ways in history, pointing out that the formulations of theology are not static, but represent a constant struggle of God's unchanging truth against the ever-changing attacks of error.⁸⁰

The most extensive study of Koehler's life and influence is that by Leigh D. Jordahl. He wrote this study as a doctoral dissertation for the School of Religion at the State University of Iowa. In it he evaluated the contribution of Johann Philip Koehler against the background Midwestern Lutheranism as exemplified in the life and work of Dr. Franz Pieper. One chapter of Jordahl's dissertation is a comparison of the theological emphases of Pieper's writings with Koehler's critique of the theology found in them.⁸¹ In Jordahl's view Koehler was the seminal thinker who broke out of the shell of intellectualism which he believed he saw in the work of Pieper. According to Jordahl, Koehler's theology was bound to be misunderstood and carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction, seeds which bore fruit in Koehler's deposition from his professorship.⁸²

⁸⁰ Ibid., LX, 212.

⁸¹ Jordahl, The Wauwatosa Theology, pp. 165-267.

⁸² Ibid., passim. Jordahl stated: "Perhaps the type of thinking which dominated Koehler can never find any very fertile soil within an organized church, where the practical problems of administration, expansion, synodical loyalty, etc., demand a relatively simple and clear-cut position and an unequivocal statement of right and wrong. (Ibid., pp. 273-274).

CHAPTER II

TWO DIFFERING VIEWS OF EPHESIANS

The purpose of the present chapter is to provide a summary of the line of thought which Dr. Georg Stoeckhardt and Professor Johann Philip Koehler respectively discovered in the text of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In this chapter no attempt will be made to give a detailed exegesis of the biblical text, nor to evaluate the interpretation which each exegete gave of the Pauline letter. Each interpreter's understanding of the line of thought in this letter will be summarized in preparation for a more detailed study of the various aspects of their exegetical work as exemplified in their respective commentaries on Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Georg Stoeckhardt

In the introduction to his commentary Dr. Georg Stoeckhardt dealt with the usual problems of isagogics, such as the authorship of the letter, the identity of the original addressees, the date and place of writing, and the occasion and purpose of the letter. Stoeckhardt had no doubts concerning the Pauline authorship of the letter, and he defended Paul's authorship against various attacks which had been made on it in contemporary New Testament scholarship.¹ The addressees of the letter were the members of the Christian congregation at Ephesus.²

¹G[Georg] Stoeckhardt, *Kommentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Epheser* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), pp. 1-11.

²Ibid., pp. 12-27.

After a consideration of Caesarea or Rome as the place of origin of the letter, Stoeckhardt concluded that Paul had written the letter during his first Roman captivity, about 62 A.D.³ There was no special circumstances which led Paul to write this letter, nor were there any special needs in the Ephesian congregation which prompted Paul to write. The letter, rather, is a hymn concerning the church, a letter directed to the Ephesian congregation in order to help it to value rightly its high calling as a Christian congregation and to assist it to fulfill its churchly function in the world.⁴

After his extended introduction Stoeckhardt turned to the interpretation of the biblical text. In his commentary he submitted his own translation of the text and then appended the exposition of its meaning.

After the salutation (1:1-2) the Apostle Paul began his letter to the Ephesian congregation with a doxology (1:3-14). This doxology may be divided into two major parts, each of which deals with God's elective activity in eternity and its achievement in time. The first of these units (1:3-8) emphasizes and praises the rich blessing which God has given to those who have come to faith in Christ. That blessing is heavenly in nature, and it consists in redemption through Christ's blood, forgiveness of sins, all manner of wisdom and insight, which equip Christians for a holy and unblamable life. In short, this blessing is adoption into God's family. This blessing of being a child of God by adoption is built upon a firm foundation, since it is based on

³Ibid., pp. 27-29. The Ephesian captivity theory had not yet been widely advocated when Stoeckhardt published his commentary in 1910.

⁴Ibid., pp. 29-32.

God's eternal election and predestination to sonship. In the second section of the doxology (1:9-14) Paul treats of the church, the total number of God's elect children, as being the content of God's eternal loving plan. According to God's eternal purpose, through the preaching of the Gospel in time, He gathers a people for Himself. This people is called during the New Testament age from among both Jews and Gentiles. God guards and keeps His people through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to them as a down payment on their future inheritance.⁵

After the doxology Paul turns to an intercession for his readers (1:15-23). This intercession is based on the thoughts expressed in the preceding doxology. In his prayer Paul asks that God may grant the readers knowledge of three divine gifts. He prays that they may know of their future inheritance; of the present power and might of God, which is actively preserving faith among them; and of the majestic lordship of Christ, which gives the assurance of the continued existence of the church.⁶

The next section of Paul's letter (2:1-10) is a reminder to Paul's readers of what they had previously learned. At the same time it serves to introduce a new thought. God has vivified people who had been spiritually dead and has brought them to life with Christ. These people had been either Jews or Gentiles. Both groups had been made up of spiritual corpses, but God's wonderful, loving activity has given them life and has ended their state of death. All of this is due solely to God's undeserved love, His overwhelming grace in Christ.⁷

⁵Ibid., p. 82.

⁶Ibid., p. 112.

⁷Ibid., p. 113.

In 2:11-22 Paul offers a second reminder to his readers of their earlier contact with Paul's Gospel. There is a parallelism between the reminder in the previous paragraph of the letter and the reminder in the present one. In the previous section the emphasis lay on the fact that at one time the readers had been dead by nature in trespasses and sins, and thus were subject to divine wrath; but now they are in communion with God, and they have become recipients of a new, godly, spiritual life. In this section the apostle again reminds his readers of their former condition, when they had been far from Christ. But here Paul's emphasis is on the fact that Christians, who had come from among the Gentiles, who had once been strangers to, and aliens from, God's covenant people, have now become a part of that people of God. They are the true and legitimate members of the church of God. Through the blood and death of Christ the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile has been broken down, and the hostility which once existed between them has been destroyed.⁸

In the next division of the letter (3:1-13) Paul thanks God for the special grace which has been given to him. He has been selected to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, and in his way his task is to gather the church from all nations of the world. This holy, Christian church is that which makes both God and His angels rejoice. It is such an object of joy because it is the successful achievement of God's eternal plan.⁹

⁸ Ibid., p. 140.

⁹ Ibid., p. 164.

Parallel to the intercession in the first part of this chapter is Paul's prayer for his readers in the next paragraph (3:14-22). As the apostle of the Gentiles Paul prays that his readers may grow in their new spiritual life. This life shows itself in faith and love. Paul prays especially that his readers may have and preserve a proper understanding of the mystery to which he had given his life and to which he was directing all his efforts. That mystery is the holy Christian church, which is world-wide in scope, and which will endure to the end of time.¹⁰

With the beginning of chapter 4 Paul starts a new section of his letter. The first three chapters laid the doctrinal foundation. With chapter 4 Paul begins the practical part of the letter. The first paragraph (4:1-6) contains an exhortation to the readers of the letter. They are to walk worthy of their calling and are to show themselves to be true members of the church. They are to demonstrate this fact by their lowliness and meekness, their longsuffering, and their Christian forbearance. These virtues are inspired by the peace which the Spirit of God creates. The unity of Christians is essentially and truly the unity of the Spirit. Through the one Spirit and in the one Spirit Christians are intimately joined to God the Father.¹¹

In the second part of this admonition (4:7-16) Paul, in the course of describing Christ's chief gift to the church, urges the congregation to preserve peace among the members and thus to preserve the unity of the Spirit. The chief gift which Christ has given to the church is the

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 173.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 175.

office of the ministry. Paul supports this claim that the ministry is Christ's gift to the church by a reference to Psalm 68, where his quotation shows a significant difference from the Masoretic text of the Old Testament. In urging his readers to preserve the unity of the Spirit, Paul is also urging them to serve one another with the gifts which God has given to each of them, so that the body of Christ, the church, may prosper and grow.¹²

In Stoeckhardt's commentary the next section (4:18-5:21) is entitled "Additional More General Exhortations." At the conclusion of this section Stoeckhardt summarized as follows:

The apostle admonishes Christians to walk before God holy and unblamable in love, to drown the Old Adam, to keep themselves unspotted from the world, while at the same time he reminds them of their duty to reprove, to improve, and to win the children of the world.¹³

Following this general exhortation Paul offers a "Table of Duties" (Haustafel) (5:22-6:9). In this discussion of the duties which Christians have, wives, children, and slaves are urged to be submissive and obedient while Christian husbands, fathers, and masters are to show love and gentleness.¹⁴

In the concluding section (6:10-24) Paul admonishes Christians to remain steadfast in the faith, to persevere in the struggle, so that they may show themselves victorious against the wiles of the devil.

¹²Ibid., p. 203.

¹³Ibid., p. 238. "Der Apostel ermahnt die Christen, heilig und unstraeflich vor Gott zu wandeln in der Liebe, den alten Adam zu daempfen, sich von der Welt unbefleckt zu behalten, indem er sie zugleich an ihre Pflicht erinnert, die Kinder der Welt zu strafen, zu bessern, zu gewinnen."

¹⁴Ibid., p. 251.

After this exhortation the apostle concludes with several comments of a personal nature.¹⁵

Even a rapid reading of this summary of Stoeckhardt's understanding of the line of thought in Paul's letter to the Ephesians will show that for him the controlling concept, the chief theme, of the latter was the holy, Christian church. It is necessary, therefore, at this point to summarize Stoeckhardt's understanding of the nature of the church. In an excursus in his commentary Stoeckhardt offered a statement of his doctrine of the church, and the following summary is based on this discussion.¹⁶

Stoeckhardt spoke of the church as the "fellowship of the Spirit and of faith" (Gemeinschaft des Geistes und des Glaubens).¹⁷ The capitalization of the word "Spirit" is intentional, for the Spirit to whom Stoeckhardt was referring is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. There is, of course, also an ambiguity in the word "faith." This word may refer to the trust and confidence which men place in Christ, who has gained for them the forgiveness of sins. Or it may be merely a synonym for the Christian religion. It is quite clear from Stoeckhardt's further comments in the same section of his commentary that he understood the term in the former sense.

The people who are members of the Christian church, to use Stoeckhardt's own words, are:

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 263.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 178-183.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 179.

All who have the true Christian faith, who are animated by the Holy Spirit, who call Jesus Lord in Spirit and faith, who confess Jesus as the Lord from heaven, as the Son of God, and as their Redeemer and Lord, all who approach God through Christ, who worship the Father of Jesus Christ as their God and Father, who in Spirit and faith honor the triune God as the true, living God and as their own God, and who approach Him in prayer.¹⁸

On the other hand, those who do not have faith are not members of the church. Stoeckhardt specifically excluded from the church not only scoffers, blasphemers, and manifest evil-doers, but also those people who, though ready to speak highly of Christ, deny that He is the only Mediator between God and man, the true Son of God, and the Redeemer of the world. An outwardly decent life is not enough for inclusion in the church. The man who merely confesses Christ with his lips or who participates in the external activities of the congregation is no member of the church in the true sense of the term.

Only those who believe in Christ as their personal Savior are the members of the church. A man's faith may be weak, but nonetheless he is still a member of the church of Jesus Christ. An individual may belong to a sectarian group where non-biblical doctrines are taught and still be a member of the church, so long as he still believes the essentials of the Gospel.

All believers are members of the church, which Stoeckhardt described as a communio, a congregatio omnium credentium. These terms imply unity. All who believe are truly and actually in fellowship

¹⁸Ibid. "Alle, welche den rechten christlichen Glauben haben, von dem Heiligen Geist beseelt sind, im Geist und Glauben Jesum einen HErrn heissen, als den HErrn vom Himmel, als den Sohn Gottes und als ihren HErrn und Erloeser bekennen und durch Christum Gott nahen, den Vater Jesu Christi als ihren Gott und Vater anrufen, alle, welche im Geist und Glauben den dreieinigen Gott als den wahren, labendigen Gott und als ihren Gott verehren und anbeten."

with one another. Christians through their own efforts, discussions and resolutions do not bring about the unity of the church. It already exists. Since the church is God's work and creation, it already is one. The one Spirit and the one faith unite it.

Local congregations simply illustrate and demonstrate the unity which already existed among their members, even prior to their joining together to form a congregation in a local community. A Christian is also in fellowship with all who believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, even though they live in other parts of the world. In addition, the church extends into eternity. Those who have died in faith are members of the church as well as those who are living on earth. The fellowship of the church is indissoluble. Even though there are outward divisions in Christendom, the church is still one.

According to Stoeckhardt the church of God is a reality, even though it is invisible. It is not a Platonic idea. The church is invisible because the faith which makes men members of the church is invisible to human sight, and therefore it is impossible for men to determine with unerring accuracy who is a member of the church. And yet the church exists on earth, for where the notae ecclesiae, the marks of the church, the Word and Sacraments, are in use, the church is to be found. Wherever the marks of the church are to be found, there is the church, even among sectarian denominations. Quite naturally Stoeckhardt did not approve of any departure from biblical teaching. But he recognized that where the marks of the church are in use, there is the true church. But, at the same time, he also asserted:

We Lutherans quite properly boast by God's grace that among us the Gospel is preached in its full completeness, that the sacraments are administered exactly according to Christ's institution. Among us the marks of the church are evident.¹⁹

Stoeckhardt's terminology (notae ecclesiae, the distinction between the visible and invisible church, the description of the church as a communio) shows that Stoeckhardt was aware of the terminology which had been used by dogmaticians of the Age of Orthodoxy. His use of this terminology and his efforts to show that the content of these terms is biblically based may be interpreted as showing the influence of the dogmaticians upon Stoeckhardt's thought.²⁰

Johann Philip Koehler

Professor Johann Philip Koehler's commentary on Paul's letter to the Ephesians contrasts sharply in many ways with Stoeckhardt's commentary on the same letter. Koehler regarded Ephesians as Paul's last letter written to a congregation.²¹ In addition, he emphasized its

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 183. "Wir Lutheraner rühmen uns durch Gottes Gnade, mit vollem Recht, dass bei uns das Evangelium in seiner ganzen Fülle gepredigt wird, dass bei uns die Sakramente genau nach der Einsetzung Christi verwaltet werden. Bei uns sind die notae ecclesiae deutlich sichtbar."

²⁰ For a brief presentation of the doctrine of the church in the orthodox Lutheran dogmaticians, consult Heinrich Schmidt, The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, translated by Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs (3rd edition; Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, c.1899), pp. 582-604.

²¹ Johann Philip Koehler, "Pauli Hochgesang von Christo, Auslegung des Epheserbriefes," Faith-Life, January 1936, p. 5. Koehler is extremely ambiguous with reference to the dating of the Pastoral Epistles. He stated that apparently it was generally assumed that Paul was released from imprisonment for about three years and that he completed a circuit through the eastern congregations and that he made

highly emotional form, so that he considered the entire letter to be almost hymnic in character. In reference to its content, too, Koehler also found a different emphasis. Stoeckhardt had stressed the doctrine of the church as the dominant concept in the letter;²² Koehler, on the other hand, found the key in the Pauline en Christo formula. He wrote:

It is correct that the doctrine of the church of God comes to the fore in a special way in the letter to the Ephesians. But it does not appear in such a manner that from this fact the difficult points of interpretation get their chief illumination from the outward appearance of the church. The key to the interpretation is always to be sought in Christ, the Savior of sinners. The congregation, when it is referred to, is the invisible flock of those whom the Lord alone knows to be His.²³

In the light of this emphasis Koehler sought to interpret Paul's entire letter to the congregation at Ephesus.

Koehler offered a more extensive interpretation of the salutation (1:1-2) than Stoeckhardt had done, for Koehler included many of the problems of isagogics in his exegesis of this section. The letter, in Koehler's view, was Paul's final letter to a congregation. It had been written while Paul was imprisoned in Rome for the sake of the Gospel. Paul wrote it to the congregation in Ephesus. Koehler

his headquarters at Nicopolis. Although this view agrees with later tradition, Koehler held it opened a vast area for conjecture without solving all of the difficulties involved. In the light of Koehler's principle of canonicity (infra, p. 88) Koehler was compelled to insist upon the apostolic authorship of the Pastorals.

²² Supra, p. 31.

²³ Koehler, p. 6. "Es ist richtig, dass die Lehre von der Kirche Gottes in hervorragendem Masse in Epheserbrief zum Ausdruck kommt, aber nicht so, dass von dieser Tatsache aus die schwierigen Punkte der Auslegung nach der aeusseren Erscheinung der Kirche ihr Hauptlicht bekommen, sondern das ist immer in dem in Christo, dem Suenderheiland, zu suchen; und die Gemeinde von der die Rede ist, ist die unsichtbare Schar derer, die allein der Herr kennt als die Seinen.

unhesitatingly adopted the textual variant which indicated that the letter had been addressed to the congregation in Ephesus.²⁴

Koehler pointed out that Paul began this letter with a hymn of praise, which then developed into a prayer for the readers. The introductory hymn (1:3-14) is a complete, well-organized, self-contained unit. At the very beginning Paul invited his readers to join him in praise to God, and at the same time he indicated the theme of his doxology is Christ. In the verses which follow Koehler detected a three-fold division which was marked by the phrase "to the praise of His glory," which occurs three times in these verses (verses 6, 12 and 14).²⁵

Koehler regarded the kathōs (1:4) as introducing the unfolding of the blessing which had been given Paul's readers. This blessing was established already before creation. The first portion of the blessing is the election of grace. This election has as its goal the separation of the elect from the rest of the world. This separation is achieved ultimately by the adoption of sons (1:4-6).²⁶

The second great portion of the divine activity shows itself in its historical development. This unfolding of the divine blessing has three aspects: redemption through the blood of Christ, the proclamation of the Gospel, and the creation of the church. In discussing the formation of the church Paul divided Christians into two groups. In verse 11 he referred to the Jews who had been included in the

²⁴Ibid., pp. 7-10.

²⁵Ibid., February 1936, p. 6.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 6-8.

scope of divine election. Before moving on to the next division of his doxology Paul punctuated his development of the hymn with the phrase "to the praise of His glory."²⁷

In the third section of the doxology (1:11-14) Paul spoke of the calling of the Gentiles and spoke of the ultimate consummation of the blessing in heavenly bliss in which Jew and Gentile alike will share.²⁸

The hymn is followed immediately by a prayer, but because of Paul's highly emotional feelings, this prayer again becomes a hymn of praise and adoration. This prayer, however, indicates a more personal tone. Paul referred to the personal experience of the Christians in Ephesus as the blessing came to be applied to them. On the one hand this line of thought led to a description of how Jew and Gentile came to be one united church. On the other hand, the real subject matter of Paul's prayer is the grandeur of the all-encompassing activity of God in Christ. In the first part of this section Paul prayed for the enlightenment of the Ephesians. He wanted them to understand the hope of God's calling, which hope included the glory of the divine inheritance and the greatness of God's power, by which the inheritance had been prepared. After this section Paul showed that the power which had been active in the lives of believers is the same as the power which was manifested in the vivification of Christ and His session at the right hand of God and in His revelation as the exalted Head of the church. Paul's purpose in

²⁷Ibid., March 1936, p. 7.

²⁸Ibid., May 1936, pp. 4-10.

referring to this divine activity was to awaken the confidence in the readers that God's purposes will certainly be achieved.²⁹

In chapter 2 Paul spoke of the Ephesians, whose conversion was exclusively a miracle of God's power. In this section, 2:1-10 Paul considered the situation of his readers whose faith had been effected by the same power which had been brought to bear upon Christ. Prior to their conversion they had been dead and under the control of the devil, and they had yielded to the impulses of the flesh. At first Paul was speaking of the Gentiles, but then he also included the Jews, for they were in no way better than the Gentiles. The love of God was utterly unmerited. It was solely by grace that they had been brought to spiritual life.³⁰

Only after Paul has discussed the majesty of God's grace does he direct his attention to the church. In 2:11-13 Paul depicts the greatness of the blessing which has been bestowed upon the Gentiles who have come into the church. Once they were far off, but now they have come near in Christ, who means peace for all members of the church. With 2:19-22 the concept of the church comes to the forefront. Paul summons the church to rejoice in the fact that it is free from the hindrance of sin and is united with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.³¹

In chapter 3 Paul again is in a jubilant mood. Here Paul speaks of the victories of the Gospel from his vantage point as the apostle of the Gentiles. The thought of his chains (3:1), which allow him to

²⁹ Ibid., June 1936, pp. 5-9.

³⁰ Ibid., June 1936, p. 5.

³¹ Ibid., July 1936, p. 5.

do nothing except to pray for the Gentiles, leads him to consider his status as the apostle of the Gentiles. His bondage is not a disgrace to him, but he now has been permitted to usher in the New Testament era in which the edifice of the church is being built.³²

In 3:14 Paul finally comes to the prayer which he has begun twice before. In this passage Paul asks for the strengthening of the spiritual life of his readers and that Christ might live in them through faith, and that they might be firm in love. The goal of his prayer is, first, that his readers might know the infinite greatness of the blessing of God and, second, that they might know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.³³

After the first three chapters in which Paul treats of the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ, Paul turns to the practical aspects of his Gospel. He urges his readers to preserve the unity which now exists among them by the grace of God. They are to preserve this unity by the practice of patience.³⁴ In 4:7-10 Paul shows how the church will achieve its goal of unity. It is through the ministry of the Gospel, which is Christ's gift to His church that this goal will be reached. In this paragraph Paul referred to Psalm 68:10, in which the Victor, who has gone to heaven, gives gifts to the church. In 4:11-13 Paul describes the gifts according to their form and purpose. And to this description Paul now adds an exhortation to work patiently for the upbuilding of the church.³⁵

³²Ibid., August 1936, p. 6.

³³Ibid., September 1936, p. 4.

³⁴Ibid., November 1936, p. 3.

³⁵Ibid., December 1936, p. 4.

In the next section (4:17-5:22) Paul has a series of exhortations in which he contrasts the Christian life with that of the heathen. In 5:3-14 he becomes more specific in drawing out the contrast between the former life of the believers and the life of the church.

The next series of exhortations is a Table of Duties, dealing with relationships of Christians to one another. In 6:10-20 Paul urged his readers to persevere in prayer and in the struggle against all of the forces of evil.

In contrast to Koehler's emphasis upon the phrase en Christo, Stoeckhardt's comments are extremely brief. He indicated that the term occurs with various shades of meaning in Ephesians and the other Pauline letters. In contexts which speak of the divine activity which is directed to believers through Christ, the en Christo is practically the equivalent of per Christum or propter Christum. In certain contexts Stoeckhardt also understood en Christo to mean "by Christ." He justified this breadth of meaning by suggesting that the Greek preposition en has a wider range of meaning and usage than does the German preposition in, but he did not attempt to prove this claim by reference to any Greek author or to grammatical or lexical authorities.³⁶

Though such a summary does not do justice to the commentaries of either Dr. Stoeckhardt or Professor Koehler, it does indicate clearly that there are decisive differences of interpretation of the same biblical text by men who share the same confessional commitment.

³⁶Stoeckhardt, pp. 35-36.

CHAPTER III

THE VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

"The interpreter does not make the rules [of hermeneutics]; rather the text which is to be interpreted does that," wrote Professor Johann Philip Koehler in the only published chapter of his projected book on hermeneutics.¹ If this view is correct, the understanding which Dr. Georg Stoeckhardt and Professor Johann Philip Koehler had of the nature of the Bible will be determinative for their hermeneutics. The present chapter, then, will be an examination of the views of both scholars on the nature and origin of the Bible.

While both Stoeckhardt and Koehler regarded the Bible as the Word of God,² it is necessary to observe the differing emphases which appear in each man's work.

Johann Philip Koehler

Professor Koehler, whose classroom duties included the teaching of biblical hermeneutics, projected--but never completed³--a book on

¹Johann Philip Koehler, "Die heilige Schrift als Grundlage aller Theologie," Katalog des Theologischen Seminars der Allgemeinen Ev.-Luth. Synode von Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan u. a. St. bei Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1913-1914 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1913), p. 15. "Der Ausleger macht die Regel nicht, sondern der auslegende Text tut das."

²Georg Stoeckhardt, "Die Bibel das unfehlbare Gotteswort," Der Lutheraner, XLVIII (August 17, 1892), 133-134. Johann Philip Koehler, "Biblische Hermeneutik, Vorlage fuer den Seminarunterricht," Katalog (1913), p. 15.

³Koehler, "Die heilige Schrift," Katalog (1913), p. 14.

that branch of theology. One chapter of that work, however, was published in the 1913-1914 catalog of the seminary of the Wisconsin Synod, then located at Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.⁴

The first major division of that one published chapter deals with the divine origin and character (Goettlichkeit) of the Scriptures. The first thesis which Koehler developed in that chapter is: "The Bible is the Word of God and is, therefore, the infallible foundation for all theology."⁵ The fundamental emphasis which determined the structure of Professor Koehler's theology appeared in the first sentence of the discussion: "The Bible is the book from which we obtain the certainty of the forgiveness of sins."⁶ In Koehler's view the Holy Spirit has brought about such confidence, which relies only on the testimony of the Scriptures. Such confidence in the forgiveness of sins, to which the Bible bears witness, will directly bring the assurance that everything which the Bible says is true.⁷

The core of Koehler's theology is the forgiveness of sins. He wrote:

All discussions in theology proceed from the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins. They also intend to lead to this assurance. This awareness is always granted immediately through faith. For a Christian this is always the first concern. In

⁴Ibid., pp. 14-35.

⁵Ibid., p. 14. "Die Bibel ist Gottes Wort und darum unfehlbare Grundlage aller Theologie."

⁶Ibid., "Die Bibel ist das Buch, aus welchem wir die Gewissheit der Vergebung der Sunden haben."

⁷Ibid.

all theological discussions it retains this position. Therefore this discussion must be of the kind which is proper to its nature, that is, it proceeds at every point from the Gospel, intends to proclaim the Gospel at every point of the discussion, seeks at every opportunity to bring to bear the power of the Gospel to work conviction, and leaves it up to the Holy Spirit to do the convincing.⁸

On the topic of the divine origin of the Bible Koehler wrote:

This teaching occurs through the Gospel alone. Therefore every doctrine must proceed from the great truth of the forgiveness of sins through Christ's blood. That engenders faith, and then all the teachings follow as they are presented in a clear biblical statement. Thus, one should not first wish to prove that the Bible is the Word of God and then to derive the Gospel of salvation from it. Rather, the reverse is the correct procedure.⁹

Koehler termed this procedure the "believing" (gläubig) approach to Scripture.¹⁰ He rejected the approach which operates with the statement, "The Bible is the Word of God," as a major premise, which then serves as the foundation for an entire theological system."¹¹ In

⁸ Ibid., p. 14. "Alle Auseinandersetzung in der Theologie geht von diesem Bewusstsein der Vergebung der Sünden aus. Sie will auch zu diesem Bewusstsein führen. Das Bewusstsein ist immer unmittelbar durch den Glauben gegeben, es ist dem Christen das nächste Anliegen, und bei aller theologischen Auseinandersetzung behält es diese Stellung. Daher muss diese Auseinandersetzung von der Art sein, dass sie ihm entspricht, d. h., sie geht in allen Stücken vom Evangelium aus, will auf jedem Punkt der Auseinandersetzung Evangelium verkünden, sucht darin ebenso auf jedem Punkt ihre Ueberzeugungskraft und ueberlässt dem heil. Geist die Ausföhrung des Ueberwindens."

⁹ Ibid., p. 17. "Dieses Lehren geschieht allein durchs Evangelium. Darum muss jede Lehre ausgehen von der grossen Wahrheit von der Vergebung der Sünden durch Christi Blut. Die erzeugt Glauben, und dann folgen alle andere Lehren von selber, so wie sie durch klares Schriftwort an die Hand gegeben sind. Also erst nicht beweisen wollen, dass die Schrift Gottes Wort sei, und dann daraus Evangelium von der Seligkeit lehren wollen, sondern umgekehrt ist die rechte Weise."

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 14. On this topic Koehler stated: "Eine andere Weise, die von dem Satze 'Die Bibel ist Gottes Wort' ausgeht als

Koehler's view this approach involved effort. He stated:

Anyone who seeks to present the doctrine of the divine origin of the Scriptures to another person purely on the basis of human reason, in a purely intellectual manner by means of arguments which appeal to the force of logical consequences is doing not only a Sisyphean task but is also operating contrary to the spirit of the Scriptures, whose meaning he is seeking to mediate.¹²

Koehler noted, however, that the approach which begins with the statement that the Bible is the Word of God may be correct, if it operates with the unexpressed concept of the forgiveness of sins. In Koehler's view, however, the second approach is fraught with dangers, since it may easily lead to a legalistic approach to, and use of, Scripture.¹³

In an essay on evidences of legalism in an evangelical church Koehler spelled out his concerns:

Characteristic of this way of thinking, for example, is the way in which the discussion of the divine origin of Scripture is made the first item of theological business in a dogmatic system. When a person has established the divine character of the Scripture on the basis of all kinds of attributes, or has determined its characteristics from its own expressions, then he has established the so-called formal principle of theology. Henceforth the naked word, severed from its context, is to have the same status which a statement of law has for a lawyer. In other words, this way of dealing with Scripture, which treats it and its contents as a code of

von einem Lehnsatz, auf dem sich dann die ganze Theologie aufbaut, kann Zwar recht gemeint sein, wenn sie naemlich die obige Auffassung in sich schliesst, wie es wohl meistens geschieht; ohne diese Auffassung aber bildet sie sich bald zur intellektuellen Gesetztreiberei heraus, die das auf jedem Punkt durch den hl [sic!] Geist gewirkte Glauben uebersieht und darum nichts ausrichtet.

¹²Ibid., p. 17. "Wer einem anderen die Lehre von dem goettlichen Ursprung der Schrift rein auf dem Boden des menschlichen Verstandes, rein auf intellektuelle Weise durch Argumente, die allein an die zwingende Kraft der logischen Folgerichtigkeit appellieren will, der tut nicht nur eine Sisyphusarbeit, sondern handelt auch wider den Geist der Schrift, deren Sinn er vermitteln will."

¹³Ibid., p. 14.

so-and-so many established propositions which people must believe because it is the Word of God, is legalism.¹⁴

On the premise that the believing Christian will accept the testimony of the Bible as to its divine characteristics and origin, Professor Koehler referred to the three chief passages which deal with this subject: 2 Timothy 3:15-16, 2 Peter 1:21, and John 10:35. In discussing 2 Timothy 3:15-16 Koehler regarded the inspiration of the Old Testament as a presupposition of Paul's exhortation to Timothy concerning the proper use of the Scriptures.¹⁵ In 2 Peter 1:21 inspiration is described

¹⁴Johann Philip Koehler, "Gesetzlich Wesen unter uns," Theologische Quartalschrift, XII (1915), 31-32. "Fuer diese Art ist es, z. B. charakteristisch, wie der Satz von der Goettlichkeit der Schrift an der Spitze der Theologie gesetzt wird. Wenn mann aus den Aussagen ueber die Goettlichkeit den Charakter ihrer Attribute festgestellt hat, dann hat man das sogenannte Formalprinzip der Theologie gewonnen. Dann soll nachher das nackte aus dem Zusammenhang gerissene Wort in der Weise Geltung haben wie beim Advokaten ein Satz des Gesetzes. Mit anderen Worten, die Weise, die die Schrift mit ihrem Inhalt als einen Kodex von so und so vielen fesstehenden Saetzen behandelt, die dem Menschen gegenueberstehen als etwas, das er glauben muss, weil es ja Gottes Wort ist, ist Gesetزتreiberei." The translation was taken from the rendering of this article entitled "Legalism in an Evangelical Church," which this writer made for the Concordia Theological Monthly, XL (1969), 140. In passing, it may be noted that Koehler disapproved of the terminology which made of Scripture the formal principle and the doctrine of justification by grace through faith the material principle of Lutheran theology. He regarded this as a warped approach to theology, since it derived ultimately from Melanchthon's intellectual concern to construct a theological system. (Koehler, Theologische Quartalschrift, XII, 29.)

¹⁵Koehler, "Die heilige Schrift," Katalog (1913), p. 15. Professor Koehler rejected certain ways of misusing this passage as they seem to have been current in his day. The abuses which he condemned were intellectualism and traditionalism. He wrote: "2 Timothy . . . is frequently explained on the basis of the Greek text in the following manner: 'The entire Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable.' In addition the statement is made that this is the correct way to understand Luther's translation Alle Schrift, von Gott eingegeben, ist nuetze zur Lehre. . . . In this way people are of the opinion that they have laid a firm foundation for the divine character of the Scriptures. It will soon dawn on anyone who knows Greek, through the use of lexicon, grammar, and a study of the context, that the correct and unambiguous translation must be as follows: ¶If a Scripture has been given by

in greater detail than in 2 Timothy 3:16, and the attributes of Scriptures that are the consequences of inspiration are mentioned. Koehler wrote:

Holy men of God have spoken, impelled by the Holy Spirit. No prophecy occurs on the basis of one's own interpretation or is produced by the human will. This expression means that no sharp human foresight or calculation of earthly events is able to predict those things which the people who read Peter's letter know to have occurred in line with the predictions of the Old Testament. For that reason Peter calls the Old Testament a sure, prophetic word which one should heed for the sake of his salvation.¹⁶

Koehler called attention to the differing emphases of these two passages. In 2 Timothy 3:16 inspiration is described only in general terms, and the passage deals, in particular, with the use of the Old Testament for one's salvation. In 2 Peter 1:21 inspiration is designated as a work of the Holy Spirit, an impelling (Treiben) on the part

inspiration of God, then it is also profitable, etc.' or 'Every divinely inspired Scripture is also profitable.' . . . Those exegetes did not note the weakness of their interpretation because in the first place they were of the opinion that they could not get along without a clear statement to express the doctrine of the divine origin of the Scripture. That is intellectualism. In addition, they argue, Luther must have expressed himself correctly. That is traditionalism. The earnestness with which an honest Christian clings to a doctrinal formulation is not to be lightly esteemed. But that is not the whole story. While one was so keen on demonstrating the fact that the divine origin of Scripture is expressed in just so many words, the real thrust of the text was lost. The text also presents the divine origin of the Scriptures in a much more impressive way by assuming it without express formulation and by depicting the blessed consequences of it." (Koehler, Theologische Quartalschrift, XII, 29).

¹⁶Koehler, "Die heilige Schrift," Katalog (1913), p. 15. "Die heiligen Menschen Gottes haben geredet, getrieben vom heiligen Geist. Denn keine Weissagung geschieht aus eigener Auslegung oder wird aus menschlichem Willen hervorgebracht: d. h. nicht menschlich kluge Voraussicht oder Berechnung der Dinge, die auf Erden geschehen, ist in Stande solch Dinge vorherzusagen wie die, von welchen die Leser des Petrusbriefes wissen, dass sie nach der Vorherverkündigung des Alten Testaments eingetroffen sind. Darum nennt Petrus das Alte Testament ein festes prophetisches Wort, auf das man achten soll zu seiner Seligkeit."

of the Spirit.¹⁷ The use of John 10:35 in a discussion of the doctrine of biblical inspiration has validity only for a person who approaches Scripture with a believing heart.¹⁸ Jesus' argumentation is not intended as an ad hominem argument. Instead, the correctness of His words can be perceived only with the eyes of faith. On the basis of Jesus' use of the Old Testament in this passage, Koehler held that the "infallibility" (Unfehlbarkeit) of every word of the Old Testament is established by Jesus' self-evident (selbstverstaendlich) tone. He regarded this approach as the only one possible for a believer.¹⁹

Koehler recognized that the three classic passages which deal with inspiration refer only to the Old Testament. The inspiration of the New Testament, too, requires attention. Koehler's argumentation was to the effect that Jesus and His apostles expected immediate acceptance of their words, since they--both Jesus and His disciples--have a divine commission. Jesus is the Son of the Father; and the apostles are His messengers, to whom He has promised His Spirit. The salutations of the apostles' letters make a claim to divine authority by their use of the term "apostle." Paul condemned anyone who preached a gospel different from the one which he had been preaching. One can see, therefore, Koehler held, that the writers of the New Testament claimed the same trustworthiness for the words which they wrote as had the writers of the Old Testament. In Koehler's words:

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 16

¹⁹ Ibid.

In a word, the Bible of the Old and New Testaments, which assures us of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake and thereby produces and makes certain in us the assurance of faith, says concerning itself in its entirety that it is divinely inspired.²⁰

Koehler understood the biblical doctrine of inspiration to mean "verbal inspiration." He used two terms to designate it: Wortinspiration and Verbalinspiration, though there seems to be no difference in meaning between the two terms.²¹ His definition of verbal inspiration reads:

On the basis of John 10:36, by "verbal inspiration" we refer to the absolute dependability of the Holy Scriptures in every respect. The Bible does not reveal more than that on this subject.²²

Koehler also wrote:

If I cannot rely upon every word in which the wonderful story of the forgiveness of sins is promised to me; if I cannot thus depend upon every word of the message which lays its claim upon my faith without being deceived . . . then the entire topic of the divine origin has no meaning. In this connection topics, truths, speech, statements, and vocables cannot be separated.²³

Koehler's approach excludes any attempt to define the process of inspiration. He specifically rejected the idea of a mechanical

²⁰ Ibid., p. 17. "Mit einem Wort, die Bibel des Alten und Neuen Testaments, die uns die Vergebung der Sunden um Christi willen versichert und dadurch in uns Glaubensgewissheit erzeugt und beansprucht, die sagt von sich in ihrer Gesamtheit aus, dass sie von Gott eingegeben ist."

²¹ Ibid., pp. 17-18.

²² Ibid., p. 18. "Mit 'Wortinspiration' bezeichnen wir auf Grund von Joh. 10, 35 die absolute Zuverlaessigkeit der heiligen Schrift in jeder Hinsicht. Mehr ist darueber in der Schrift nicht geoffenbart."

²³ Ibid. "Wenn ich mich nicht auf jedes Wor verlassen kann, in welchem mir die wunderbare Maer von der Vergebung der Sunden verheissen ist, wenn ich mich bei der Rede, die als Gottes Wort meinen Glauben unmittelbar in Anspruch nimmt, nicht auf jedes Wort so verlassen kann, dass mir niemand dran deuteln darf . . . dann hat die ganze Rede von der Goettlichkeit der Schrift ueberhaupt keinen Sinn. Sachen, Wahrheiten, Rede, Worte, Woerter kann man in diesem Zusammenhang Ueberhaupt nicht von einander trennen."

inspiration, because the Bible itself rejects it. A mechanical process of inspiration would violate the concept of pneuma in the Scriptures.²⁴

The writers, said Koehler,

are not to be regarded as lifeless instruments but as people whom the Holy Spirit takes into His service with their entire nature, both the human and spiritual aspects, together with their peculiarities and abilities.²⁵

As an illustration of Koehler's view, one may refer to the similarities and differences between the salutations in the various Pauline letters. The emphases differ from one letter to another. About this fact Koehler wrote:

Paul's altered expression allows us to look into the workshop of the Holy Spirit, where through the natural development of human events He fashions a language and mode of expression which is filled with the special content of revelation, even though the language has the same characteristics as other human language and especially as the Greek koine of Paul's day.²⁶

²⁴Ibid., p. 15.

²⁵Ibid., p. 15. "dass die Schreiber nicht als leblose Werkzeuge anzusehen sind, sondern als solche, die der heilige Geist, mit ihrer ganzen menschlich-geistigen Art, mit ihren Eigentuemlichkeiten und Faehigkeiten in seinem Dienst nimmt." In a footnote Professor Koehler discussed the use of the terms "organ pipes" and "pen of a ready writer," which some theologians have used to describe inspiration. "By these figurative expressions the activity of the Holy Spirit is stressed, without making a statement about how inspiration occurred." (Ibid., p. 15).

²⁶Johann Philip Koehler, "Pauli Hochgesang von Christo, Auslegung des Briefes an die Epheser," Faith-Life, January 1936, p. 7. "laesst uns die veraenderte Ausdrucksweise in die Werkstatt der Inspiration des Heiligen Geistes blicken, da er durch die natuerliche Entwicklung der menschlichen Dinge sich eine Sprache und Ausdrucksweise schaffen laesst, die mit dem besonderen Inhalt der Offenbarung gefuehlt ist, wengleich die Sprache sonst dieselben Eigenschaften hat wie andere menschliche Sprache und besonders die grieehische Volkssprache zu Pauli Zeit ueberhaupt."

Georg Stoeckhardt

Like Professor Koehler, Dr. Stoeckhardt held a doctrine of verbal inspiration. He placed great emphasis on the statement, "The Bible is the Word of God." Numerous articles in Lehre und Wehre, the one-time theological journal of the Missouri Synod, Der Lutheraner, the official organ of the synod, as well as convention essays, stress this conviction.

Dr. Stoeckhardt amassed large numbers of Bible passages and arrayed them in the manner of a systematician of the Age of Orthodoxy in support of the thesis that the Bible is God's Word. In an article entitled "What does the Scripture Say about Itself?" (Was sagt die Schrift von sich selbst?) Stoeckhardt's first thesis emphasized that according to its nature and purpose the Bible is in a real sense the Word of God.²⁷

After a polemical presentation of the views of late nineteenth century theologians on the nature and origin of the Scripture, Stoeckhardt developed his argument by a study of a series of passages in which the Old Testament presents itself as the Word of God. Stoeckhardt could call the book of the Law (Deuteronomy 31:9-13) "this Law, the Law which God gave through Moses, therefore the Law of the LORD, God's Word."²⁸

²⁷ Georg Stoeckhardt, "Was sagt die Schrift von sich selbst?", Lehre und Wehre, XXXII (1886), 161-163.

²⁸ Ibid., XXXII, 206. "das Gesetz, das Gott durch Moses gegeben, also das Gesetz des HErrn, Gottes Wort." Stoeckhardt allowed no room for any form of the documentary hypothesis. He held that the "Torah of Moses or the Torah of God as it was in use in Israel also included what we now have in the Pentateuch, the history of Israel and of the patriarchs until the death of Moses." (Ibid., XXXII, 208.)

Stoeckhardt cited numerous passages from the later books of the Old Testament to show that they held the same view of the Torah.²⁹

After citing a series of passages referring to the prophetic writings (Is. 8:6; Dan. 12:4; Is. 1:1; Jer. 1:1; 2 Chron. 32:32) Stoeckhardt expressed his opinion that

according to the Scripture the book of the prophets is no mere historical record of the prophetic activity, no mere recital of their prophecies, but itself is termed "revelation," "prophecy," "the word of the LORD."³⁰

The Psalms, too, claim to be the Word of God. Stoeckhardt based this view on 2 Samuel 23:103, where David spoke of his song as the "Word of the LORD."³¹

In similar fashion Stoeckhardt marshalled a lengthy series of passages from the New Testament to show that the Old Testament is the Word of God. He first showed that Christ looked upon the Old Testament as the Word of God, and on the basis of Luke 24:44 he held that Christ testified to the entire Scripture, to the collected canon of the Old Testament. The next step in Stoeckhardt's battery of quotations served to show that the apostles, too, regarded the Old Testament as the Word of God. After his survey of the many passages treating this subject Stoeckhardt was of the opinion that he had established that the Old Testament Scriptures are the inspired Word of God.³²

²⁹ Ibid., XXXII, 207-208.

³⁰ Ibid., XXXII, 209. "Nach der Schrift ist demnach das Buch der Propheten kein blosser geschichtlicher Bericht ueber die Wirksamkeit der Propheten, kein blosses Register ihrer Prophezeiungen, sondern selbst 'Gesicht,' 'Weissagung,' 'Wort des HErrn' genannt."

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., XXXII, 210-215.

Stoeckhardt also sought to validate the statement that "The New Testament itself claims to be the Word of God and a revelation."³³ He developed this thesis by a series of subordinate theses. The first of these reads: "According to the testimony of the New Testament, the words of the apostles are on the same level as the words and writings of the prophets."³⁴ In the development of this thesis Stoeckhardt held that Christ claimed that His words require the same acceptance as the words and writings of Moses. The apostles taught what they had received from Christ. They stressed not only what they had received from Christ but also their agreement with the prophetic writings. According to 2 Peter 3:2 the commands and teachings of the apostles are of equal significance with the words of the prophets.³⁵

The second step in Stoeckhardt's argumentation to show that the New Testament is the Word of God is an effort to show that according to the New Testament itself the oral proclamation of the apostles is God's Word and revelation. Stoeckhardt supported this thesis by citing 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:24-25; 1 Peter 1:12; 1 Corinthians 15:1; and Romans 1:1.³⁶ He then proceeded to his final statement that the apostles recorded in written form the same Gospel which they

³³ Ibid., XXXII, 249. "Das Neue Testament gibt sich selbst als Gottes Wort und Offenbarung."

³⁴ Ibid. "Nach dem Zeugnis des Neuen Testaments stehen die Worte der Apostel auf gleicher Stufe mit den Worten und Schriften der Propheten."

³⁵ Ibid., XXXII, 249-250.

³⁶ Ibid., XXXII, 250-251.

had proclaimed orally.³⁷ After a discussion of the pertinent passages Stoeckhardt concluded:

We see that the oral and written testimony of the apostles are two parts of the apostolic activity which are on the same level. The latter is, just like the former, the "true" Word of God. It makes no difference whether the apostles write or speak.³⁸ The words and letters of the apostles stand on the same level.

After establishing the biblical testimony that the Bible claims to be the Word of God, Stoeckhardt discussed the Bible's claims to inspiration. The thesis reads:

The Scripture testifies that the Holy Spirit has inspired the holy men of God not only as to the thoughts but also as to the words, so that the entire Scripture and all its parts are inspired; and that, therefore, no part of the Scriptures dare be broken or changed.³⁹

Stoeckhardt stressed the fact that the Holy Spirit did not merely convey the thoughts but supplied the writers with the very words which they were to use. He wrote:

When the apostles spoke and wrote, the Spirit of God gave and supplied the matters which they themselves knew and which they should bring to the attention of others. Also the words in which the apostles expressed these spiritual and divine matters were taught by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰

³⁷Ibid., XXXII, 251-254.

³⁸Ibid., XXXII, 254. "Wir sehen, das muendliche und das schriftliche Zeugnis der Apostel sind zwei gleichgeordnete Theile der apostolischen Wirksamkeit. Das letztere ist, wie das erstere, 'wahrhaftig' Gottes Wort. Es macht schlechterdings keinen Unterschied, ob die Apostel reden oder schreiben. . . . Wort und Briefe der Apostel stehen auf gleicher Stufe."

³⁹Ibid. "Die Schrift bezeugt, dass der Heilige Geist den heiligen Menschen Gottes nicht nur die Gedanken, sondern auch die Worte eingegeben hat, dass die ganze Schrift und alle sinzelnen Theile inspirirt sind, und dass daher kein Tuettel der Schrift gebrochen oder geaendert werden darf."

⁴⁰Ibid., XXXII, 255. "Der Geist Gottes hat den Aposteln, da sie redeten, da sie schrieben, die Dinge gegeben, dargereicht, die sie selbst

Stoeckhardt placed great emphasis on the divine activity, in particular on the work of the Holy Spirit, in the inspiration of the Bible.

He cited 2 Samuel 23:2; Psalm 45:1;⁴¹ Jeremiah 1:9; Luke 1:70; and Acts 3:21. He concluded his examination of these passages by saying:

And now concerning the written message of God, which came through the prophets, it is now stressed that God, that the Holy Spirit, spoke through the mouths of holy men. The tongue, the mouth, gives shape to the words, the expression of thought.⁴²

To support this view of inspiration Stoeckhardt referred to passages such as Galatians 3:16; Matthew 22:43-44; John 10:35, which refer to individual words and inflectional forms of words.⁴³

Stoeckhardt summarized his view as follows:

Inspiration which is not at the same time verbal inspiration is, in truth, no inspiration. In every rational speech words and thoughts are as intimately connected as body and soul. The speaker gives his thought suitable expression. The Scripture is the Word of the living God. Here God has revealed His hidden wisdom in language which men can understand.⁴⁴

erkennen und andern zu wissen thun sollten; aber auch die Worte, in denen die Apostel jene geistlichen Dinge zum Ausdruck brachten, sind von dem Heiligen Geist gelehrt."

⁴¹The numbering of many verses in the Psalms differs by one verse in the German version from the numbering in the English versions. In this study all such references have been changed from the German to the English system of numeration.

⁴²Ibid. "Und gerade von der schriftlichen Rede Gottes, die durch die Propheten geschehen, wird nun hier hervorgekehrt, dass Gott, dass der Heilige Geist durch die Zunge, durch den Mund der heiligen Menschen geredet hat. Die Zunge, der Mund gestaltet die Worte, den Ausdruck der Gedanken."

⁴³Ibid., XXXII, 255-256.

⁴⁴Ibid., XXXII, 256. "Ja, Inspiration, die nicht zugleich Verbalinspiration ist, ist in Wahrheit keine Inspiration. In jeder vernünftigen Rede haengen Gedanke und Ausdruck so eng zusammen, wie Leib und Seele. Der redende Person gibt ihren Gedanken den entsprechenden

The role of the holy writer is quite limited. In fact, Stoeckhardt, in spite of his disclaimers, seemed to be on the road to a doctrine of mechanical inspiration. He wrote:

The Spirit of prophecy, who granted the prophet to behold these visions, also shaped the forms words, and language. He accommodated Himself at the same time to these natural gifts and peculiarities, to the talents (indoles) of the prophet; but at the same time He sanctified and heightened these natural gifts and abilities, and He has suggested to the prophet, as he preached and wrote, the true and adequate expression for the high divine matters which he was to make known to the people.⁴⁵

In Stoeckhardt's view the Holy Spirit had set the entire human equipment of the writers into motion--their research, their thought processes, and their organization of material. All of these were the medium of the Spirit's activity. In a clear statement Stoeckhardt wrote:

Not the pens with which the apostles and prophets wrote on paper or parchment; no, the prophets and apostles themselves, living people with their willing, thinking, researching, conceptualizing, were the pens, calami, of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit . . . as they wrote, gave them His divine wisdom, the divine thoughts, together with the right words.⁴⁶

Ausdruck. Die Schrift ist die Rede des lebendigen Gottes. Gott hat hier seine heimliche Weisheit in den Menschen verstaendlicher Sprache offenbart."

⁴⁵ Georg Stoeckhardt, Commentar ueber den Prophet Jesaia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1902), p.x. "Der Geist der Weisagung, welcher dem Propheten diese Gesichte zu schauen gegeben, hat auch die Form, Worte, und Sprache gebildet. Er hat sich, wie sonst, an die natuerliche Begabung und Eigenthuemlichkeit, an die indoles des Propheten accomodirt, hat aber zugleich diese natuerlichen Gaben und Faehigkeiten geheiligt, gesteigert, und dem Propheten, da er predigte und schrieb, fuer die hohen, goettlichen Dinge, die er seinem Volk kundthun sollte, den rechten adaequaten Ausdruck suggerirt."

⁴⁶ Georg Stoeckhardt, Lehre und Wehre, XXXII, 282-283. "Nicht die Griffel, mit denen Propheten und Apostel das Papier oder Pergament beschrieben, nein, die Propheten und Apostel selbst, die lebendigen Personen mit ihrem Wollen, Denken, Forschen, Concipiren waren Griffel, calami, des Heiligen Geistes. Der Heilige Geist hat . . . da sie schrieben . . . die ewigen Gottesgedanken, und auch die rechten Worte an die Hand gegeben."

At the same time Stoeckhardt maintained that the mode of inspiration is a mystery. No human being can peer into the workshop of the Holy Spirit. Christians must be satisfied with the result, the words of the apostles and prophets, which are truly God's Word. The manner in which this result was arrived at has no interest for faith and for salvation.⁴⁷

Stoeckhardt, like Koehler, recognized the spiritual purpose for which God had inspired the Scriptures. In commenting on Romans 15:4 Stoeckhardt wrote:

If we diligently search the Scriptures, then, from day to day we obtain the same new power, comfort and encouragement, courage and confidence, and keep the blessed goal firmly before our eyes, when we then with our brethren, free from all infirmities and burdens, will rejoice in our salvation.⁴⁸

As evidence of Stoeckhardt's pastoral concern for the use of the Scriptures, one might call attention to the many sermon studies and sermons which during his career he published in the Magazin fuer Ev.-Luth. Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie.

Since Professor Koehler had entered into the interpretation of 2 Timothy 3:15-17, it is necessary to canvass Stoeckhardt's views on this passage. He held that the theses of the Lutheran theologians of the Age of Orthodoxy are merely an exposition of the phrase pasa

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 283.

⁴⁸ George Stoeckhardt, Commentar Ueber den Brief Pauli an die Roemer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1907), p. 618. "Wenn wir aber fleissig in die Schrift hineinsehen, dann schoepfen wir aus derselben von Tag zu Tag neue Kraft, Trost, und Zuspruch, Muth und Zuversicht und behalten unverrueckt das selige Ziel vor Augen, da wir dann mit unsern Bruedern frei von allen Gebrechen und Beschwerden unsers Heils, das vollendeten Heils, uns freuen werden."

graphē theopneustos.⁴⁹ He recognized the grammatical uncertainties which beset the interpreter of the passage. From the various grammatically possible options Stoeckhardt preferred to understand theopneustos attributively.⁵⁰ He justified his interpretation of theopneustos as a passive by an appeal to the morphology of verbal adjectives which end in -tos.⁵¹ He interpreted pasa graphē according to a similar usage in Matthew 3:15, as "every Scripture," or "everything which is Scripture."⁵² In his interpretation of this passage Stoeckhardt placed the stress on the inspiration of Scripture rather than on its profitable use. In summary Stoeckhardt said:

According to our understanding--and this is Luther's understanding, too--inspiration appears not as one attribute of Scripture alongside of others, but it appears quite clearly as the real foundation for the doctrine of Scripture.⁵³

Stoeckhardt and Koehler

After a survey of the views of Stoeckhardt and Koehler on the nature of the Bible and its inspiration, it is possible to compare

⁴⁹ G[eorg] St[oeckhardt], "Was lehrt St. Paulus II Tim. 3, 15-17. von der Inspiration?", Lehre und Wehre, XXXVIII (1892), 289. For a presentation of the doctrine of inspiration in the Lutheran dogmaticians of the Age of Orthodoxy, consult Robert David Preus, The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study of the Theology of the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians (Edinburg: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), passim.

⁵⁰ Stoeckhardt, "Was Lehrt St. Paulus?," Lehre und Wehre, XXXVIII, 289.

⁵¹ Ibid., XXXVIII, 321.

⁵² Ibid., XXXVIII, 292.

⁵³ Ibid., XXXVIII, 294. "Ja, nach unserer Fassung, und das ist auch die Luther'sche Fassung, erscheint die Theopneustie nicht als eine Eigenschaft der Schrift neben andern, sondern recht deutlich als das eigentliche Fundament der Lehre von der Schrift."

their viewpoints.

1. Both Stoeckhardt and Koehler are in agreement that in a real sense the Bible is the Word of God.
2. Koehler placed great stress on the fact that the Bible testifies to the forgiveness of sins, and that the believer recognizes the voice of God in the Scriptures. Stoeckhardt, on the other hand, operated with a catena of passages to show that the entire Bible claims to be God's Word. Koehler's viewpoint may be the unexpressed premise of Stoeckhardt's approach. Since, however, it is unexpressed, it may lead to the abuse of Scripture as a legal code.
3. Both Stoeckhardt and Koehler contended for the verbal inspiration of the entire Bible. Koehler's formulation of this teaching came close to a doctrine of the reliability of every statement of Scripture, while Stoeckhardt sought to give an exegetical foundation for the presentation of the form of the doctrine espoused by the theologians of the Age of Orthodoxy.
4. Stoeckhardt stressed the Holy Spirit as the ultimate Author of the Bible, so that the Holy Spirit accommodated Himself to the human characteristics of the writers. Koehler attempted to preserve a balance between the divine and the human aspects of biblical inspiration.
5. Both Stoeckhardt and Koehler were concerned about the use of Scripture to make men wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Both Stoeckhardt and Koehler recognized the need for a critical text of the New Testament. This need had its origin in the way in which the New Testament had been transmitted prior to the time of Gutenberg. Before his invention of a movable type books had to be copied by hand. In the process transcriptional errors usually found their way into the text. The task of the textual critic is to attempt to discover and to eliminate these errors, and thus to recover, so far as possible, the text of the autographs of the New Testament.

Walter H. Frerking, "Changes in Hermeneutics," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XII (1941), 150.

CHAPTER IV

THE CIRCLE OF LANGUAGE

"We might . . . picture the interpreter approaching the sacred text through three concentric circles: the circle of language, the circle of history, and the circle of theology or Scripture."¹ With these words Professor Martin H. Franzmann outlined his approach to hermeneutics. The same outline will help to organize for a discussion of the hermeneutics of both Dr. Georg Stoeckhardt and Professor Johann Philip Koehler, as they are exemplified in their respective commentaries on the letter of Paul to the congregation in Ephesus. This chapter, then, will concern itself with the first of these three concentric circles: the circle of language.

Text

Both Stoeckhardt and Koehler recognized the need for a critical text of the New Testament. This need had its origin in the way in which the New Testament had been transmitted prior to the time of Gutenberg. Before his invention of movable type books had to be copied by hand. In the process transcriptional errors easily found their way into the text. The task of the textual critic is to attempt to discover and to eliminate these errors, and thus to recover, so far as possible, the text of the autographs of the New Testament.

¹Martin H. Franzmann, "Essays in Hermeneutics," Concordia Theological Monthly, XIX (1948), 598.

A study of the Greek text which underlies the commentaries of both Stoeckhardt and Koehler will show that both scholars employed critical editions of the Greek New Testament. The Greek text which is printed in Stoeckhardt's Kommentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Epheser is that of Tischendorf's editio octava.² On the other hand, Professor Koehler probably employed the text which appears in Eberhard Nestle's Novum Testamentum Graece.³ It is impossible to be absolutely certain of this conclusion, since Koehler nowhere specifically indicated the critical text which he was employing, nor did he give extensive quotations from it in his commentary. This conclusion is based on a study of the translation which Koehler offered in his study of Ephesians, as well as on references which he made to items of textual evidence in the course of his commentary.⁴

Neither Dr. Stoeckhardt nor Professor Koehler claimed special competence in the area of textual criticism. A study of their discussions of several textual variant readings which appear in their respective

²Constantinus de Tischendorf, HE KAINI DIATHEKE, Novum Testamentum Graece (Editio stereotypa sexadecima, ad editionem viii. majorem compluribus locis emendatam conformata; Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1904), pp. 350-357.

³Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, Novum Testamentum Graece cum apparatu critico (13th edition; Stuttgart, Wuerttembergische Privilegierte Bibelanstalt, 1927), pp. 489-500. At one point Koehler referred to the Nestle text, but it was in conjunction with references to the texts edited by Tischendorf and Westcott-Hort (Johann Philip Koehler, "Pauli Hochgesnag von Christo, Auslegung des Briefes an die Epheser," Faith-Life, May 1937, p. 7).

⁴Koehler, Faith-Life, January 1936, pp. 5-10; February 1936, pp. 9-14; March 1936, pp. 6-11; April 1936, pp. 3-8; May 1936, pp. 4-10; June 1936, pp. 5-9; July 1936, pp. 4-10; August 1936, pp. 6-11; September 1936, pp. 4-8; October 1936, pp. 5-8; November 1936, pp. 3-8; December 1936, pp. 4-7; January 1937, pp. 6-11; February 1937, pp. 6-10; March 1937, pp. 8-12; April 1937, pp. 4-9; May 1937, pp. 5-10; June 1937, pp. 6-12; July 1937, pp. 4-8.

commentaries, however, does reveal some of their guiding principles in the field of textual criticism.

In Ephesians 1:1 there is an important textual variant.⁵ It is important because the decision which the interpreter makes concerning it will influence his subsequent interpretation of the letter. The words en Epheso are lacking in the original text of Codex Sinaiticus (s/s) and Codex Vaticanus (B). Stoeckhardt also called attention to their absence from the twelfth-century Codex 67.⁶ In the case of Codex Sinaiticus a corrector inserted the words en Epheso into the text. In Codex Vaticanus a corrector placed the phrase in the margin. Stoeckhardt also took note of the evidence derived from the writings of the church fathers Tertullian, Origen, and Basil as to the absence of these words.⁷

Stoeckhardt entered a vigorous defense of the authenticity of this phrase. He argued from the fact that all extant manuscripts known to him, with the exception of those previously mentioned, include this phrase. In addition, all of the ancient versions have these words in their text. He also noted that all known manuscripts of the New

⁵For a full citation of the evidence see Kurt Aland et al., The Greek New Testament (2nd edition; New York; American Bible Society, 1968), p. 664. Neither Koehler nor Stoeckhardt had the benefit of the additional manuscript evidence furnished by the discovery of P46 which omits the phrase. Codex 1739 also omits these words.

⁶G[eorg] Stoeckhardt, Kommentar ueber die Brief Pauli an die Epheser (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), p. 12. It should be noted that Stoeckhardt's Codex 67 corresponds to Codex 424 in current listings of biblical manuscripts.

⁷Ibid., pp. 12-16.

Testament have superscriptions which connect this letter with Ephesus. Stoeckhardt also called attention to the unanimous tradition of the early church which accepted this letter as being addressed to the congregation in Ephesus.⁸ In summary of the external evidence Stoeckhardt wrote:

The testimonia externa accordingly all favor Ephesus as the locale to which the letter was directed. They decisively give preference to the reading en Ephesō in the salutation. If these words en Ephesō were missing from the original text, it is utterly inconceivable that they should have appeared in nearly all still extant codices and in all versions, and that Christian tradition from ancient times should have unanimously accepted the letter as addressed by Paul to the Ephesians.

Stoeckhardt also argued for the correctness of the reading which includes the words en Ephesō on the basis of internal evidence. He was of the opinion that the text which omitted the phrase en Ephesō made no sense. He gave no reason for this view. He also found it impossible to accept the suggestion that there was a lacuna after tois ousin, in which the readers might insert the name of the city in which the letter was being read. He also rejected out of hand the suggestion that the papyrus text of this letter had suffered mutilation and that an early scribe had supplied what was missing by the insertion of the phrase en Ephesō.¹⁰ He rejected these proposals because "By such conjectures, which have

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 16. "Die testimonia externa sprechen demnach fuer Ephesus als Bestimmungsort des Briefes, geben der Lesart en Ephesō in der Grusszuschrift den Vorzug. Es ist schlechterdings undenkbar, dass, wenn die Worte en Ephesō im urspruenglichen Text gefehlt haetten, dieselben in fast saemtliche noch vorhandene codices und in alle Versionen Eingang finden koennen, und dass die kirchliche Tradition von alters her und so einhellig unsern Brief als Brief Pauli an die Epheser angenommen haben sollte."

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 18-20.

absolutely no factual and historical basis, one forsakes all sound critical methodology and enters the wide-open field of speculation."¹¹

Koehler, too, opted for the originality of the phrase en Ephesō in the autograph of the letter. Professor Koehler was aware of the same evidence for the presence or omission of this phrase as was Stoeckhardt.¹² He rather dogmatically brushed aside the external evidence with the statement: "All this, however, does not prove that the reference to the location was missing from Paul's manuscript."¹³ Koehler gave no reasons for his position that the manuscript evidence plays such an insignificant role in the determination of the reading. On the other hand, Koehler was of the opinion that both the grammar of the Greek text and the personal references in the last chapter speak in favor of the reading which includes the place name.¹⁴ Koehler also showed an awareness of the conjectures to which Stoeckhardt had made reference, and he rejected them out of hand as foolishness.¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 18-19. "Mit derartigen Konjekturen, die in keinem historischen Datum irgenwelchen Anhalt haben, verlaesst man den Boden aller gesunden Kritik und verliert sich in das weite, offene Feld der Tendenzdichtung." It is noteworthy that Stoeckhardt found it impossible to explain the origin of the reading which lacks the words en Ephesō. This fact might bring his methodology into question in the light of the text-critical principle that the reading which best explains the origin of the variants is most likely to be correct. See Bruce M. Metzger, The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration (2nd edition; New York: Oxford Univerity Press, 1968), p. 210.

¹² Koehler, Faith-Life, January 1936, pp. 8-9.

¹³ Ibid., "Das alles beweist aber nicht, dass die Ortsangabe in Pauli Handscrift fehlte."

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁵ Ibid.

The discussions of Stoeckhardt's and Koehler's opinions on this important textual variant provide an insight into their text-critical methodology. A further study of those passages where there are significant textual variants will support the impression of a lack of technical competence in this area of scholarship. Stoeckhardt repeatedly expressed himself in favor of a particular reading on the basis of external evidence alone.¹⁶ He very seldom employed any other criterion in text-critical matters beyond a mere counting of manuscripts. On occasion he would even glide over textual variants as being of little significance.¹⁷

In a way inconsistent with his usual practice. Stoeckhardt on one occasion practically set aside the textual evidence in favor of a reading which he felt was called for by the context. He held that the manuscript attestation was adequate, even though it was restricted to the koine textual tradition. He believed that the expression "the faith toward all the saints" was incomprehensible, and the context demanded the addition of the words ten agapēn.¹⁸

Koehler, likewise, showed little interest in textual variants. He easily accepted the readings of the critical edition of the New Testament which he was using. In the outline for his proposed work on biblical hermeneutics, he stated that not every interpreter is capable of being a real textual critic. He should, however, understand enough

¹⁶Stoeckhardt, pp. 140, 229, 250, etc.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 51, 260.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 98

of this branch of science as to be able to evaluate the arguments which are being employed by commentators for or against a reading.¹⁹

It is quite evident, then, that neither Koehler nor Stoeckhardt were equipped for or aware of the importance of this highly technical area of New Testament scholarship. At the same time, it should be noted that this deficiency does not materially detract from the value of their interpretations of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, since they both used a critical text, which was based on the best textual research of their times.

The Nature of New Testament Greek

After the interpreter has determined the text on which he is to comment, it is necessary that he understand the nature of the language in which the text was originally written. That language, in the case of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, was Greek; but it was not the Greek of the classical period of Greek literature. There are too many variations from the standards of strict classical usage for that to be the case. But how can the differences which appear be explained?

Nowhere, to the writer's knowledge, did Stoeckhardt offer a discussion of the language in which the New Testament was written. Any statement concerning his views on this subject will have to be made by induction on the basis of the viewpoints expressed in the lexical and

¹⁹Johann Philip Koehler, "Biblische Hermeneutik, Vorlage fuer den Seminarunterricht, Katalog des Theologischen Seminars der Allgemeinen Ev. Luth. Synode von Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan u. a. St. bei Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1912-1913 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1912), p. 23.

grammatical works which he employed. In his commentary on Paul's letter to the Ephesians he made frequent reference to the lexicons of Cremer,²⁰ Grimm,²¹ and Stephanus;²² and to the grammatical works of Blass,²³ Krueger,²⁴ and Winer.²⁵ The viewpoint which is common to all these works is that New Testament Greek is a late form of the language and that it shows a decided Septuagintal influence. The variations from strict classical usage are explained by linguistic development or by the influence of the Greek translation of the Old Testament upon the writers of the New Testament. It is noteworthy that Stoeckhardt nowhere showed any awareness of the work of Adolf Deissmann,²⁶ or James Hope Moulton²⁷ on the study of the

²⁰Herman Cremer, Biblich-Theologisches Woerterbuch der neutestamentlichen Graecitaet (3rd edition; Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1883), passim.

²¹Carl Ludwig Willibald Grimm, Lexicon Graeco-Latinum in libros Novi Testamenti (3rd edition; Leipzig: In Libraria Arnoldiana, 1888), passim.

²²Henricus Stephanus, ΘΗΚΑΥΡΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΓΛΩΣΣΗΣ, Thesaurus Graecae Linguae (London: Valpianus, 1816-1826), passim.

²³Friedrich Blass, Grammatik des Neutestamentlichen Griechisch (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1896), passim.

²⁴K. W. Krueger, Griechische Sprachlehre fuer Schulen, I. Teil: Ueber die gewoehnliche, vorzugsweise die attische Prosa (5th edition; Berlin: Gustav Schlawitz, 1875), passim.

²⁵Georg Benedikt Winer, Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Sprachidioms als sichere Grundlage der neutestamentlichen Exegese (7th edition edited by Gottlieb Luenemann; Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1867), passim.

²⁶Adolf Deissmann, Bibelstudien (Marburg: Schermerhorn, 1895), passim; and Adolf Deissmann, Neue Bibelstudien (Marburg: Schermerhorn, 1897), passim.

²⁷James Hope Moulton, Prolegomena, in A Grammar of New Testament Greek (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906), I, passim.

language of the New Testament, even though their works were available at the time of the publication of his commentary on Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Professor Koehler also recognized the difference between the language of the New Testament and that of the classical period. He explained the majority of differences by reference to Septuagint influence on the writers of the New Testament.²⁸ Unlike Stoeckhardt, Koehler was aware of the contributions of Deissmann and Moulton to the study of the language of the New Testament, since he reviewed Moulton's Prolegomena in the Theologische Quartalschrift. He declined to follow Deissmann and Moulton in stressing the influence of the koine dialect on New Testament Greek. Instead, he believed that the peculiarities of biblical Greek were best explained by the influence of the Septuagint on the writers of the New Testament with reference to both vocabulary and grammar.²⁹

Word Study

Stoeckhardt's commentary on the letter of Paul to the Ephesians contains a large number of word studies, and from an examination of these, it is possible to understand how Stoeckhardt undertook to determine the exact signification of the words which Paul used in his letter to the Ephesians.

It is necessary for the correct interpretation of an author's thought to be clear as to the exact significance of the words which

²⁸Koehler, Faith-Life, January 1936, p. 9.

²⁹[Johann Philip] Koehler, "Buechertisch," Theologische Quartalschrift, III (1907), 191.

he employs. It is not sufficient to determine only in a general way the sphere of meaning which a particular word may have, but its specific signification must also be determined. But how is this to be done?

Stoeckhardt sought to determine the meaning of words by ascertaining their usus loquendi, their use in speech and writing. On occasion he would refer to the etymology of a word; but for him etymology was only a starting point in an effort to determine meaning.³⁰ On one occasion, however, he rejected a proposed definition of a word because the suggested definition conflicted with the true etymology of the word.³¹

For Stoeckhardt the meaning of a word was determined by its usage. Accordingly he frequently cited examples from classical authors to demonstrate the meaning which a word had in classical Greek usage.³² Since, however, certain theological terms had obtained specific nuances from their use in the Septuagint, and since the Septuagint had deeply influenced the writers of the New Testament, he also undertook word studies which made reference to the specific Septuagintal usage of words.³³ As had already been indicated, Stoeckhardt did not refer to popular koine usage, though his word studies do include the use of terms found in Greek authors as late as the sub-apostolic age.³⁴

³⁰Stoeckhardt, p. 37.

³¹Ibid., p. 71.

³²Ibid., p. 37. Many of these references are taken from Cremer's Biblisch-Theologisches Woerterbuch der neutestamentlichen Graecitaet.

³³Ibid., p. 59.

³⁴Ibid., p. 7. Once again Cremer's Woerterbuch seems to have been the source from which Stoeckhardt drew his information.

In the case of terms which are theologically important Stoeckhardt would offer more extended word studies. In many of these he would concentrate on Septuagintal usage, and then would also seek to determine usage in specific portions of the New Testament, such as the Gospels or the epistles of the apostles.³⁵ By making a study of the usage of a particular author, Stoeckhardt was observing the principle that an author is his own best interpreter.

In most instances Stoeckhardt did not offer such elaborate word studies, as in the case of theologically crucial terms. Instead he frequently referred his readers to the results which Cremer offered in his theological dictionary of the New Testament.³⁶

Like Stoeckhardt, Professor Johann Philip Koehler was intent on determining the exact significance of words so that he might accurately understand the document which he was interpreting. There are, therefore, numerous word studies scattered throughout Koehler's commentary on Ephesians.

For Koehler the usus loquendi of a word was determinative for its meaning. The etymology of a word was seemingly more important in Koehler's thinking than it was in Stoeckhardt's.³⁷ Koehler, in his commentary on Ephesians, however, did not fall into the trap of allowing the etymology to determine what a word must mean apart from its usage.³⁸

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 40-41.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

³⁷ Koehler, Faith-Life, March 1936, p. 8.

³⁸ This methodological error, however, does appear in Koehler's "A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John," which appeared

The interpreter must arrive at that decision on the basis of usage alone.

The word studies which Koehler offered in his commentary show the same basic methodology as those which Stoeckhardt gave in his interpretation of Ephesians. They are, however, not so technical, since Koehler originally wrote his commentary for meetings of the Protestant Conference. This group consisted of both clergy and laity. For the sake of the latter Koehler frequently gave only the results of his investigations. His word studies, however, were independent investigations of the evidence in many instances.³⁹ A more accurate picture of his approach emerges from his study of the terms pistis⁴⁰ and eklegesthai,⁴¹ as they are contained in articles which appeared in the early volumes of the Theologische Quartalschrift.

serially in XVII (1944) through XX (1947) of Faith-Life. Little use was made of this work in studying Koehler's exegetical methodology because there is a decisive weakening of Koehler's abilities to be observed in this commentary. It must be remembered that Professor Koehler was in his eighties when this work was being written.

³⁹Koehler himself says: "Als vor dreiunddreissig Jahren [in 1904] meine erste Abhandlung ueber Roem. 12:6 von der Analogie des Glaubens veroeffentlicht war, machte Professor Hoenecke mich darauf aufmerksam, dass die lutherische Dogmatiker durchweg mir entgegenstaenden bezueglich meiner Uebersetzung und Verwendung von pistis, Glaube, und charis, Gnade, den zwei Hauptbegriffen im Evangelium. . . . Ich hatte natuerlich alle in Betracht kommenden Bibelstellen verglichen und war so meiner Sache einigermassen gewiss." (Koehler, Faith-Life, July 1937, p. 7).

⁴⁰Johann Philip Koehler, "Die Analogie des Glaubens," Theologische Quartalschrift, I (1904), 28-32.

⁴¹Johann Philip Koehler, "eklegesthai," Theologische Quartalschrift, II (1905), 156-179.

In these word studies it becomes evident that Koehler was concerned about the actual usage of words. Classical usage was important, but he warned against adopting uncritically the pagan usage of theological terms and transferring it directly to the vocabulary of the New Testament.⁴² Koehler held that the decisive influence on the development of New Testament vocabulary was the Septuagint, and therefore his word studies made frequent mention of the usage of terms in that translation.⁴³ The usage of the author whose work was being interpreted was for Koehler of the utmost importance.⁴⁴

One particularly instructive word study challenged the interpretation given in Stoeckhardt's Kommentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Epheser, even though Koehler did not mention that book by name. He wrote:

The term "power of the air" is debated. It should be quite self-evident that we discard the pagan ideas as well as the Jewish fables of a later date. Since we have here an expression, in a trope at that, which grew out of quite specific views, whose import cannot be clearly and definitely determined from Scripture, there is no sense in following the example of Gentiles and Jews by seeking to contrive a "Christian" solution similar to theirs. The translation "the power domain of the atmosphere of the spirit," suggested by some of the most prominent exegetes, appears to me to be of that kind. A trope gained by specious explanations, and derived from modern views, at that, cannot possibly do here. . . . Were one to uphold the proposed expression "atmosphere," it would be necessary to adduce an example from non-biblical Greek of the time to establish its figurative sense. Otherwise the term would appear too much a modern rendition of the term aeros.⁴⁵

⁴² Koehler, Faith-Life, August 1936, p. 8.

⁴³ Ibid., January 1936, p. 9.

⁴⁴ Ibid., February 1936, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Ibid., June 1936, p. 7. "Der Ausdruck Luftmacht ist sehr unstritten. Dass wir uns nicht einlassen auf die Ideen der Heiden oder viel spaeteren Judenfabeln, versteht sich wohl von selbst. Aber wenn ein Ausdruck, vorab ein tropischer Ausdruck, der doch aus ganz speziellen Anschauungen entsteht, nicht aus der Schrift durchaus sicher klar

This extensive quotation shows that Koehler was alert to the problem of determining the exact significance of the terms which Paul was using, and he guarded himself against the too-facile adoption of a meaning which made sense to the modern mind, but which was based on a modern, twentieth-century Weltanschauung.

One of the difficulties in evaluating Koehler's use of commentators is his hesitancy to name the authorities which he was using. He refused to do so on principle, for he feared that a listing of authorities would confuse the reader and would prevent an examination of the biblical text.⁴⁶

Koehler was ready to be independent of previous authorities. He gratefully used their work, as the references to previous exegetes and lexicographers indicate. He did not, however, always feel obligated to agree with their views. When Dr. Adolf Hoenecke pointed out to him that his conclusions concerning the meaning of pistis and charis were in disagreement with the findings of the orthodox Lutheran dogmatists, he did not withdraw or alter his conclusions. Instead, he

gestellt werden kann, dann hat es ebensowenig Sinn, dass wir der Juden und Heiden Beispiel folgen, um ein aehnliches 'christliches' Resultat zu gewinnen. So erscheint mir die Uebersetzung "Machtgebiet der Atmosphaere des Geistes [']", die sich grade bei den bedeutendsten Auslegern findet. Ein mit kuenstlichen Erklaerungen und dazu noch aus modernen Anschauungen heraus gewonnener Tropus kann hier nicht genuegen. . . . Fuer die vorgeschlagene uebertragene Redeutung Atmosphaere muesste der entsprechende Gebrauch des Worts wenigstens in der damaligen Profan-graezitaet beigebracht werden, sonst moechte die Auffassung zu sehr als moderne Wendung erscheinen." Koehler's reference to prominent modern commentators undoubtedly included a reference to Stoeckhardt, p. 117, where the phrase is translated by "atmosphaere des Geistes."

⁴⁶Johann Philip Koehler, "Schriftauslegung in der Schrift," Faith-Life, July 1935, p. 4.

could say that while he was concerned about the views of the dogmatists, he had made a study of all the cases which came into consideration, and he was sure of his ground.⁴⁷

Both Stoeckhardt and Koehler agreed in their basic approach to word study. For both men etymology provided no more than a starting point for the effort to determine the meaning of a word. For each of them the actual usage was determinative. Since the Septuagint had been such a formative influence on the language of the early church, Septuagint usage was especially to be considered in an effort to determine the meaning of a word. The usage which Paul had, of course, was the best key to the meaning which a Greek word had in the Pauline corpus.

Grammar and Syntax

In his commentary on the letter to the Ephesians, Professor Koehler, following Winer, called attention to the fact that it is necessary for the interpreter to abide by the rules of Greek grammar.⁴⁸ With this position Stoeckhardt's practice was in agreement. Throughout his commentary on Ephesians Stoeckhardt referred to points of grammar and syntax in an effort to support the particular interpretation which he was sponsoring.⁴⁹

In his discussion of 1:4, for example, he appealed to the principles of Greek grammar to show that the phrase en autō could not be used as an adjectival modifier of the hemas. It could only be an

⁴⁷Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, July 1937, p. 7.

⁴⁸Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, February 1936, p. 13.

⁴⁹Stoeckhardt, passim.

adverbial modifier of exeloxato, since there are no examples in all of Greek literature of an adjectival modifier without the definite article following a personal pronoun.⁵⁰ Numerous other instances of an appeal to grammatical principles could be cited to prove that Stoeckhardt used grammar in support of his interpretation of the biblical text.⁵¹ An interpretation which violated accepted Greek grammar was totally inadmissible.⁵² When a particular interpretation did not require grammatical support, Stoeckhardt was frequently unconcerned about grammatical niceties.⁵³ He was, then, not interested in grammar for its own sake. For him it was only a tool, enabling him to understand the meaning of the biblical text.

In his commentary on Ephesians, Professor Koehler offered his own translation of the biblical text. In this translation he indicated how he understood the grammatical construction of the underlying Greek text. When this translation differed in any significant way from Luther's rendering, Koehler felt it necessary to justify his translation. If he followed a Greek text which differed from the textus receptus, which Luther had used, he called attention to this fact.⁵⁴ If he gave a different definition of a Greek word, he sought to justify his rendering by means of a lexical study. And if he construed a sentence differently

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 44.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 74, 126, 204, etc.

⁵² Ibid., p. 44.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 52.

⁵⁴ Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, April 1936, p. 4; August 1936, p. 10.

from the way in which Luther had done, he also justified this procedure by an appeal to the principles of Greek grammar.⁵⁵ Significantly different from Stoeckhardt is his paucity of reference to grammatical authorities. The only grammarian to whom he made repeated references is Georg Benedikt Winer.⁵⁶ This lack of citation of grammatical authorities may perhaps be explained by the identity of the original hearers and readers of his commentary. Professor Koehler was concerned about the problems of grammatical interpretation, for in the introduction to his commentary on Paul's letter to the Galatians he explained that he had published his exposition of that letter in order to gain more time in the classroom for a consideration of linguistic matters.⁵⁷

In this area, again, there are no significant differences between Stoeckhardt and his pupil, Professor Johann Philip Koehler. Both were in total agreement that any biblical interpretation must be in accord with the principles of the grammar of the Greek language. There was no room for exegetical fancies which did not conform with the linguistic requirements of the language of the New Testament.

⁵⁵Ibid., September 1936, p. 6.

⁵⁶Johann Georg Benedikt Winer (1789-1858) was professor at the University of Leipzig. He stressed the fact that the language of the New Testament follows quite definite grammatical principles of its own, even if it does not agree with the rules of classical Greek. He wrote a grammar (Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Sprachidioms als sichere Grundlage der neutestamentlichen Exegese), which went through many editions and which was repeatedly translated into English.

⁵⁷Joh[ann] Ph[ilip] Koehler, Der Brief Pauli an die Galater (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1910), p. i.

Literary Style

An important difference between Stoeckhardt and Koehler is the attention which each man gave to matters of literary style. Stoeckhardt, no doubt, had developed an appreciation for literary style through his training in a German Gymnasium and through his constant reading of the Scriptures. He, however, made very few comments on this topic.⁵⁸ He did not seem to feel that this was a necessary aspect of the task of the exegete. His task was to derive from the text its doctrinal content. Considerations of style were of secondary importance for him and therefore they might be neglected with no great harm to the interpretation.⁵⁹

Koehler, in contrast, felt that the exegete's task included far more than the exposition of the writer's line of thought. He believed that the exegete was to take into consideration also matters of literary style. This was particularly true because a man's literary mode of expression is frequently determined by his psychological make-up. For this reason, Koehler wrote: "Thus in the interpretation of the letter to the Ephesians, the strong emotional involvement of the apostle dare not be overlooked."⁶⁰ In connection with his view that

⁵⁸One exception to this statement occurs in Stoeckhardt, p. 165, where he notes a paronomasia between patēr and patria.

⁵⁹Perhaps this emphasis will explain why Stoeckhardt devoted so few pages to the closing portion of the letter to the Ephesians. This section is not so doctrinally rich as the previous sections of the letter.

⁶⁰Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, January 1936, p. 7. "So darf bei der Auslegung des Epheserbriefes die starke Gemuetsbewegung des Apostels nicht uebersehen werden.

the introductory hymn of 1:3-14 is punctuated by three doxologies (eis espainon tēs doxēs) in Verses 6, 12, 14, Koehler wrote:

For dogmatics it is sufficient to record the content of the formula, but it is also the exegete's task to reconstruct the rhythmic emotions of the soul, which give to the thoughts a coloration which is not at all unimportant.⁶¹

One particular problem of literary style requires investigation. Did Paul employ the anacoloutha in his letter to the Ephesians? There are several instances in the letter where some interpreters have discovered them.⁶² In all of these instances Dr. Stoeckhardt rejected the possibility and undertook to explain the unevenness of style without granting the possibility of an anacolouthon.⁶³ Koehler, on the other hand, saw no difficulty in accepting anacoloutha as a part of Paul's literary style. They were, he held, an expression of Paul's emotional nature.⁶⁴ When the question is asked as to why Stoeckhardt hesitated to admit of anacoloutha, no certain answer can be given. It is probable, however, that he felt that an anacolouthon would be a form of imperfection in Scripture.

In contrast, Professor Koehler had no difficulty in granting the existence of such a literary feature in the biblical writings, for he attributed it to the deep emotions of the writer. He stated:

⁶¹ Ibid., January 1936, "Der Dogmatik genuegt es dann, den Gedankeninhalt der Formel zu registrieren, aber des Exegeten Aufgabe ist es, auch die rhythmische Seelenbewegung nachzuempfinden, die dem Gedanken eine doch wohl nicht gleichgueltige Faerbung gibt."

⁶² E.g., 2:1-7; 3:16, 17.

⁶³ Stoeckhardt, pp. 113, 168.

⁶⁴ Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, January 1936, p. 7.

One might gain the opinion that this the presence of anacoloutha is opposed to the biblical conception of inspiration, and that it impairs the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture, if one were to concede that Paul had written in this way. But that view is unnecessary. The anacolouthon is a way of speaking which many writers consciously transfer from oral speech to literary language, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit does not prevent that. For He uses, as is otherwise clear in the Holy Scriptures, the human apparatus of speech as it is developed in the course of human experience.⁶⁵

Both Koehler and Stoeckhardt were ready to recognize the presence of figurative language in the letter to the Ephesians. They were no crass literalists, in the sense that they did not allow for literary figures. Stoeckhardt could, for example, say that a word (nekros) was used figuratively,⁶⁶ and Koehler interpreted in similar fashion.⁶⁷ Neither exegete, however, attempted to define the exact point at which a word was used in a figurative sense, and at which it was to be taken in its exact, literal sense, with no trope involved.

Summary

Both Dr. Stoeckhardt and Professor Koehler were in agreement on a number of essential considerations about the circle of language:

⁶⁵Koehler, Galater, p. 37. "Man koennte auf den Gedanken kommen, dass es der biblischen Auffassung von Inspiration entgegen sei und die Lehre von der Klarheit der Schrift beeintraechtigte, wenn man annehme, dass Paulus so geschrieben habe. Doch das ist nicht noetig. Der Anacolouth ist eine Weise zu reden, die manche Schreiber sogar mit Bewusstsein aus der muendlichen Rede in die Schriftsprache heruebernehmen, und die Eingebung des heiligen Geistes hindert das nicht. Denn der gebraucht, wie es sonst in der heil. Schrift klar vorliegt, den menschlichen Apparat der Rede, so wie er aus der menschlichen Entwicklung vorliegt."

⁶⁶Stoeckhardt, p. 114.

⁶⁷Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, June 1936, p. 6.

1. Both agreed as to the necessity for a critical text of the New Testament.
2. They also agreed that the language of the New Testament is a late form of the Greek language, though there is some lack of clarity as to Stoeckhardt's exact position on this topic.
3. The methodology of each interpreter with reference to the determination of the meaning of words is essentially similar. They are agreed that usage, not etymology, is decisive.
4. Both interpreters are in agreement that an interpretation of the biblical text must be based on an adequate consideration of its grammar and syntax. No interpretation which violates the principles of Greek grammar can possibly be correct.
5. Both exegetes were also in agreement that the letter to the Ephesians contains figurative language.

On the other hand, there are differences between Stoeckhardt and Koehler on the following points:

1. Stoeckhardt did not consider it to be a part of the exegete's task to note and comment on matters of literary style, while Koehler deemed it an essential function of the interpreter to do so.
2. Koehler showed a greater degree of freedom than did Stoeckhardt in his views concerning the possibility of the existence of anacoloutha in the biblical text. Stoeckhardt's hesitancy in this respect may have stemmed from dogmatical presuppositions, while Koehler's willingness to recognize this literary device comes from his emphasis on the human aspect of biblical composition.

None of the similarities or differences which have been noted between Dr. Georg Stoeckhardt and Professor Johann Philip Koehler is of such a nature that it will suffice to explain the differences between their commentaries on the same biblical text. The agreements in the circle of language far outweigh the disagreements, and thus they cannot serve to explain the divergence in the interpretation of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

CHAPTER V

THE CIRCLE OF HISTORY

The second circle which Professor Martin H. Franzmann described in his "Essays in Hermeneutics" is the circle of history. By this phrase Professor Franzmann did not wish to limit the term "history" to a recital of past events, but he interpreted this term in a much broader sense. He stated that the circle included "the geographical, social, economic, and cultural pattern in which the original proclaimers and the first hearers lived and moved."¹ For him this circle also included the past which the writers and readers inherited from previous generations.² In this chapter, then, an attempt will be made to describe how Dr. Georg Stoeckhardt and Professor Johann Philip Koehler employed "history" in their respective interpretations of the letter to the church at Ephesus.

Isagogical Matters

The author of the letter, according to the superscription (1:1) was the apostle Paul. For Stoeckhardt there could have been no question as to the correctness of this ascription, nor, for that matter, for the correctness of any factual statement in the Bible.³ He could

¹Martin H. Franzmann, "Essays in Hermeneutics," Concordia Theological Monthly, XIX (1948), 641.

²Ibid.

³William Elmer Goerss, "Some of the Hermeneutical Presuppositions and Part of the Exegetical Methodology of Georg Stoeckhardt" (Unpublished Doctor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1964), p. 43.

not allow, therefore, for the literary convention of pseudepigraphy. In addition to the letter's own claim to be from the hand of Paul, Stoeckhardt also cited statements from the church fathers in support of the Pauline authorship of Ephesians.⁴

In view of the various attacks on the Pauline authorship of this letter in late nineteenth and early twentieth century New Testament scholarship, Stoeckhardt undertook a lengthy defense of Paul's authorship of the letter. He sought to show that the view that Ephesians was post-Pauline was untenable in the light of literary, historical, and theological considerations. We took cognizance of the argument against Pauline authorship based on vocabulary by challenging the view that the letter employed Gnostic terminology. He held, rather, that the Gnostics were compelled to adopt Pauline terminology in order to give their teachings a semblance of respectability.⁵ The linguistic argument that Ephesians displays a markedly different vocabulary from the Pauline writings was disposed of by a comparison with those books which are generally accredited as Pauline.⁶ Stoeckhardt also challenged the view that the contents of Ephesians was entirely alien to Pauline thought. He held that the theme of the letter, as he interpreted it, was the unity of the church, the Una Sancta. While it is true that this topic receives little consideration in the other Pauline

⁴Georg Stoeckhardt, Kommentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Epheser (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), p.1.

⁵Ibid., p. 4. The assumption behind this argument is that Gnosticism was a second-century heresy, and that therefore Ephesians could not have come from the apostolic age.

⁶Ibid., pp. 6-7

writings, Stoeckhardt questioned whether an author may not in different writings deal with various themes because different interests move him to write.⁷ In summary, Stoeckhardt wrote:

No, not a later-Pseudo-Paul, but the real Paul himself speaks to us in the letter to the Ephesians as is evident from the letter's own testimony, from the concurrent testimony of the early church, and also from the almost unanimous judgment of modern exegetes. The characteristic concepts of the letter fit well not only inside the framework of Pauline theology, but within the apostolic teaching as well. The rich and abundant material of which the apostle treats here, the fullness of ideas, which are to substitute for the poverty of thought attributed to the apostle, compel the stylistic peculiarities. They also explain why his speech is chopped up by so many dependent clauses and parenthetical expressions, which may give the impression at a superficial reading of excessive verbosity.⁸

In line with the textual decision which was treated in the previous chapter⁹ Stoeckhardt considered the original recipients of the letter to have been the members of the Christian congregation at Ephesus. He did give consideration to the hypothesis based on the text which omits the words en Epheso that this letter was an encyclical letter. He was of the opinion, however, that this hypothesis created more difficulties than it solved; and he therefore rejected it.¹⁰ He stated:

⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 10-11. "Nein, nicht ein spaeterer Pseudo-Paulus, sondern der echte Paulus ist es, welcher nach dem Zeugnis des Briefes selbst, nach der einhelligen kirchlichen Tradition und auch nach dem fast einstimmigen Urteil der neueren Exegeten auch im Epheserbrief zu ins redet. Die charakteristischen Ideen desselben fuegen sich gar wohl in den Rahmen der paulinischen Theologie, ueberhaupt der apostolischen Lehre ein. Und der grosse, reiche Stoff, den der Apostel hier behandelt, die Gedankenuelle, die an Stelle der angeblichen Gedankenarmut zu setzen ist, bedingt die stilistischen Eigentuemlichkeiten, erkluert insonderheit, dass die Rede sich oft in so viele Beisaetze und Zwischensaetze Zergliedert, die beim fluechtigen Lesen wohl den Eindruck der Ueberladung und Verbositaet erwecken koennen."

⁹ Supra, pp. 62-64.

After weighing the arguments both pro and contra we cling to the opinion of the early church that Paul wrote this present letter to the congregation at Ephesus, and to none other, and sent it through Tychicus.¹¹

In a brief paragraph Stoeckhardt summarized the founding of the Christian congregation in Ephesus on the basis of the record in Acts 18 and 19.¹² It is significant that he took no note of secular history or the geographical situation of Ephesus or of the cultural heritage of that important city of Asia Minor in order to shed light on the original recipients of the letter. This omission is perhaps understandable on the basis of a remark which appears in the same paragraph as his description of the beginnings of the Ephesian church. He wrote:

Nevertheless it is proper to state concerning this apostolic writing, as well as of all the rest, that, even if it were addressed to a limited circle of readers, still at the same time, it was intended for all Christians.¹³

In this way Stoeckhardt effectively reduced the necessity for interpreting a Pauline letter (or any other biblical document, for that matter) in the light of its historical origins. He was interested in the doctrinal assertions which were being made, and this interest helped him to close his eyes to the contributions to the understanding of the document which might come from the circle of history.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 27. "Wir halten nach Erwaegung des pro and contra . . . an der altkirchlichen Auffassung fest, das Paulus der Gemeinde von Ephesus und sonst keiner anderen den vorliegenden Brief geschrieben, und durch Tychikus uebersandt hat."

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid. "Uebrigens gilt auch von dem vorliegenden apostolischen Sendschreiben, wie von allen andern, dass, wenn es auch zunaechst an Christenheit zugedacht war."

The third major heading to which Stoeckhardt addressed his attention in the introduction to his commentary was the time and place of writing. He considered only Rome or Caesarea as possible places for the composition of the letter.¹⁴ After a review of the arguments offered in support of the view that Ephesians had been written at Caesarea during Paul's captivity there, Stoeckhardt opted for the Roman origin of the letter, and he dated it in the middle of Paul's first Roman imprisonment, about 62 A. D. He held that the circumstances mentioned in Philemon and Colossians, which he believed to have been written at approximately the same time as Ephesians, best agree with the situation during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.¹⁵

As to the occasion of the writing of Ephesians, Stoeckhardt was of the opinion that there was no specific occasion which moved Paul to write, nor were there any specific needs in the congregation at Ephesus which required the apostle's attention.¹⁶ The purpose of the letter was merely to remind the Ephesian congregation of its great honor and of the high calling which, as a church belonging to Christ, it was to fulfill in the world.¹⁷

Koehler did not devote a separate section of his commentary to a discussion of isagogics, but he incorporated his views on the problems of isagogics into his interpretation of the salutation of the letter (1:1-2). In general, his views agreed with those of Stoeckhardt. Paul

¹⁴At the time when Stoeckhardt wrote his commentary, the Ephesian captivity theory had not yet gained scholarly attention.

¹⁵Stoeckhardt, p. 28.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 31.

was the author of the letter;¹⁸ the addressees were the members of the Christian congregation at Ephesus;¹⁹ the letter was written while Paul was suffering imprisonment in Rome.²⁰ Only in reference to the purpose of the letter is there a noteworthy difference. On this subject Koehler wrote:

It is my contention . . . that Ephesians is to be evaluated as Paul's last letter written to a congregation. The letter to the Ephesians is not provoked by some practical occurrence. It is rather the heart-felt expression of sublime emotion at the close of Paul's apostolic career as he looks back on all that God has done for him and by him, as it appeared in the great context of the universe, an emotion which bursts forth into an all-encompassing hymn of praise to God.²¹

The Use of "History" in Interpreting Ephesians

The letter of Paul to the Ephesians does not offer great scope for an investigation of the use which Dr. Georg Stoeckhardt and Professor Johann Philip Koehler made of the circle of history. The nature of the subject matter with which the letter deals, in their view, precluded an extensive use of "historical" materials. It is instructive, however,

¹⁸ Joh[ann] Ph[ilip] Koehler, "Pauli Hochgesang von Christo, Auslegung des Briefes an die Epheser, Faith-Life, January 1936, p. 8.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁰ Ibid. Like Stoeckhardt, Koehler seems to have been unacquainted with the Ephesian captivity theory. In his case there can be little justification for this gap in his knowledge, for the theory had been developed and popularized during the time of Koehler's activity as a theological professor.

²¹ Koehler, January 1936, p. 8. "Der Brief muss meiner Meinung nach . . . als der letzte Gemeindebrief gewertet werdn [sic!]. Es handelt sich hier nicht wie sonst um einen praktischen Anlass fuer den Briefschreiber, sondern um einen Gefuehlserguss des Apostels am Ende seiner Laufbahn, da er alles, was Gott an ihm und durch ihn getan, in dem grossen Zusammenhang des Weltalls sieht und nun in ein alles umfassendes Loblied Gottes ausbricht."

to study a number of passages in which one or the other of the commentators made an effort to employ the circle of history as an aid to the understanding of what Paul had to say to his original readers.

The salutation (1:1-2) of the letter to the Ephesians was written in the standard letter form of the first century of the Christian era. Stoeckhardt took absolutely no notice of this fact. Koehler, on the other hand, recognized that the superscription followed the style employed by both the Greeks and the Romans in their correspondence, and he then sought to show that this form of greeting produced a far greater degree of trust than do the modern conventions of letter writing.²²

²²Ibid., p. 7. Koehler's awareness of literary forms came to the fore already in the days when he served at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin. Speaking about himself in the third person, in his "History of the Wisconsin Synod," Koehler wrote: "While Koehler was still at Watertown, tales had been borne to Hoenecke that he was guilty of false teaching in regard to the authorship of the Book of Job, its time, and the historical evaluation of the story it tells. . . . Hoenecke called Director Ernst's attention to the matter. . . . The following was Koehler's reply to inquiry in the matter. Neither the authorship of the Book of Job, nor the times of its writing, nor the historicity of the account in the first chapter are mentioned in the Bible, not even in Ezek. 14 and James 5, where the references are clearly to the teaching of the poetic composition. The didactic form of the poem points to the time between David and Ezekiel or the Babylonian Captivity. The first chapter bears a marked semblance to the Lord's parable of Dives and Lazarus. To argue that because Ezekiel mentions Job together with Noah and Daniel he must have been a real person in history appeals to Christian piety, but it must still be recognized that it is not the same situation as with Moses' relation about Melchizedek and the Book of Ruth's account regarding the ancestress of the Savior, since their historicity is fully covered in the New Testament, whereas the Book of Job is purely concerned about the dogmatic question of the righteousness of a child of God. When the assumption that Job was not a real person is used to represent him together with Noah and Daniel as creatures of human fiction and legendary characters, thus questioning the authenticity of the whole Old Testament, the same mistake is apparent of trying to solve a historical question with so-called science. But when the Savior chooses the same form for a story by which He intends to convey His teaching, as the first chapter of the Book of Job, it does

Koehler's comments on the salutation include a discussion of the Pauline authorship of the letter, and with this discussion he included a discussion of its canonicity.²³ It might be anticipated that as a church historian he would have included a discussion of the historical attestation for its canonicity. He avoided doing so for a theological reason, for he based the canonicity of a letter on the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the people who read the letter. He wrote:

It must be borne in mind, though, that in our day the authenticity of a letter dating from that period cannot be established by those means now employed in examining old manuscripts. But even if that were possible, the findings would have no special value, because such proof is based on nothing more reliable than human authority. It is only the conviction that it is at the same time connected with faith in the Savior, by which one is made a child of God, that deserves our attention. What the Savior said to the fickle-minded people that followed Him for the sake of material advantage and soon afterward cried "Crucify, crucify Him" before Pilate's judgment hall, also applies here: "He that is of God hears God's words. Therefore you do not hear them, because you are not of God." . . . The Christian, however, knows the Shepherd's voice, even as a child knows his mother's voice, even when he does not see the mother.²⁴

not conflict with the doctrine of inspiration to say the latter is a parable too, intended so by its author, and that is fully in keeping with Old Testament literature as a whole and ancient literature in general. . . . Whether Professor Hoenecke was accordingly advised, remained obscure; anyhow, he offered no objections to Koehler's election to the seminary professorship soon after and gave it his support." (Johann Philip Koehler, "The History of the Wisconsin Synod," Faith-Life, October 1942, p. 9).

²³Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, January 1936, p. 8.

²⁴Ibid. "Wir duerfen uns freilich nich verhehlen, dass man haute nicht mehr mit solchen Mitteln wie die, mit denen man jetzt Handschriften untersucht, die Echtheit eines Briefes aus jener Zeit nachweisen kann. Doch wenn man das auch koennte, so wuerde der Nachweis wenig besondere Bedeutung haben. Dergleichen kommt doch immer auf menschliches Autoritaetswesen heraus. Nur die Ueberzeugung kann fuer

Stoekhardt, too, did not offer a discussion of the question. He simply referred to the fact that this letter was a homologoumenon.²⁵ His patristic citations have the purpose of showing that the early church unanimously accepted the Pauline authorship of the letter to the Ephesians.²⁶

Stoekhardt's introduction treated of the Pauline authorship of Ephesians at some length, but he did not discuss the significance of the apposition, "an apostle . . . by the will of God." In his comments at 1:1 in the commentary proper, Stoekhardt merely said that he

uns in Betracht kommen, die zugleich in den Glauben an den Heiland eingeschlossen ist, wodurch man ein Kind Gottes wird. Hier gilt auch, was der Heiland selbst zu den Halbglaebigen sagte, die ihm um aeusserer Vorteile willen nachfolgten und dann im Gerichtshof des Pilatus das Kreuzige, Kreuzige ueber ihn riefen: Wer von Gott ist, der hoert Gottes Wort. Darum hoert ihr nicht, denn ihr seid nicht von Gott. . . . Ein Christ aber kennt die Stimme des Heilandes, wie ein Kind die Stimme der Mutter kennt, wenn es auch die Mutter nicht sieht." A similar statement which develops this insight appears in Koehler's review of Stoekhardt's commentary on First Peter. It reads: "Vergleichen wir in dieser Sache Pauli und Petri Schriften, da die Namen der Schreiber ueberliefert sind, mit den Evangelien, da das nicht der Fall ist. Ich lese die Schriften. Das Evangelium von dem Heil in Christo, das sie erzaehlen, spricht so unmittelbar an das Herz als das Wort des heil. Geistes, dass es sich Annahme erzeugt und dass man keinen anderen Beweis braucht. Es erfuehlt die Seele mit der Gewissheit der Vergebung der Suenden und dass dies Wahrheit ist, so dass keine Gewissheit staerker ist als diese. In diese Gewissheit ist selbstverstaendlich eingeschlossen alles, was sonst in diesen Schriften an uns herantritt: Die Tatsache, dass es Petrus und Paulus sind, die diese Botschaft bringen; dass diese Schriften, wie die des Alten Testaments, Wort fuer Wort von Gott eingegeben sind. Die Kraft dieser letzten Gewissheit ruht nicht auf einer rein intellektuellen rationation, sondern im Bewusstsein der Vergebung der Suenden, oder besser im Zeugnis des heil. Geistes. Nicht ich dring mit meiner Verstandsoperation durch zu der Erkenntnis, sondern des heil. Geistes Zeugnis dringt durch zu mir." (Johann Philip Koehler, "Buechertisch," Theologische Quartalschrift, X (1913), 66-67.

²⁵Stoekhardt, p. 1.

had given adequate consideration to the salutation in his introduction. His only other comment is: "Paul, who has been set apart and called as an apostle of Jesus Christ through God's express will directs the present letter to the saints and believers in Ephesus."²⁷

The contrast with Koehler's commentary is striking. In the introduction to the commentary Koehler attempted to sketch the life of Paul to describe his contacts with the Ephesian church. He then summarized Paul's activity until he became a prisoner in Rome. In that city Paul was held in moderate confinement and was able to minister to the congregation there. Koehler then continued:

From there he sent Tychicus to Ephesus and received from him a report from and about the congregation there. Again through him Paul sent this, his last letter to a congregation, to the congregation in which he had worked during his early ministry for the longest period of time. From there his last message could most readily be transmitted to all parts of the world.²⁸

At the same time Koehler attempted to place this letter into the proper setting in the course of Paul's personal development, when he commented:

Endowed with the clarified vision of a matured man, who has come to the end of his earthly course, Paul comprehended the work of the Gospel in its wide-ranging and all-embracing interrelationships and expressions, and with the emotions of his deeply moved soul he broke out into a doxology to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid., p. 33. "Paulus, der durch Gottes ausdruecklichen Willen zum Apostel Jesu Christi verordnet und berufen ist, widmet das vorliegende Sendschreiben den Heiligen und Glaebigen in Ephesus."

²⁸ Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, January 1936, p. 5. "Von dort her sandte er den Tychikus nach Ephesus und erhielt durch ihn auch die Botschaft aus und ueber die Gemeinde daselbst; und wieder durch ihn sandte er diesen seinen letzten Gemeindebrief an die Gemeinde, in welcher er in seiner Anfangsarbeit am Laengsten gewirkt hatte, und wo aus seine letzte Botschaft die schnellste und weiteste Verbreitung erfahren konnte."

²⁹ Ibid. "Mit dem abgeklaerten Weitblick eine erfahrenen Mannes, der mit dem Leben abgeschlossen hat, fasst er das Werk des Evangeliums

After the introduction in which he surveyed the usual problems of isagogics, Stoeckhardt made very little use of his findings in the interpretation of the letter to the Ephesians. The best way to demonstrate his neglect of this important area is to take note of his remarks which concern the circle of history and to compare them with those of Professor Koehler.

In the commentary proper on the salutation Koehler expanded his comments on the theme of a development in Paul's thought. He noted that when Paul used the term "apostle" in Ephesians the basic concept was the same as in Galatians 1:1, but the emphasis differed. In Galatians the emphasis lay on the fact that Paul's apostolate originated with God and Jesus Christ. In Ephesians the emphasis is that Paul is Christ's representative in carrying out Christ's work in the world by the proclamation of Christ crucified.³⁰ This change in emphasis, according to Koehler, shows how the Holy Spirit "takes into His service the natural development of human affairs and has these create for Him a mode of expression which is filled with the peculiar content of revelation."³¹

in weitschauenden, allumfassenden Zusammenhaengen und Ausdruecken und mit dem rhythmischen Schwung seiner start bewegten Seele in einen Lobpreis Gottes und unsers Herrn Jesu Christi zusammen." Koehler was not afraid to speak of the theological development of Paul. In commenting on the letter to the Roman church Koehler wrote: "Die Lehr-darstellung ist der Niederschlag dessen, was Paulus im Lauf der ersten Missionstaetigkeit in der oestlichen Haelfte der Mittelmeerlaender durch Studium der Schrift und durch Eingebung des Heiligen Geistes gelernt und mit zunehmender Reife dargestellt hatte." (Ibid., p. 5).

³⁰Ibid., January 1936, p. 7.

³¹Ibid. "durch die natuerliche Entwicklung der menschlichen Dinge sich eine Sprache und Ausdrucksweise schaffen laesst, die mit dem besonderen Inhalt der Offenbarung gefuell't ist . . ."

Another example of Stoeckhardt's lack of emphasis on the historical aspects of exegesis is his complete lack of commentary on the significance of the term hagioi in its reference to Christians. He simply paraphrased the term by "dedicated" (geweiht) and then passed on.³²

Koehler, on the other hand, discussed the fact that the Septuagint translators had five words of similar import available to them to render the Hebrew gadosh. Since the Greeks did not apply the term hagios to their gods, but rather used it in connection with earthly objects, the Septuagint translators adopted hagios as a rendering of gadosh. In this way there was no necessity to dissociate pagan notions from it. It could rather be invested with the peculiar content of divine revelation.³³

Paul's use of charis and eirene received only the briefest comments from Stoeckhardt. His entire commentary on these words is:

As he does at the beginning of all his letters, the apostle wishes for these, his Christian readers, grace and peace from God, our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, who has gained grace and peace with God for us. Christ, the Mediator of salvation, here appears as the Source of grace and peace together with the Father.³⁴

The contrast with Koehler's comments immediately strikes the reader. Koehler showed that the familiar word of greeting among the Greeks was chaire, for which Paul used the similar-sounding word charis, while

³²Stoeckhardt, p. 33.

³³Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, January 1936, p. 10. In passing Koehler also called attention to the fact that the semitic root gdsh had been used by non-Israelite peoples in a way similar to hagios among the Greeks. (Ibid.)

³⁴Stoeckhardt, p. 33. "Diesen seinen christlichen Lesern wuenscht der Apostel, wie er dies im Eingang aller seiner Briefe tut, Gnade und Frieden von Gott, unserm Vater, und dem Herrn Jesu Christo, der uns Gnade bei Gott und Frieden mit Gott erworben hat. Christus, der Heilmittler, erscheint aber hier zugleich, wie der Vater, als Urheber der Gnade und des Friedens."

the standard semitic greeting was shalōm, for which Paul used the Greek word which the Septuagint translators had used to render this concept, the word eirēnē, and he filled it with evangelical content.³⁵

In their comments on the lengthy paragraph 1:3-14 both Stoeckhardt and Koehler were in agreement that these verses form a doxology. Stoeckhardt, however, did not comment on why this doxology was appropriate at this point in the letter. Koehler, on the other hand, showed his historical interest in attempting to determine why this particular mode of presentation of the doctrine of election was used at this point. He compares a similar passage in Romans and argues that the manner of presentation in the letter to the Romans was the result of Paul's effort to acquaint the congregation in Rome with his way of preaching the Gospel. He therefore had to expound his teaching in detail. In the letter to the Ephesians, on the contrary, he could assume that the people whom he had instructed in Ephesus already knew this doctrine and could therefore join him in a doxology.³⁶

Even the connection between 1:3 and 1:4 offered Koehler an opportunity to operate with the circle of history. Stoeckhardt merely noted that kathōs as an argumentative particle did not fit the context, and he therefore favored Luther's rendering of the phrase kathōs exelexato hēmas as "wie er uns denn erwählt hat."³⁷ Koehler rather looked on Paul as a man of vigorous emotions. As a Pharisee he had persecuted the Christian church. But on the Damascus road Jesus had stopped his persecuting activity and had overcome him with His grace. Paul then

³⁵Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, January 1936, p. 10.

³⁶Ibid., February 1936, p. 11.

³⁷Stoeckhardt, p. 36.

served as the apostle to the Gentiles as vigorously as he had served as apostle of the Sanhedrin. He "had grasped with his whole heart the message of election by grace. . . . Such a man is not concerned about argumentation, but about a song to move the heart."³⁸

Unfortunately neither Dr. Stoeckhardt nor Professor Koehler entered into a discussion of hiliothesia, adoption, in the light of the culture of the first century of the Christian era. This omission shows that neither exegete employed the resources of the circle of history to full advantage in elucidating the text of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:15 is a passage where it is absolutely impossible for the commentator to avoid dealing with the circle of history. Stoeckhardt's comment on this passage reads:

That these words do not necessarily assume that the readers of the letter were personally unknown to the apostle has been shown in the introduction. Bengel: This can be referred not only to those unknown by sight, but also to those who are very familiar in the light of the present situation. . . . Therefore, during his Roman imprisonment, probably quite frequently, the apostle heard, possibly from Christian travelers from Asia, about the faith in the Lord Jesus which was evident among the Ephesians, through which they participated in the heavenly blessings. He also received reports about their present spiritual condition, and how their faith proved itself powerfully in love to the brethren, in love to all the saints, both Jewish and Gentile, without exception. This prompted him not to relax, but on their account to thank God the more, just as he previously had been accustomed to do.³⁹

³⁸Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, February 1936, p. 12. "Der Mann hat die Botschaft von der Wahl mit dem Herzen erfasst. . . . Dem ist nicht um argumentierendes Raesonnement zu tun, sondern um herzbeweglichen Gesang."

³⁹Stoeckhardt, pp. 98, 99. "Dass diese Worte nicht notwendig voraussetzen, dass die Leser des Briefes dem Apostel persoendlich unbekannt waren, ist in der Einleitung gezeigt worden. Bengel: Hoc referri

Koehler's reconstruction of the situation is more elaborate as well as more speculative. He began by referring to Tychicus, who was to be the bearer of the letter to the Ephesians. Koehler assumed that Tychicus was from Ephesus and had joined Paul as he continued his third missionary journey after a ministry of several years in Ephesus. At the conclusion of this journey in Jerusalem, Paul became a prisoner and was taken to Rome after his appeal to Caesar. While imprisoned in Rome, Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians. Tychicus was the bearer of this letter. On his way to and from Colossae, Tychicus had opportunity to visit Ephesus. He then returned to Rome and reported to Paul about the spiritual conditions in the Ephesian church.⁴⁰

Both explanations of how Paul came to hear of the conditions in Ephesus are speculative. They both are based on pieces of information contained in the New Testament itself. They differ in the interpretation of this information. The correct reconstruction of the situation cannot be deduced from the wording of the text, and one explanation has equal rights with the other.

potest non solum ad ignotos facie, sed etiam ad familiarissimos, pro statu eorum praesenti. . . . Der Apostel hatte also waehrend seiner roemischen Gefangenschaft und wohl zum oeffteren, jedenfalls durch seiner reisende Christen aus Asien, von dem Glauben an den HErrn Jesum, den sich bei den Ephesern vorfand, durch welchen sie an den vorher erwaehnten himmlischen Guetern Anteil hatten, von ihrem gegenwaertigen Glaubestand, und wie sich ihr Glaube, in der Bruderliebe, in der Liebe zu allen Heiligen ohne Unterschied, Judenchristen und Heidenchristen . . . kraeftig erwies, Kunde erhalten, und dies veranlasst ihn, nicht nachzulassen, ihretwegen Gott zu danken, wie er das schon vordem zu tuh pflegte."

⁴⁰Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, May 1936, p. 5. This reconstruction reflects a view that there was only one Roman captivity.

The phrase ton archonta tēs exousias tēs aeros in 2:2 has already received comment in the previous chapter. Further discussion is unnecessary.⁴¹

The sharp distinction between Jews and Gentiles comes to the fore in the discussion of 2:11-12. This cleavage had already been hinted at in 1:11-14. This distinction plagued the church in the apostolic age, and Paul sought to deal with it in these verses. Stoeckhardt referred to the physical mark of circumcision as a mark of the Jew, and the lack of physical circumcision as a mark of the Gentile. He then continued:

At the time when Paul wrote these words, this way of speaking about the Gentiles on the part of the Jews was very common. It made no difference to them whether the uncircumcised Gentiles were Christians or non-Christians.⁴²

Koehler elaborated the same ideas as did Stoeckhardt and then attempted to show that this attitude toward people outside the in-group was extremely common in the ancient world. He wrote:

The Greek word for Gentiles, *ethnē*, is the translation of the Hebrew goim, which signifies "nations," all nations outside Israel. In the vocabulary of the Jews this term acquired a derogatory tone, similar to the term "foreigner" among us. The Greeks, and after them, the Romans termed all nations barbarians, uncivilized. The two expressions show the difference in outlook which is expressed by these terms. The Jews considered themselves to be God's people. Their principle of evaluation was religious in nature. The Romans and Greeks on the other hand allowed the religions of other people to have a recognized status, but they considered themselves to be specially endowed people, who by right were the masters of the world.⁴³

⁴¹Supra, pp.

⁴²Stoeckhardt, pp. 141-142. "Denn zur Zeit, da Paulus diese Worte schreibt, ging diese Rede der Juden ueber die Heiden noch im Schwange; das machte fuer die Juden keinen Unterschied, ob die unbeschnittenen Heiden Nichtchristen oder Christen waren."

⁴³Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, July 1936, p. 5. "Das griechische Wort fuer Heiden, *ethnae* [sic!] ist die Uebersetzung des

From these two quotations it becomes evident that Koehler was much more alert than Stoeckhardt to placing the terminology which Paul was using into the cultural and social setting of the ancient world. He was alert to this aspect of interpretation, so that he might assist his readers to gain an insight into the way of thinking which was common among both Jews and Gentiles in the first century of the Christian era, for in his opinion the epistles could be correctly understood only in this light.

When Paul spoke about the "middle wall of partition" (to mesostoi-
chon toy phragmou) in 2:14 Stoeckhardt regarded this expression merely as a literary figure and made no effort to identify the exact portion of the building to which Paul was referring.⁴⁴ Koehler recognized the legitimacy of such an inquiry, but he felt that the identifications which had been proposed by previous interpreters were unsatisfactory. The exact identification was not necessary, however, since Paul was using a metaphor, which received its interpretation from the appositional phrase which followed.⁴⁵

hebraeischen Wortes gojim [sic!] das "Voelker," alle Voelker ausser Israel bedeutet. Das Wort bekam im Munde des Juden leicht eine veraechtlichen Klang, aehnlich, wie bei uns hierzulande das Wort foreigner. Die Griechen und ihnen nach die Roemer nannten alle anderen Voelker Barbaren, Ungebildete. Die beiden Audruecke zeigen die Verschiedenheit der ganzen Weltanschauung, die sich darin ausspricht. Die Juden hielten sich fuer Gottes Volk. Ihr Einschaetzungsprinzip ist religioeser Natur. Roemer und Griechen dagegen liessen die Religionen anderer Voelker gelten, hielten sich aber fuer besonders begabte Menschen, die Anspruch darauf hatten, die Herren der Welt zu sein."

⁴⁴Stoeckhardt, p. 144.

⁴⁵Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, July 1936, p. 6.

In 2:15 Stoeckhardt simply assumed the definition of the term dogma,⁴⁶ whereas Koehler attempted to anchor it specifically in the culture of the first century by making reference to the decrees of the Roman senate and the decrees of the emperor, both of which were termed dogmata.⁴⁷

The listing of church offices in 4:11 is a clear test of the exegete's use of the resources of the circle of history. Stoeckhardt defined the various offices mentioned in this verse as follows: The apostles were (and are) the infallible teachers of all Christendom, and their doctrine is determinative for the doctrine of all Christian teachers of all times. Prophets and evangelists were special gifts of God to the early church. The prophets--here the reference is to the prophets of the New Testament era--received special revelations from God for a specific purpose, and they brought these revelations to the attention of the assembled congregation in an ecstatic manner. The evangelists proclaimed the Gospel on the missionary journeys to those places where the apostles could not come. By the terms "pastors and teachers" Paul described the regular ministry of the Word, which in all ages of the church has been and remained the same. The term "teacher" referred to the instructional aspect of the preacher's work, and the term "pastor" (or "shepherd") to the cure of souls, by applying God's Word to the individual members of the congregation.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Stoeckhardt, p. 144.

⁴⁷Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, July 1937, p. 7.

⁴⁸Stoeckhardt, p. 198.

Koehler also offered a statement as to the function of these gifts to the church. The apostles, in the limited sense of the term, were the bearers of the Gospel. They had been called by Christ and were specially filled with the Holy Spirit. Koehler also recognized that the term was used more comprehensively to include the companions of the apostles and their helpers, as well as emissaries of local congregations. The term "prophet" does not denote an office but a function. The "evangelists" were probably the practical preachers while the term "teacher" here denoted an individual who gave systematic instruction. The term "pastor" referred to the characteristic activity of personal ministrations.⁴⁹ After noting that in his view the term edōken in this verse did not mean "instituted" Koehler continued:

To this consideration we must add the historical course taken by the apostolic church in gradually systematizing the offices. During the days of the apostles probably no uniform system ever developed. For such development authority is requisite; and, as long as the apostles lived, that probably did not gain the upper hand, not even in Ephesus while John was there. In Jerusalem the office of deacons was soon organized; and about nine years later we find the elders there at the meeting improperly termed the "Apostolic Council" (Acts 15). We meet bishops only in the captivity letters, and here the institution is by no means complete. This organization originated essentially in the same way as it has happened throughout the entire history of the church, down into our century, whenever a new church organization began. The missionaries arrange matters, appoint people to take care of time and place and other matters necessary for meetings. Not until later do these things become congregational affairs in the sense that they are managed independently by the congregation. At first the only essential requirement is that the Word be preached and heard until it bears fruit.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, January 1937, p. 7.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 7-8. "Dazu kommt der geschichtliche Verlauf der allmählichen Einrichtung der Aemter in der apostolischen Kirche. Da ist in der Apostelzeit wahrscheinlich ueberhaupt nie ein gleichgeformtes System geworden. Denn dazu gehoert das Herrschen: und das wird wohl

In connection with his exposition of the development of church offices in the apostolic church Koehler had some trenchant remarks about the lack of historical understanding on the part of many theologians.

He stated:

In this connection I have always discovered a lack of understanding of the way in which biblical history is presented. As is done so frequently, the historical presentation of the Bible is not applied to the understanding of doctrine, which, of course, is the acid test. Historical events and developments are rather defined according to dogmatic, preconceived notions. Attentive listening, even when the Scriptures are silent, appears to me to be the most difficult task in theological study.⁵¹

Both Stoeckhardt and Koehler recognized the difficulty inherent in the quotation given in 5:14. Stoeckhardt discussed the possibility that Paul was quoting Isaiah 60:1, but doing it in a very free fashion. He rejected that possibility, as well as references to Isaiah 29:19 or 9:1. He rejected unconditionally the possibility that these words were a quotation from an apocryphal (did he mean pseudepigraphical?) book, as well

nicht bei Lebzeiten der Apostel, nicht einmal in Ephesus, solange Johannes da war, durchgedrungen sein. In Jerusalem hatten sie bald die Diakonen eingerichtet, und etwa neun Jahre spaeter finden wir die Aeltesten da auf der irrtuemlich "Apostelkonvent" genannten Versammlung Apg. 15. Die Bischoefe finden sich nur, wie oben gezeigt, in den Gefangenschaftsbriefen. Und da erscheint die Einrichtung immer noch unvollendet. Diese Organisation ist wesentlich so entstanden, wie das in der ganzen Kirchengeschichte bis in unser Jahrhundert hinein immer geschah, wo ein neues Kirchenwesen entstand. Die Missionare richten die Dinge ein, ernennen Leute, die dafuer sorgen, dass Zeit und Ort der Versammlungen, und was sonst zum aeusseren Ablauf derselben gehoert, innegehalten wird. Und erst spaeter werden diese Dinge in dem Sinn Gemeindeangelegenheiten, dass sie selbststaendig von der Gemeinde gehandhabt werden. Zunaechst ist nur das wesentlich, dass das Wort gepredigt und gehoert werde, bis es Frucht schafft."

⁵¹Ibid., p. 8. "In dieser Hinsicht habe ich immer einen Mangel an Verstaendnis fuer biblische Geschichtsdarstellung gefunden. Statt dass die Geschichtsdarstellung der Schrift fuer Auffassung von Lehre, wenn auch nur als Probe auf das Exempel, in Anwendung kommt, werden geschichtliche Vorgaenge und Entwicklungen nach dogmatischen Vorurtheilen bestimmt. Das hoerende Aufmerken auch grade da, wo die Schrift schweigt, scheint das Schwierigste im theologischen Studium zu sein."

as the suggestion that these words are an agraphon of Jesus. He did not reject out of hand the possibility that the quotation came from an early Christian hymn, and he offered some arguments in support of this theory. Ultimately, however, he was forced to say: The case is not proved.⁵²

Koehler, on the other hand, suggested that the background for this quotation is Isaiah 60:1 and 59:20 in combination. He rejected the hymnic theory which Stoeckhardt had favored and preferred to think of the citation as a targumic reproduction of the thought of the passages mentioned above.⁵³

Once again both exegetes showed an interest in a historical interpretation of the passage, but they arrived at widely differing conclusions on the basis of the evidence and on the basis of their reconstruction of the situation in the early church. The biblical evidence is insufficient to determine the correctness of either interpretation.

Other passages might be discussed from the commentaries of both Dr. Stoeckhardt and Professor Koehler. Those passages which have been considered, however, are adequate to show the basic stance of each scholar toward the use of the circle of history in the interpretation of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Even though Dr. Stoeckhardt did not employ the circle of history to the fullest advantage in his interpretation of the letter of Paul to the Ephesians, he was not averse to the proper use of "history" in the interpretation of Scripture. In his introduction to his magnum

⁵²Stoeckhardt, p. 233.

⁵³Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, April 1937, p. 7.

opus, his commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans, he discussed his methodology of interpretation. He stated:

The method followed in the present commentary, continuous, coherent explanation and exposition . . . seemed to me to correspond best to the . . . purpose of the exposition. In the so-called glossatorial method, which attaches linguistic matters and items of content to individual segments of the text, one may easily lose the train of thought and the connection of ideas with one another. When, on the other hand . . . one treats of the grammatical, lexical, historical, and archaeological material in notes and limits the real exegetical exposition to a free reproduction of the content of the letter, those items which belong closely together, language and matter, form and content, are torn apart.⁵⁴

The significant statement for the present discussion is Stoeckhardt's acknowledgment of the necessity of dealing with both historical and archaeological materials in the exposition of the text of Scripture. Even though on occasion his interpretation balks this aspect of the task, still he does recognize the necessity for such an approach.

Koehler's expression of his viewpoint concerning the use of the resources of the circle of history in interpretation is much more detailed. He wrote:

One approaches the treatment of a psalm, prophecy, a Gospel, or an apostolic letter in the following manner. The text which is to be studied is regarded as a revelation of God, by means of

⁵⁴ G[eorg] Stoeckhardt, Commentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Roemer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1907), p. iii. "Die im vorliegenden Commentar befolgte Methode, fortlaufende, zusammenhaengende Erklaerung und Entwicklung . . . schien mir dem . . . Zweck der Auslegung am besten zu entsprechen. Bei der sogenannten glossatorischen Methode, welche an einzelne Testesbestandtheile sprachliche und sachliche Bemerkungen anknuepft, verliert man leicht den Gedankengang und Gedankenzusammenhang. Wenn man hingegen . . . das grammatische, lexikalische, historische, archaeologische Material in Anmerkungen behandelt und die eigentlich exegetische Darlegung auf freie Reproduktion des Briefinhalts beschraenkt, wird eng Zusammengehoeriges, Sprache und Sache, Form und Inhalt, auseinandergerissen."

which He, through the holy writer, steps into the condemned world of sinners and into a specific environment narrowed down and shaped by human limitations of many kinds--in the Old Testament, the people of Israel, in the New Testament, the Diaspora among Graeco-Roman paganism. Before one can begin studying the text in a detailed manner, this historical situation must be clear. And to this belongs the entire cultural life of the respective peoples, their religion, government, art, science, social customs, etc., down to the smallest details. And indeed, all this is to be considered in the form which it achieved through sin in all of the aforementioned relationships, in the way that history documents them.⁵⁵

Summary

It is now possible to summarize the similarities and differences between Dr. Stoeckhardt and Professor Koehler with reference to their use of the resources of the circle of history in the interpretation of the biblical text.

1. Both Stoeckhardt and Koehler recognized the need for placing a writing into its historical context.
 - a. Stoeckhardt, however, emphasized that the teaching of the letter was intended for the church of all ages. He

⁵⁵ Johann Philip Koehler, "Unsere poetische musikalische Ausdrucksformen, gemessen an den Formen der Schrift, Luthers und des lutherischen Gemeindelieds im XVI, Jahrhundert. Studien ueber den Text At Eventide von Herzberger, Schumacher und Reuter," Theologische Quartalschrift, XIV (1917), 203-204. "Es tritt an die Bearbeitung eines Psalms, einer Weissagung, eines Evangeliums oder eines Apostelbriefes in folgender Weise heran. Der vorliegende Text wird aufgefasst als eine Offenbarung Gottes, mit der er durch den heiligen Autor in die verdammte Suenderwelt in einem durch vielseitige menschliche Beschraenkungen genauer bestimmten Kreis antritt, im Alten Testament in das Volk Israel, in Neuen Testament in die Diaspora unter dem griechisch-roemischen Heidentum. Ehe man an das Einzelstudium des Textes herantreten kann, muss diese geschichtliche Situation klar sein. Und dazu gehoert das gesamte Kulturleben des betreffenden Volkes in Religion, Verfassung, Kunst, Wissenschaft, Volkssitte, etc., bis in die kleinste Einzelheiten hinein. Und zwar dies alles in der Gestalt aufgefasst, die durch die Suende in allen genannten Beziehungen gerade so geworden, wie sie historische festgestellt ist."

therefore looked at the text as offering broad, generalized statements of doctrine.

- b. Koehler sought to understand every statement of the text in its original historical setting. He regarded the biblical record as being primarily historical and kerygmatic in nature.
2. The aspect of the circle of history which deals with culture, geography, economics, etcetera, was much more fully exploited by Stoeckhardt than by Koehler.
3. Both scholars were ready to use the information derived from biblical sources in an effort to effect a reconstruction of the original historical setting in which the events referred to in the text occurred. The two scholars did not always agree in their proposed reconstructions.
4. Koehler observed a development in Paul's understanding of the Gospel, while Stoeckhardt refused to do so, since he held that Paul was granted a full insight into the Gospel at the time of his conversion.
5. Neither exegete consistently employed the resources of the circle of history in seeking to understand Paul's letter to the congregation at Ephesus. Stoeckhardt did not feel the necessity for the employment of these resources, because he emphasized the abstract, propositional truths contained in the biblical text. Koehler, however, was far more alert to the possibilities inherent in the use of these resources, since he stressed the fact that the letter was written to a particular situation in the life of the early church.
6. Professor Koehler was particularly aware of the significance which a cultural context in which a word was used offered for determining its meaning and overtones.
7. Both exegetes recognized the limitations of history in the establishment of the place of Ephesians in the canon.

CHAPTER VI

THE CIRCLE OF THEOLOGY

The statement by Professor Johann Philip Koehler that the text to be interpreted determines the rules of hermeneutics has already been cited.¹ In the light of this statement, one chapter has already been devoted to a study of the views of both Dr. Georg Stoeckhardt and Professor Johann Philip Koehler with reference to the nature and inspiration of the Bible.² Since both exegetes maintained that the Scriptures are the written Word of God, they necessarily had to observe a number of theological principles of hermeneutics which derive from this fact. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine in some detail the theological principles of interpretation which underlie the expositions of Paul's letter to the Ephesians given by these two biblical expositors.

The Interpreter Himself

Neither Stoeckhardt nor Koehler made any effort to describe in detail the moral or spiritual qualifications which are requisite for the proper interpretation of the Bible. Both scholars, however, were in agreement on one basic personal qualification which the exegete must possess if he is to interpret Scripture properly: he must be a believing child of God.

¹Supra, 42.

²Supra, pp. 42-59.

Georg Stoeckhardt

Stoeckhardt did not specifically spell out the requirement that the interpreter must be a man of faith. He seems rather to have taken this requirement for granted. Throughout his commentary on Paul's letter to the Ephesians, as well as in his other commentaries, he used the words "we" and "us," as well as the phrases "we Christians" and "we Lutherans" in contexts which showed that he was assuming that he and his readers were participating in the spiritual blessings about which he was commenting at the hand of the biblical text.³ Such a participation is the consequence of a personal faith on the part of the interpreter and is anticipated on the part of those who are employing the commentary.

Such faith is a gift of God, and it is not the result of man's activity. Stoeckhardt's participation in the free conferences between representatives of the Synodical Conference, on the one hand, and representatives of the Ohio, Iowa, Buffalo, and Norwegian synods on the other, helped him to penetrate deeply into the biblical teaching concerning conversion. As a leading spokesman for the Synodical Conference at these meetings, he underscored the total inability of unconverted man to contribute in any way to his conversion. The fruits of his study of the biblical doctrine of conversion appear in a lengthy excursus in his commentary on Paul's letter to the Ephesians.⁴

³ Georg Stoeckhardt, Kommentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Epheser (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), passim.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 127-139.

Since man is by nature spiritually blind and dead, he cannot comprehend the mystery of the Gospel with his own innate powers. He requires the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A biblical interpreter, then, who lacks faith is an anomaly, since he would lack a basic requirement for functioning effectively as an interpreter of the Scriptures.⁵

In Stoeckhardt's view a man of faith will subject himself unconditionally to the authority of the Scriptures and will not attempt to introduce foreign norms into their interpretation.⁶ He will, instead, follow the basic Lutheran principle that the Scriptures interpret themselves.⁷ Concerning this absolute submission to Scripture Stoeckhardt wrote:

A theologian should study the Scriptures. . . . Meditation belongs to those elemental requirements which make a theologian. But what is proper meditation? Not that a person spins out webs of ideas from his own wisdom. For then, in the best of circumstances, he would be building with hay, straw, and stubble. No, meditation consists in drawing from the Scriptures the thoughts which God has placed into the Scriptures and in taking them up into one's own way of thinking.⁸

⁵Georg Stoeckhardt, "Vom Schriftstudium der Theologen," Lehre und Wehre, XXXI (1885), 262.

⁶Infra, 118-124.

⁷Stoeckhardt, Lehre und Wehre, XXXI, 263.

⁸Ibid. "Ein Theologe soll die Schrift studieren. . . . Zu den Stuecken, die einen Theologen machen, gehoert die Meditation. Was ist denn aber die rechte Meditation? Nicht dass man aus seiner eigenen Weisheit Gedankenfaeden spinnt. Dann foerdert man in besten Fall nur Heu, Stroh, Stoppeln zu Tage. Nein, dass man die goetlichen Gedanken, die Gott selbst in die Schrift niedergelegt hat, aus der Schrift herausnimmt und in die eigenen Gedanken aufnimmt."

Johann Philip Koehler

Professor Koehler, too, said little specifically about the spiritual and moral requirements of the biblical interpreter. Like his teacher, Koehler did not offer an elaborate listing of the spiritual qualifications which an exegete must possess if he is to function properly as an interpreter of the Word of God. Instead, Koehler mentioned only one spiritual requirement: faith.⁹

Faith, for Koehler, is the basic element of the Christian life.¹⁰ Through his faith in Jesus Christ, the exegete comes to the certainty that the Scriptures, which assure him of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake, are the Word of God.¹¹ He will recognize that he had received the ability to interpret the Scriptures as a gift from God. Just as Joseph attributed to God his ability to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker (Gen. 40:8), the exegete must give due credit to God for the ability to interpret the Scriptures.¹²

As a corollary of this fact that exegetical skill is a divine gift, Koehler stressed the necessity for the exegete to submit himself

⁹Johann Philip Koehler, "Die Heilige Schrift als Grundlage aller Theologie," Katalog des Theologischen Seminars der Allgemeinen Ev.-Luth. Synode von Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan u. a. St. bei Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1913-1914 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1913), p. 22.

¹⁰Johann Philip Koehler, "Der Glaube, das Urwesen des Christenlebens auf der Erde," Theologische Quartalschrift, XXVI (1927), 2.

¹¹Koehler, Katalog, p. 14.

¹²Johann Philip Koehler, "Schriftauslegung in der Schrift," Faith-Life, August 1935, p. 9.

to the Scriptures, acknowledging them as the Word of the living God.¹³

He dare not set himself up as a judge of what the text says. He dare not reject if for any reason or contrive to evade its clear meaning.¹⁴

The demand that the exegete operate without presuppositions was for Koehler an evidence of unbelief.¹⁵

To the charge that the demand for faith on the part of the interpreter would lead to subjectivism, Koehler countered:

To the charge of subjectivism . . . it is sufficient to point out that faith in the Savior is the most subjective operation of the heart and at the same time the most objective operation of the intellect. It is produced by the Holy Spirit, and that alone touches objective truth.¹⁶

Scripture Interprets Itself

Neither Stoeckhardt nor Koehler would have questioned the validity of the Lutheran principle that the Scriptures interpret themselves. For each exegete it was a commonplace. For committed, confessionally oriented Lutherans no other stance was possible.

Georg Stoeckhardt

Stoeckhardt repeatedly demonstrated his application of this hermeneutical principle in his commentary on Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

¹³ Koehler, Katalog, p. 21.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁶ Johann Philip Koehler, "Pauli Hochgesang von Christo, Auslegung des Briefes an die Epheser," Faith-Life, January 1936, p. 7. "Gegen den Vorwurf des Subjektivismus . . . genuegt der Hinweis, dass der Glaube an den Heiland die allersubjektivste Regung des Herzens und zugleich die allerobjektivste Taetigkeit des Verstandes ist. Das wird vom Heiligen Geist gewirkt, und das allein trifft die objektive Wahrheit."

For example, in his examination of the word eklegesthai, which is of prime importance for the understanding of what the Scriptures teach concerning election, Stoeckhardt canvassed the usage of the word and its cognates in classical Greek, in the Septuagint, as well as in the New Testament itself.¹⁷ He was particularly concerned to ascertain its use in theological contexts in which God is the Actor and in which individuals are chosen.¹⁸ While he gave consideration to classical usage, biblical usage in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, was for him the primary concern. By this approach he revealed his determination to allow the Scriptures to define the meaning of this significant term.

In his use of Scripture to interpret Scripture, Stoeckhardt seemingly had a tendency to limit himself to certain aspects of this approach to interpretation. On the one hand, he frequently cited biblical usage in matters of lexicography and grammar.¹⁹ On the other hand, he often confined his citation of Scripture to those passages where explicit doctrinal assertions were being made. He cited numerous biblical parallels and used them to buttress a particular doctrinal point,²⁰ a practice which cannot help but remind the reader of the methodology of the dogmaticians of the Age of Orthodoxy.

The quotation of Psalm 68:19 in Ephesians 4:7 raises the question of Stoeckhardt's understanding of the relationship of the Old to the

¹⁷Stoeckhardt, Epheser, pp. 37-41.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁹E.g., ibid., p. 70.

²⁰Ibid., e.g., pp. 67, 80, etc.

New Testament. Dr. William E. Goerss has adequately summarized Stoeckhardt's approach to the Old Testament. According to Stoeckhardt:

Salvation is clearly declared in the Old Testament in Jesus Christ, because the Spirit of Christ spoke through the prophets. In the same way this Spirit of Christ spoke through Isaiah in order to reveal "die neutestamentliche Gnade, die Leiden Christi und die Herrlichkeit hernach." The heart and core of prophecy is Christ.²¹

Goerss continued:

The difference between the Old and New Testament declaration of Jesus Christ is simply this, that believers in the Old Testament believed on the Christ who was to come and the New Testament believers on the Christ who had come and who had appeared in the flesh. Abraham and David were saved by faith in Jesus Christ.²²

For Stoeckhardt the entire Old Testament was a type of the New. The various ordinances of the Old Testament cultus, the sacrificial system, the tabernacle, the temple, the Sabbath day, circumcision, and the like, were to direct the attention of the Old Testament believers to the good gifts which were to come in the Messiah.²³ It is somewhat mystifying, in the light of this approach to the Old Testament, to observe that Stoeckhardt explicitly rejected the possibility of typical prophecy.²⁴ He did so on the ground that the acceptance of this approach to prophecy would undermine the hermeneutical principle that

²¹William Elmer Goerss, "Some of the Hermeneutical Presuppositions and Part of the Exegetical Methodology of Georg Stoeckhardt" (Unpublished Doctor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1964), pp. 50-51.

²²Ibid., p. 51.

²³Georg Stoeckhardt, Die Biblische Geschichte des Alten Testaments (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1895), p. 115.

²⁴Stoeckhardt, Epheser, p. 190.

Scripture has only one intended sense.²⁵ Because of his rigid insistence on this principle, Stoeckhardt interpreted the quotation of Psalm 68:19 in Ephesians 4:7 as a rectilinear prophecy of the activity of the ascended Christ on behalf of His church.²⁶

In the light of Stoeckhardt's views concerning the Old Testament, the statement of Baepler that "Stoeckhardt clearly has a developed sense of history and historical development which one would expect from a student of von Hofmann" is inexplicable.²⁷ From Stoeckhardt's point of view there was little difference between the Old and New Testaments. Goerss' statement is more to the point: "Stoeckhardt does not allow for a growth in the degree to which God revealed His truth, but He does allow different historical circumstances to illustrate eternal truths which can be stated propositionally."²⁸

Johann Philip Koehler

Like Stoeckhardt, Koehler was also committed to a soundly Lutheran hermeneutics. He also advocated the principle that Scripture interprets

²⁵Georg Stoeckhardt, "Weissagung und Erfuellung," Lehre und Wehre, XXX (1884), 127. For a more extended discussion of Stoeckhardt's approach see William J. Hassold, "Rectilinear or Typological Interpretation of Messianic Prophecy?", Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXVIII (1967), 157-159.

²⁶Stoeckhardt, Epheser, pp. 190-194. Missouri Synod exegetes, until comparatively recent times, have followed Stoeckhardt's approach to Messianic prophecy. In recent years a different approach has been adopted. See Hassold, Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXVIII, 155-167, for evidence of this change.

²⁷Richard Baepler, "The Hermeneutics of Johannes Christian Konrad von Hofmann with Special Reference to his Influence on Georg Stoeckhardt" (Unpublished Bachelor of Divinity Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1954), p. 46.

²⁸Goerss, p. 61.

itself. His application of this principle, however, showed somewhat differing emphases from those of his teacher.

Like Stoeckhardt, Koehler was concerned about word study. In an early volume of the Theologische Quartalschrift Koehler offered a study of the Greek verb eklegesthai.²⁹ In his commentary on Paul's letter to the Ephesians he drew upon the results of this study.³⁰ In his article on the analogy of faith Koehler also offered an extensive study of the Greek word pistis.³¹ His methodology of referring in passing to classical usage but in stressing particularly biblical usage is in fundamental agreement with the method followed by Stoeckhardt.

A study of Koehler's approach to the broader aspects of the principle that Scripture interprets itself shows distinct difference between Stoeckhardt and Koehler. Koehler was receptive to the idea of Heilsgeschichte.³² Throughout his commentary on Paul's letter to the Ephesians he pointed to the role of Israel in the Old Testament as the people of God, and to the role of the church in the New Testament age as God's people.³³ Koehler had a much more dynamic view of the activity of God, who was active in history. Koehler did not attempt to indicate

²⁹Johann Philip Koehler, Theologische Quartalschrift, II (1905), 156-179.

³⁰Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, February 1936, p. 12.

³¹Johann Philip Koehler, "Die Analogie des Glaubens," Theologische Quartalschrift, I (1904), 28-31.

³²Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, December 1936, p. 6.

³³Ibid., April 1936, p. 4.

how the people of the Old Testament times were saved, except to say that it was through faith.³⁴ Koehler made the very significant statement:

It is unprofitable to try to determine the extent of the knowledge of the way of salvation among those people of olden times. We cannot say more than what the Scriptures expressly offer. Even the Savior's statement in John 8:56 . . . does not say more than that Abraham in faith laid hold on the salvation which was to come through the Messiah.³⁵

From the preceding quotation someone might conclude the Koehler did not believe in Messianic prophecy. Such a conclusion would be false. He did not, like Stoeckhardt, a priori rule out the possibility of typical prophecy. Like his one-time colleague, Professor August Pieper,³⁶ he recognized that a prophecy might be either rectilinear or typical in character.³⁷ He did not specifically answer the objection which Stoeckhardt raised as to the legitimacy of typical prophecy; but, if he had, his answer most probably would have been that a typical prophecy has only one intended sense, and that this sense is broad enough to allow for multiple fulfillments.

Messianic prophecy, according to Koehler, was shadowy in character. On this topic he stated:

³⁴Koehler, "Der Glaube," Theologische Quartalschrift, XXVI, p. 14.

³⁵Ibid., XXVI, 13-14. "Es ist unfruchtbar, darueber etwas feststellen zu wollen, in welchem Masse die Lehrerkenntnis in unserm Sinne von Heil bei jenen Alten vorlag. Wir koennen nicht mehr davon aussagen, als was die Schrift ausdruecklich an die Hand gibt. Auch des Heilandes Bemerkung Joh. 8, 56 . . . sagt nicht mehr darueber, als dass Abraham im Glauben das Heil ergriff, das durch den Messias kommen sollte."

³⁶August Pieper, Jesaias II, Kommentar ueber den zweiten Teil des Propheten Jesaias (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1919), 14-15.

³⁷Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, December 1936, p. 5.

The Old Testament text cannot be expected to describe a future occurrence as an eyewitness would describe its fulfillment. Prophecies of every sort, like the entire economy of the Old Covenant, remain silhouettes which no one in the Old Testament viewed with his spiritual eyes as does an eye-witness of the New Testament with his physical senses.³⁸

In the quotation of Psalm 68:19 in Ephesians 4:7 Koehler showed a marked divergence from the interpretation offered by Stoeckhardt. In Stoeckhardt's view Psalm 68 was a rectilinear Messianic prophecy of the activity of the ascended Christ. Koehler, on the other hand, opted for a typical interpretation of this psalm. It referred in the first instance to a victory of the Israelites over their enemies. This historical event, however, did not exhaust the significance of the psalm. It also typified the victory which Christ gained and the participation of the church in the fruits of that victory.³⁹

One Simple Intended Sense

Another fundamental theological principle of hermeneutics as practiced within the Lutheran church is: Scripture has only one intended sense. If there were more than one sense intended, the result would be utter uncertainty as to the message of the Scriptures. Because of the importance of this principle, both Stoeckhardt and Koehler took great care to attempt to discover what the biblical text was actually saying.

³⁸ Ibid. "Aber man darf von dem alttestamentlichen Text nicht erwarten, dass er von dem zukuenftigen Ereignis so referieren soll wie ein Augenzeuge der Erfuellung. Die Weissagungen jeder Art bleiben, wie die ganze Oekonomie des Alten Bundes, Schattenbilder, die niemand im Alten Testament mit seinem Geistesauge sah wie ein Augenzeuge des Neuen Testaments mit seinem leiblichen Sinnen."

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

In Stoeckhardt's commentary much space is devoted to a consideration of the interpretations of the biblical text offered by various commentators.⁴⁰ He repeatedly referred to various interpreters' views and debated them. He was not a slavish follower of any one particular commentator's views as to the meaning of the biblical text. He evaluated various suggested interpretations in the light of grammar, lexicography, and the consistent teaching of the Scriptures.⁴¹

Koehler, too, assumed that one intended sense is contained in the wording of the biblical text. Like Stoeckhardt, Koehler used the work of previous commentators, though he generally failed to cite them by name. Such an absence of citation occurs on principle. He did not regard such references to the views of previous commentators as being particularly helpful in determining the intended sense of the passage. Lengthy listings of views with which the commentator disagrees only obscure the meaning of the biblical text.⁴²

The emphasis which Professor Koehler sought to maintain was that the interpretation of Scripture follows the natural processes of thought and interpretation which any unprejudiced person will follow in the reading and interpretation of any ordinary human document.⁴³ He wanted every statement to be interpreted in the light of its context.⁴⁴ He was

⁴⁰For a listing of all the commentators whose works are explicitly referred to in Stoeckhardt's commentaries, see Goerss, pp. 381-413.

⁴¹Stoeckhardt, Epheser, passim.

⁴²Koehler, "Schriftauslegung," Faith-Life, July 1935, p. 4.

⁴³Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 4.

particularly opposed to the pressing of the wording of a passage at the expense of its obvious intention.⁴⁵ On this subject he wrote:

The simplest, and at the same time, the most adequate manner of explaining or interpreting a speech or a document is to show how the author arrived at the words which he used and which are now to be interpreted. For this it is necessary to know the author, his characteristics, and the circumstances of the speech, such as the audience, the purpose and goal of the speaker, and so forth.⁴⁶

As an illustration of what he regarded as proper hermeneutical procedure, Koehler referred in several articles to the simple, uncomplicated method which Christ and His apostles followed in their interpretation of passages from the Old Testament.⁴⁷ In his view, this was the correct procedure for a Lutheran to follow in doing exegesis.⁴⁸

In a previous chapter reference has already been made to Koehler's insistence that Paul's statements in 4:11-16 are to be interpreted in the light of the historical developments in the early church.⁴⁹ This emphasis was for Koehler more than a formal acknowledgment of the circle of history; it was also a theological affirmation. Koehler maintained

⁴⁵ Ibid. For an example of the procedure to which Koehler objected, see his article "Glaube und Liebe," Theologische Quartalschrift, XIII (1916), 137-140.

⁴⁶ Ibid. "Die einfachste und zugleich vollstaendigste Weise, eine Rede oder Schrift zu erklaren oder auszulegen, ist die, dass man zeigt wie der Auto dazu kommt, gerade die Worte zu gebrauchen, die zur Auslegung vorliegen. Dazu ist noetig, dass man den Autor, seine besondere Art, die Umstaende der Rede, naemlich Hoererschaft, Aufgabe und Ziel des Redenden und dergleichen kennen lernt."

⁴⁷ Koehler, "Analogie," Theologische Quartalschrift, XIII, 83-90; "Schriftauslegung," Faith-Life, August 1935, pp. 9-14; September, 1935, pp. 5-8.

⁴⁸ Johann Philip Koehler, "Die Exegese von 'Das ist mein Leib' ein Beispiel der Hermeneutik, welche lutherische Theologie eigen ist," Theologische Quartalschrift, IV (1907), 65-83.

⁴⁹ Supra, 101-102.

that God's activity took place in history, and that therefore the true exegete must be a historian if he is to arrive at a correct and adequate understanding of the sense of Scripture.⁵⁰

No Norm Beyond Scripture

Further clarification of the theological principles of hermeneutics which Stoeckhardt and Koehler employed may come from an examination of those interpretations which they rejected and by a study of the reasons which they offered for such rejection. The principle that Scripture is its own interpreter carries certain very definite implications for proper biblical exegesis. Among these implications is the principle that the interpreter may not legitimately import alien norms into exegesis in order to justify his interpretation or to evade the clear import of the biblical text on which he is commenting. They rejected both reason and tradition as judges of the meaning of Scripture, while Koehler in particular stressed the improper use of the analogy of faith and dogmatic formulations in exegetical work.

⁵⁰ There are allusions at various places in Faith-Life to a charge or insinuation that Professor Koehler's historical approach (historische Anschauungsweise) aligned him with modern, liberal theologians. Such a charge was never made in writing, so far as the present writer's research has been able to document. Even if the charge could be documented, the rebuttal of the charge lies close at hand. The effective refutation of this charge lies in the fact that Koehler's concept of history is not mechanistic, but it allows full scope for God's effective control of the historical process. (Johann Philip Koehler, "History of the Wisconsin Synod," Faith-Life, February 1938, pp. 6-8.

Reason

Both Stoeckhardt and Koehler refused to allow reason the role of arbiter as to the correctness of biblical statements.⁵¹ They recognized implicitly, the ministerial office of reason in showing the connection of thought which lay behind the words of the biblical text. They did this by calling attention to the logical connection of ideas in the biblical text.⁵² This approach to the role of reason in exegesis might have been anticipated, since both interpreters regarded the Scriptures as the only legitimate source of theological truth. Since both Stoeckhardt and Koehler were in agreement on this point, there is no need for lengthy discussion, since their agreement precludes this subject as a possible reason for the differences between their respective commentaries on Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Tradition⁵³

Theoretically, at least, both Stoeckhardt and Koehler would have agreed that tradition is not to be a norm for the interpretation of the

⁵¹Stoeckhardt, Epheser, p. 95. Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, February 1936, p. 12. See also Georg Stoeckhardt, Commentar ueber den an die Roemer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1907), p. 403; Koehler, "Die Exegese," Theologische Quartalschrift, IV, 80.

⁵²Stoeckhardt, Epheser, passim; Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, passim.

⁵³The term "tradition" is not being used in the technical sense of a deposit of that which had been taught by Christ and handed down by His apostles. The term here refers to the consensus as to the meaning of a biblical text as that consensus has developed within a specific theological group.

Bible. While in theory such was the case, in practice there was the danger that tradition did play a significant role in the making of exegetical decisions. Koehler called attention to this potential danger when he wrote:

We may let 2 Tim. 3:16 serve as an example of the first situation the decisive role of tradition in exegesis. "Every Scripture inspired by God is also profitable." Luther's German Bible version of this clause is frequently explained on the basis of the Greek text in the following manner: "The entire Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable." The additional comment is made that this is the correct way to understand Luther's translation. People believe that in this way they have laid a firm foundation for the divine character of the Scriptures. But the use of a lexicon and a grammar, and the study of the context, will persuade anyone who knows Greek that the correct and unambiguous translation must be, "If a Scripture has been given by inspiration of God, then it is also profitable," etc., or "Every divinely inspired Scripture is also profitable." . . . Those exegetes who take the other position have failed to note the weakness of their interpretation, because, in the first place, they believe they cannot get along without a clearly expressed statement of the divine origin of the Scriptures. That is intellectualism. In addition, they argue, Luther must have expressed himself correctly. That is traditionalism.⁵⁴

While Koehler did not expressly state that he was thinking of the approach adopted by Stoeckhardt, a comparison of Stoeckhardt's article

⁵⁴Johann Philip Koehler, "Gesetzlich Wesen unter uns," Theologische Quartalschrift, XII (1915), 29-30. "Fuer das erste diene folgendes Beispiel. 2 Tim. 3, 16. 'Alle Schrift, von Gott eingegeben, ist nuetze etc.'" wurde oft aus dem griechischen Texte so erklart: 'Die ganze Schrift ist von Gott eingegeben und ist nuetze.' Es wurde dann auch noch gesagt, dass das das rechte Verstaendnis von Luthers Uebersetzung sei. Damit glaubte man die Goettlichkeit der Schrift ganz festgelegt zu haben. Wer nun Griechisch versteht, dem leuchtet bald Lexikon, Grammatik und Zusammenhang ein, dass man richtig und unzweideutig so uebersetzen muss: 'Wenn eine Schrift von Gott eingegeben ist, dann ist sie auch nuetze,' oder 'Eine jede von Gott eingegebene Schrift ist auch nuetze.' . . . Jene Ausleger merkten die Schwaeche der Auslegung nicht, weil sie ersten ein klares Wort, das den Lehrsatz von der Goettlichkeit der Schrift klar ausspricht nicht missen zu koennen meinten. Das ist Intellektualismus. Dann musste Luther doch das Rechte gesagt haben. Das ist Traditionalismus."

dealing with the interpretation of 2 Timothy 3:15-17 will show that the interpretation which Koehler so decisively rejected was the very one which Stoeckhardt had adopted in that article.⁵⁵ In the light of Koehler's readiness to disagree with the exegetical views of his teacher,⁵⁶ it may well be that he attributed to Stoeckhardt a willingness to allow tradition a role of some sort in the making of exegetical decisions. But the matter is not clear enough to erect an elaborate structure upon it.

The Analogy of Faith

Koehler, in particular, rejected the analogy of faith as a principle of biblical interpretation. His first article in the Theologische Quartalschrift was prompted by the use which had been made of this principle in the intersynodical free conferences of 1903-1906.⁵⁷ In this article he examined the purported biblical basis for this principle, Romans 12:6, and he showed that this text did not support the use which was being made of it.⁵⁸ Stoeckhardt's exegesis of this passage was in fundamental agreement with that of Koehler.⁵⁹

The analogy of faith to which Koehler objected was the effort to maintain that not all doctrines are revealed with equal clarity in the

⁵⁵ Georg Stoeckhardt, "Was lehrt St. Paulus II Tim. 3, 15-17 von der Inspiration?," Lehre und Wehre, XXXVIII (1892), 292-294.

⁵⁶ Supra, 23.

⁵⁷ Koehler, "Analogie," Theologische Quartalschrift, I, 18.

⁵⁸ Ibid., I, 20-36.

⁵⁹ Stoeckhardt, Roemer, p. 569

Scriptures. Only the doctrine of justification is unconditionally clear. Accordingly all doctrines must be in harmony with this chief doctrine, and the task of the interpreter is to discover this harmony and to expound doctrines in this sense.⁶⁰ Koehler regarded this approach as a form of rationalism, since the theologians outside the Synodical Conference used this principle of interpretation to explain away the clear wording of the text in treating the doctrine of election; and accordingly he rejected it unconditionally.

Dogmatics

The alien norm to which Koehler directed most of his concern was dogmatics. He apparently regarded dogmatics as the foe of sound exegetical methodology.⁶¹ He held a very low view of the value of dogmatics in general,⁶² and expressly repudiated its right to determine the exegesis which should be given to a text of Scripture.⁶³ Since this area is one in which Koehler and Stoeckhardt are in (unconscious) disagreement, the subject requires a slightly more extended discussion.

Koehler recognized the need for dogmatics as a theological discipline and even instructed in that area after the death of Professor John Schaller in 1920. He regarded dogmatics as a systematization of

⁶⁰ Koehler, "Analogie," Theologische Quartalschrift, I, p. 18.

⁶¹ Koehler, Katalog, p. 32.

⁶² Koehler, "Die Bedeutung der historischen Disziplinen fuer die amerikanische lutherische Kirche der Gegenwart," Theologische Quartalschrift, I (1904), 213.

⁶³ Koehler, Katalog, p. 32.

the teachings of the Bible.⁶⁴ To this procedure he had no objection. At the same time Koehler was acutely aware of the potential dangers inherent in a reliance upon dogmatics. It might provide easy answers to theological questions, and the student of theology might rest content with the results of Scripture study done by the dogmaticians instead of studying the Scriptures himself.⁶⁵ Koehler even held, in the light of his historical studies, that the lengthy domination of dogmatics produces spiritual torpor and a hyper-conservative outlook.⁶⁶ Koehler's primary concern was that the interpreter should not take the short-cut offered by dogmatics of assuming that he already knew what the biblical text had to say, simply because the dogmaticians had already formulated biblical doctrine on the subject to which the text spoke.⁶⁷

Koehler's rejection of dogmatics did not imply that he rejected the theological content of orthodox Lutheran dogmatics, as expounded in the writings of such a scholar as Dr. Adolf Hoenecke. On occasion Koehler made it a special concern to show that certain biblical statements did not contradict a dogmatic formulation.⁶⁸

The same attitude is shown toward the confessional writings of the Lutheran church. Koehler did not quote from them extensively. In

⁶⁴Koehler, "Die Bedeutung," Theologische Quartalschrift, I, 205.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 214.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 213

⁶⁷Koehler, Katalog, p. 32.

⁶⁸Johann Philip Koehler, Der Brief Pauli an die Galater (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1910), p. 42.

his commentary on Paul's letter to the Ephesians only one explicit quotation appears.⁶⁹ He agreed with their content, however, but he maintained that exegesis should be done apart from all ecclesiastical authority.⁷⁰

Stoeckhardt in theory would have concurred with Koehler's approach, because he regarded the Scriptures as the only source of doctrine. In practice, however, there is a legitimate question as to whether Stoeckhardt lived up to his ideals. His commentary on Paul's letter to the Ephesians displays a number of traits which suggest that Stoeckhardt allowed his systematic concerns to color his exegesis. He was primarily interested in the doctrinal content of the biblical text, as he himself indicated.⁷¹ Koehler observed that for dogmatics it is enough to record the doctrinal content of a passage, but for exegesis other considerations are also involved.⁷² Stoeckhardt's frequent citations of the confessional writings are another indication that he was governed by systematic and dogmatic concerns.⁷³ In addition, the doctrinal excurses which Stoeckhardt offered on the doctrine of predestination⁷⁴ and conversion⁷⁵

⁶⁹Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, January 1936, p. 10.

⁷⁰Johann Philip Koehler, "Biblische Hermeneutik, Vorlage fuer den Seminarunterricht," Katalog des Theologischen Seminars der Allgemeinen Ev.-Luth. Synode von Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan u. a. St. bei Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1912-1913 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1912), p. 21

⁷¹Stoeckhardt, Roemer, p. iv.

⁷²Koehler, "Hochgesang," Faith-Life, January 1936, p. 7.

⁷³Stoeckhardt, Epheser, p. 171

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 83-96.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 127-139.

show his interest in the systematization of Christian doctrine. In addition, he regularly used the technical terminology of the dogmatists.⁷⁶ While it cannot be proved that Stoeckhardt allowed dogmatics to color his exegetical work, all of the above considerations combine to strengthen the supposition that such is the case.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 181

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

There are many similarities between the commentaries on Ephesians written by Dr. Georg Stoeckhardt and Professor Johann Philip Koehler. At the same time a number of basic differences in approach, method, and interpretation may be observed when comparing the one commentary with the other. The stated purpose of this study is to answer the question: What hermeneutical principles led two exegetes, with basically the same confessional commitment, operating with the same biblical text, to produce two commentaries which differ from one another in so many ways?

Both Dr. Stoeckhardt and Professor Koehler were aware that the text on which they were commenting was in a real sense the Word of God which had been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They also knew that the use to which the Spirit of God intended to put that text was to make men know the way of salvation through coming to know the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In theory, at least, Stoeckhardt and his pupil were in agreement on the essential principles of the circles of language, history, and theology. In the circle of language they agreed that a critical text of the Bible was to be employed; that the meaning of words was determined by their usage; and that proposed interpretations of the biblical text most conform to the requirements of Greek grammar. In the circle of history Stoeckhardt and Koehler concurred in asking and seeking answers to the questions of authorship, identity of the addressees, time and place of writing, purpose of the letter, and other similar

questions. In the circle of theology they also agreed on such basic Lutheran theological principles as the fact that Scripture serves as its own interpreter, that Scripture has only one intended sense, that outside norms (besides the Scriptures) are illicit in exegetical activity.

In spite of these very fundamental agreements, Stoeckhardt and Koehler offered two differing interpretations of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Stoeckhardt held that the integrating concept for the letter was the Una Sancta, the one, holy, catholic church, while Koehler held that the Pauline phrase en Christo provided the key to the interpretation of the letter.

The fundamental agreement between Stoeckhardt and Koehler with reference to the nature of Scripture and its inspiration, as well as with reference to the three circles of language, history, and theology, must not be allowed to cover certain differences in emphasis. In the circle of language there are disagreements as to details, but with reference to principles there is no disagreement. The chief differences between Stoeckhardt and Koehler may be seen in Koehler's readiness to recognize the emotional element in the literary style which Paul employed, while Stoeckhardt down-played this aspect of the exegetical task. In the circle of history Professor Koehler excelled his teacher in the use of the resources which that circle offers the exegete. In the circle of Scripture the agreement in principle cloaks certain differing emphases. The principle that Scripture has but one divinely intended sense became for Stoeckhardt a straight-jacket which compelled him to reject the legitimacy of typical prophecy. Koehler, in contrast, could accept typology as a legitimate mode of prophecy, because for him the intended sense was

broad enough to include more than one fulfillment. The agreement as to the principle that Scripture serves as its own interpreter disguises a basic difference as to the mode of the unity of Scripture. For Stoekhardt the unity consisted in static, propositional truths, while for Koehler the unity was heilsgeschichtlich. The basic agreement that no alien norms were to be used in the interpretation of Scripture did not prevent Stoekhardt from allowing his dogmatic interests and concerns to color his interpretation of the text in that he gave undue attention to this aspect of interpretation.

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