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THE HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD: DIVIDING WALL
BETWEEN MODERATES AND CONSERVATIVES IN THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD CONTROVERSY

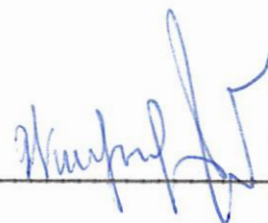
A thesis presented to the faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology


by

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May 1982

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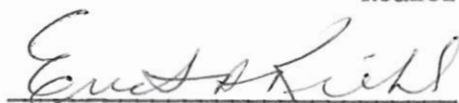
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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Doctrinal Controversy Due To The Use of Historical-Critical Method

The polarization of the theological stance which has been going on for years between the Moderates and the Conservatives within The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod reached its climax in the walkout of the former faculty majority and most of the students of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri on February 19, 1974.¹ Although a multiplicity of factors contributed to the tragic split within The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS), the majority of the leaders within both theological factions agree that the major cause of the controversy was theological in nature. This assertion is affirmed by both parties.

The delegates at the fiftieth regular convention of the LC-MS in New Orleans had explicitly denounced the doctrinal teachings of the former faculty majority of Concordia Seminary. In Resolution 3-09 the majority of the convention delegates declared that the false doctrines of the former faculty majority "cannot be tolerated in the church of God, much less be excused and defended."² The adoption by the same convention

¹Board of Control, Exodus From Concordia: A Report on the 1974 Walkout (St. Louis: Concordia College, 1977), p. 119.

²Ibid., pp. 51, 54-55.

of the document A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles (Resolution 3-01) was vehemently protested by the former faculty majority as a "violation of the principle of Sola Scriptura." They contended that the normative character given to such a confessional symbol chains the Scripture to an assumed synodical tradition.³

In response to the report of the Fact Finding Committee appointed by the former synodical president Jacob A. O. Preus, then president of Concordia Seminary, Dr. John Tietjen issued a thirty-five page report mailed to all pastors of the Synod. The document entitled Fact Finding or Fault Finding admitted the presence of doctrinal issues.⁴ Dr. Tietjen's accompanying letter clearly states: "Our basic concern is not about some minor aberrations but over our adversaries' basic understanding of the nature of the Gospel itself."⁵ The same view is shared by the rest of the former faculty majority in their confessional statement Faithful To Our Calling, Faithful To Our Lord where they state:

The issue in the Synod is not academic freedom for the Faculty of Concordia Seminary. . . . Nor is the problem a struggle between the Seminary and the present synodical administration. At stake is the centrality of the Gospel in our faith, our lives, our theology, our ministry, and God's mission to the world through us.⁶

³Ibid., pp. 163-164.

⁴John H. Tietjen; Fact Finding or Fault Finding? An Analysis of President J. A. O. Preus' Investigation of Concordia Seminary (St. Louis: n.p., 1972), pp. 8-16.

⁵John Tietjen's letter enclosed with the above-mentioned report dated September 8, 1972, p. 2.

⁶The Faculty of Concordia Seminary, Faithful To Our Calling, Faithful To Our Lord (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, January, 1973), pp. 3-4. Hereafter referred to as FCFL.

The Evangelical Lutherans in Mission's (ELIM) publication reported that the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) had diagnosed the Synod's chief problem as doctrinal.⁷ The former faculty majority's insistence on the "centrality of the Gospel" as the fundamental issue in the synodical controversy shows the distinctive theological character of this dispute. In their confessional statement Faithful To Our Calling, Faithful To Our Lord the words "Gospel" and "promise" were used 130 and 44 times respectively.⁸ The sense and significance of this emphasis will be analyzed and treated at length in the next two chapters. The combatants in the theological struggle concur that doctrinal difference is at the heart of the ecclesiastical strife in the Missouri Synod. However, many pastors and parishioners to this day cannot specify the main cause of the conflict. As to be expected, this was to a much greater extent the case in the early days of the polemical fight. One Moderate wrote:

Both secular and religious press continue to report extensively on the controversies which wrack the synod. Despite the coverage the average pastor and parishioner, not to mention the outsider, remain confused. What is going on? What is really at issue between the so-called 'moderates' and 'conservatives'?

The precise aim of this dissertation is to provide a response to that inquiry. It is without question that there were non-doctrinal and

⁷"Synod Commission Says Doctrine Is Chief Problem," Missouri In Perspective, October 13, 1975, p. 5.

⁸Armand John Boehme, "Faithful To Our Calling, Faithful To Our Lord, Part I, A Study: In the Light of the Lutheran Confessions" (M. Div. dissertation, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, May, 1974), p. 4.

⁹Richard E. Koenig, "What's Behind the Showdown in the LC-MS? The Making of the Tradition," Lutheran Forum 6 (November 1972):17.

even other doctrinal problems which helped ignite and fan the flames of the conflict. However, it is this writer's contention that the major reason for the controversy stems from the Moderates' acceptance of historical criticism's presuppositions. These presuppositions have become axiomatic in historical-critical methodology employed by the Moderates in their understanding of the nature of Scripture and of their interpretation of it. Hence we assert that the major cause of the theological controversy between Moderates and Conservatives is the former's use of the historical-critical method with its underlying presuppositions.

Almost all of the leading theologians within the Synod see that the main reason for the theological controversy lies in the Moderates' usage of the historical-critical methodology. Professor Raymond F. Surburg considers the method to be "the big dividing issue today in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod."¹⁰ Dr. Samuel Nafzger attributes the crisis in contemporary Lutheran theology primarily to the application of historical criticism in the study and investigation of Holy Scripture by the majority of Lutheran theologians today.¹¹ Dr. Robert Preus deplores the wide and uncritical acceptance of the historical-critical method and believes that practically all the doctrinal problems in the

¹⁰ Raymond F. Surburg, "Book Reviews," Concordia Theological Quarterly, 41 (April 1977):101.

¹¹ Samuel Nafzger, "The Future of Confessional Lutheranism in the World," Concordia Theological Quarterly 42 (July 1978):224.

Synod can be attributed to the use of this methodology.¹² Dr. Eugene Klug says, "No other single force has done more to erode Biblical authority in our century than the historical-critical technique."¹³

While the conservative theologians within the Synod vigorously opposed the use of historical criticism in the exposition of Scripture, it was not until after the unfortunate split and almost three years later that the Synod in convention was able to repudiate officially the use of the historical-critical method. Resolution 3-11 of the Synodical convention in Dallas, Texas in 1977 was in fact titled: "To Declare Ourselves on the Historical-Critical Method." Its first resolve declares:

Resolved, That the Synod reject and repudiate as opposed to sound Lutheran theology and injurious to the Gospel any view of the Bible and method of interpreting it which relates history to the production of the sacred writings in such a way as to diminish their "not of this world" character and to deprive them of their divine authority.¹⁴

In the Report of the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation (ACDC) the Conservative participants condemn the use of the historical-critical method as "inimical to the authority of Scripture" and

¹² Robert Preus, "May the Lutheran Theologian Legitimately Use the Historical-Critical Method?" Affirm: Occasional Papers (Milwaukee: Walther Memorial Lutheran Church, Spring, 1973), p. 35.

¹³ Eugene Klug, "Luther and Higher Criticism," The Springfielder, 38 (December 1974):216. The critical views of the above-mentioned theologians are shared by other leading theologians in the Synod. Cf. Ralph Bohlmann and Walter A. Maier's viewpoints in John Reumann, ed., Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 34, 193.

¹⁴ LC-MS, Proceedings of the Fifty-Second Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), pp. 132-133.

subversive of the divine characteristics attributed to it.¹⁵ Almost all of the fifteen antitheses rejected by the Conservative Caucus in this document were directed against historical criticism.¹⁶ Non-Missouri Synod Lutheran theologians agree that historical criticism is to be blamed for the division of Lutherans into opposing theological camps.¹⁷ Commenting on the Missouri Synod controversy John Reumann states:

While biblical interpretation, or hermeneutics, was not the only issue, it is the issue at the heart of what has been called a U. S. Lutheran civil war that split what once was the largest seminary in the United States, Concordia Seminary in St. Louis . . .¹⁸

The results of a series of conferences under the auspices of the Lutheran Council in the United States of America (LCUSA) published in a booklet called The Function of Doctrine and Theology in Light of the Unity of the Church specifically identified the use of the historical-critical method as the major cause of theological disagreements among the representative members of the LCUSA.¹⁹ Edward B. Fiske, a non-Lutheran, has pinpointed the use of the historical-critical method as the source of the theological drift of the former faculty majority from the traditional

¹⁵Report of the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1976), p. 44. (This report shall henceforth be abbreviated as ACDC).

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 80-82.

¹⁷See Harold H. Ditmanson's comment in Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 80.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 1-2.

¹⁹LCUSA, The Function of Doctrine and Theology in Light of the Unity of the Church (New York: n.p., 1978), pp. 65-81, passim. (Hereafter cited as LCUSA, FODT).

Missouri Synod stance on Scripture.²⁰ It is most likely this concern with historical criticism which influenced the Colloquy Committee to question Seminex graduates seeking certification in the LC-MS ministry especially about their attitude regarding the assumptions of the historical-critical method.²¹

Moderates Justify Use of Historical-Critical Method

In spite of a number of denials concerning the postulate asserted in this research and reasons given to disclaim the theological nature, and specifically the use of historical-critical method as the primary cause of the synodical conflict, it cannot be denied that the Moderates do support and use the historical-critical method as the only methodology in their understanding and interpretation of the Bible.

In spite of the admission that the introduction of historical-criticism provided "the most serious test that the church has had to face through nineteen centuries," Professor Edgar Krentz nevertheless advocates the method as the only adequate procedure in dealing with the Bible's claim of historicity.²² In 1970 Concordia Seminary's exegetical department, then composed mostly of Moderate exegetes, endorsed the use of the historical-critical method and listed the various steps involved in the use of the method. Such recommended steps whose presuppositions

²⁰Edward B. Fiske, "Missouri Lutherans: the story behind the story," Christian Herald 96 (October 1973):21.

²¹"LC-MS Colloquy Board Seeks Statements on Disputed Issues," Missouri In Perspective, February 25, 1980, p. 3.

²²Edgar Krentz, The Historical-Critical Method (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 4, 63. Hereafter referred to as HCM.

the Conservatives in the Synod emphatically reject are Literary Criticism, Form Criticism, and Redaction Criticism.²³

The mediating theologians see the method as a necessity in the light of the fact that God had opted to use human beings and their language to communicate with men.²⁴ They stress that the methodology "seeks to do justice to both the 'human side' of Scripture as well as to its 'divine side'".²⁵ It is further argued that this exegetical approach was used by Luther²⁶ and even by Christ²⁷ and that it "helps us return to the Reformation understanding of the nature of Scriptural authority."²⁸ Dr. John Tietjen, former president of Concordia Seminary, announced before the seminary community on March 6, 1972, that competent exegesis can not be achieved on the seminary level without the use of the historical-critical method.²⁹ He expressed the same argument in defending Dr. Arlis Ehlen's use of this methodology.³⁰ Dr. Paul G. Bretscher, who though a

²³ACDC, pp. 68-69.

²⁴FCFL, p. 41.

²⁵ACDC, p. 67.

²⁶Robert Smith, "The Historical-Critical Method in the Light of Lutheran Theology," Paper presented at the two Concordia Seminaries and the Council of Presidents' Meeting, November 10, 1969, pp. 4-5.

²⁷Roy Harrisville, His Hidden Grace: An Essay on Biblical Criticism (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), p. 22.

²⁸"Questions? Answers!" Missouri In Perspective, November 4, 1974, p. 5.

²⁹Richard Klann, "Criticism of the Bible," Affirm: Occasional Papers, Spring, 1973, p. 4.

³⁰Robert Preus, "May the Lutheran Theologian Legitimately Use The Historical-Critical Method?" p. 31.

moderating theologian has preferred to remain within the fold of Missouri Synod, calls historical criticism a "gift from the Lord," and unequivocally admits that his use of the historical-critical method in no way fundamentally differs from that of Rudolf Bultmann.³¹

Another reason given by Edgar Krentz for commending the use of the historical-critical methodology is due to the contention that Biblical scholarship is greatly indebted to this method in providing the research tools such as grammars, lexica, concordances, theological dictionaries, commentaries, and histories for competent Biblical exegesis.³² The mediating theologians, moreover, emphasized that the clarity of the Scripture is enhanced by the use of the historical-critical approach.³³ Krentz, the foremost proponent of the method among the Moderates, insists that it "is congruent with Lutheran theology and the doctrine of the Word."³⁴

A good number of the methodology's practitioners maintain that this exegetical procedure is of itself neutral.³⁵ One of them even alleged that it can be profitably employed by an unbeliever in understanding

³¹Paul G. Bretscher, The Baptism of Jesus, Critically Considered, Biblical Study Series #5 (St. Louis: n.p., May 1973), p. 9.

³²Krentz, HCM, p. 63.

³³LCUSA, FODT, p. 79.

³⁴"Historical-Critical Method Differs from Higher Criticism," Badger Lutheran, February 1, 1973, p. 1.

³⁵ACDC, p. 70; FCFL, p. 41; Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 87, and LCUSA, FODT, p. 79.

a Biblical text.³⁶ The Moderates further justify their use of the historical-critical method on the basis that there is no officially approved exegetical methodology within Lutheranism.³⁷ The former faculty majority in an endorsed "Editorial" published in Concordia Theological Monthly declared:

We confess an open Bible unfettered by any human rules. With Luther we "acknowledge no fixed rules for the interpretation of the Word of God" - whether historical-critical, grammatical-historical, or any other - "since the Word of God, which teaches freedom in all other matters, must not be bound."³⁸

From such a declaration one gets the impression that for the Moderates the sort of exegetical methodology to be used in interpreting Scripture should be regarded an open question - a kind of an adiaphora. Such, however, is not the case as one can see in their strong advocacy for historical-criticism. In fact, the Moderate exegetes accept, teach and use only the historical-critical method in their interpretation of Scripture.

The Fact Finding Committee Report states that the Exegetical Department of Concordia Seminary is fully committed "to the use of the historical-critical method as the valid and preferred method for the interpretation of the Bible."³⁹ A check of the various exegetical theses written between 1965 and 1973 shows the use of historical criticism as

³⁶LCUSA, FODT, p. 79.

³⁷ACDC, p. 42.

³⁸Faculty of Concordia Seminary, "Editorial", Concordia Theological Monthly 44 (September 1973):244. (Concordia Theological Monthly hereafter shall be referred to as CTM.)

³⁹Faculty of Concordia Seminary, Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the Report of the Synodical President (St. Louis: n.p., April 4, 1972), p. 6.

the preferred methodology. While the Moderates did not give the method an absolute imprimatur, in practice it was the only technique which was taught and accepted.

Such was the experience of Wilmar Sihite, a pastor of the Batak Church in Indonesia, who before and after the walkout of the former faculty majority was in the process of writing his doctoral dissertation for the Exegetical Department. Though a non-believer in historical criticism, he was, nevertheless, forced to use the method in order to secure approval for his research. In the walkout Pastor Sihite could have easily joined his former professors and advisor and finished his thesis at Seminex but he chose to remain at Concordia Seminary because of his conservative views. Since it was almost impossible for him to change the exegetical methodology used in his dissertation because he was more than half-way in the writing of his thesis, he continued to use the historical-critical method. When the thesis was finally finished he appended the following confession in his work:

It should be understood that the conclusion reached and the methodology followed in this dissertation do not necessarily imply that they are the faith-convictions of the writer. Much of modern scholarship proceeds on assumptions which are not related to the issues of doctrine. It is my intention in this dissertation to present the conclusion as well as the methodology of modern historical-critical scholarship. Therefore, the present enterprise is to be understood in terms of fulfilling an academic requirement.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Wilmar Sihite, "The Verb Makarizien and Cognates in the New Testament: A Study in Christian Identity" (Th.D. dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, May 1974), p. 6.

A survey of the exegetical courses taught at Christ Seminary - SEMINEX as listed in its 1978-1980 catalog shows that the historical-critical method and its assumptions are the paramount features of the courses.⁴¹ The descriptions of these courses show the Seminex professors' acquiescence to historical criticism. The consistent and radical use of this interpretative approach to Scripture have become more apparent among the Moderates in recent times. One needs only to read Ralph W. Klein's book Israel in Exile: A Theological Interpretation where the presuppositions of historical criticism and its liberal exegetical conclusions are accepted without question.⁴²

Krentz alleges that present-day exegetes "cannot escape historical-critical study of the Bible."⁴³ It is the predominant methodology used in Biblical scholarship today.⁴⁴ Its general acceptance has not been limited to Protestant denominations but has been given official

⁴¹ Christ Seminary-SEMINEX Catalog 1978-1980 (St. Louis: n.p., 1978), pp. 35-38, passim. These courses are: EO-313: Old Testament Form Criticism; EO-324: The Two Davids: Succession Narrative and First Chronicles; EO-440: Studies in the Pentateuch: Priestly Stratum; EO-442: Seminar: In The D-Circle, and E/S-451: Historical-Critical Methodology and Law-Gospel Reductionism. The other listed courses which use the presuppositions and methodology of historical criticism are: EX-100: The Techniques of Biblical Exegesis; EO-300: Jeremiah; EO-307: Psalms; EO-330: A Theology For Exiles; EO-441: Seminar in Salvation History; EO-443: Seminar In the Isaianic Circle; EO-825: Studies in Biblical Poetry; EN-401: Passion Narratives, and EN-421: The Theology of "Q".

⁴² Ralph W. Klein, Israel In Exile: A Theological Interpretation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), chaps. 2-6, passim.

⁴³ Krentz, HGM, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Idem, "A Survey of Trends and Problems in Biblical Interpretation," CTM 40 (May 1969):277.

sanction by the Roman Catholic Church through Pope Pius XII's encyclical Divino Afflante Spiritu of September 30, 1943.⁴⁵ Even the conservative theologians of Germany consider the use of the historical-critical method in the exposition of Scripture as justifiable and necessary.⁴⁶ Professor Raymond F. Surburg admits that even as early as 1925 the historical-critical method was adopted by most of the prestigious theological schools.⁴⁷ While admitting that C. F. W. Walther, F. Pieper and other early Missouri Synod theologians rejected historical-critical methods, the Moderates argue that the reason for this rejection was because the method had not as yet been well developed as it is today. Moreover, they assert, the early practitioners "had used it in a very negative and rationalistic way."⁴⁸

In the early 60's when the method was beginning to be introduced in Biblical studies at Concordia Seminary, the professors of the Exegetical Department used it with much qualification and caution. Sensing the grave danger it posed to the Biblical position of the Synod, the Exegetical Department of the Seminary issued in 1963 a warning "against the abuse of the historical study of the Scriptures . . ."⁴⁹ The

⁴⁵Idem, HCM, p. 2.

⁴⁶Idem, "A Survey of Trends and Problems in Biblical Interpretation," p. 277.

⁴⁷Raymond F. Surburg, "The Historical Method in Biblical Interpretation," CTM 23 (February 1952):81.

⁴⁸"Questions? Answers!" Missouri In Perspective, November 4, 1974, p. 5.

⁴⁹Martin Franzmann, "The Hermeneutical Dilemma: Dualism in the Interpretation of Holy Scripture," CTM 36 (September 1965):527.

Department listed a number of assumptions which it believed would provide the necessary safeguards in the use of the historical-critical method.⁵⁰

Earlier in an editorial in the Concordia Theological Monthly Professor Herbert T. Mayer had warned concerning the danger of the use of the historical-critical method.⁵¹

Two of the leading and respected conservative exegetes within LC-MS had contended, in the early days of the controversy, that the historical-critical method can be used conservatively without endangering any doctrine of the Lutheran Church.⁵² The Commission on Theology and Church Relations document A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Biblical Studies affirmed that there is a "responsible use of the historical-critical method" and had in fact given the method a qualified endorsement by listing what it considered as "necessary controls."⁵³ Walter Wegner saw this as an approval of the Moderates' way of using the historical-critical method.⁵⁴

The ambivalent attitude of many within the Synod, especially among the laity, towards the mediating theologians' application of

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 527-528.

⁵¹ Herbert T. Mayer, "Editorial," CTM 36 (February 1965):69.

⁵² ACDC, p. 74.

⁵³ CTCR, A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Biblical Studies (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), pp. 5, 9-10.

⁵⁴ Walter Wegner, "Editorial," CTM 38 (February 1967):67 and Ralph W. Klein, "A Response by Ralph W. Klein." Responses To Presentations Delivered at Theological Convocation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri: A Study Document Offered to Members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod by Evangelical Lutherans in Mission (St. Louis: n.p., n.d.) pp. 1-5.

historical criticism in Biblical interpretation is, to some extent, due to their insistence that they use the method with Lutheran presuppositions. In the Statement on Exegetical Methodology adopted by the Exegetical Department of Concordia Seminary on December 9, 1970 the former faculty majority exegetes declared:

The "criticism" which we practice is motivated by presuppositions of faith and is intended to discern clearly among the various levels and possibilities in the situations being studied. Our ultimate evaluation of the results obtained by this critical methodology arises not from the methodology itself but from our presuppositions, which are those of faith in God through Christ rather than those of pure naturalism, skepticism, or any other world view.⁵⁵

Conservatives Reject Historical-Critical Method's Neutrality

The Moderates have repeatedly emphasized and widely publicized this viewpoint: "When we use the historical-critical method, we use it with Lutheran presuppositions."⁵⁶ This allegation is quite true except that what they termed as "Lutheran" presuppositions have been subsumed and redefined under the influence of one major presupposition -- Law-Gospel Reductionism. The next two chapters of this research will attempt to provide evidence for this assertion.

The Moderates give the impression that the liberal presuppositions of the historical-critical method "are not necessarily inherent in the methodology itself" and can therefore be extracted so that the

⁵⁵ ACDC, p. 72.

⁵⁶ Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the Report of the Synodical President, p. 34; FCFL, pp. 39-40, and ACDC, p. 41.

method can be modified with the provision of Lutheran presuppositions.⁵⁷

This argument is strongly rejected by the Conservatives. Dr. Richard Klann argues that a tool and a method are different. A tool is neutral but

a method of interpretation is at once a declaration of the belief of the interpreter and of the policy which he intends to adopt for his work.⁵⁸

It is for this reason that Dr. Martin H. Franzmann whom not a few Moderates praised and whom Moderate Richard E. Koenig characterized as "the Synod's most respected theologian . . . with impeccable credentials"⁵⁹ rejected the opinion concerning the neutrality of historical criticism. He declared:

A principle, or a method, is not to be applied 'conservatively' or 'radically' - it should simply be applied consistently. Therefore the more 'radical' practitioners of the method can always reproach the more 'conservative' ones with inconsistency. It is therefore not unfair to cite examples of a more 'radical' use of the method in order to illustrate its tendency and its consequences.⁶⁰

A methodology and its presuppositions are inseparably integrated. To displace the method with new presuppositions, especially with ones contrary to what were original with the methodology, is not simply a revision of the old technique but a creation of a totally new method. Historical criticism would not be what it is without its own presuppositions.

⁵⁷Walter Wegner, "Editorial," p. 67 and Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the Report of the Synodical President, pp. 28-29, and John Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 52.

⁵⁸Richard Klann, "Sorting Out the Problems," Affirm: Occasional Papers, Spring, 1973, p. 9.

⁵⁹Richard E. Koenig, "What's behind the showdown in the LCMS? Conservative reaction: 1965-69," Lutheran Forum 7 (May 1973):19.

⁶⁰Martin Franzmann, "The Hermeneutical Dilemma: Dualism in the Interpretation of Holy Scripture," pp. 507-508.

It is with sufficient justification that Dr. Robert Preus insists that the historical-critical method cannot be used with Lutheran presuppositions.⁶¹ He further argued that the hermeneutical principles of the Lutheran Confessions cannot be harmonized with the Moderates' exegetical method.⁶² No one, he contends, can legitimately subscribe quia to the Lutheran Confessions and at the same time employ historical criticism.⁶³ Professor Horace D. Hummel stressed that there are no presuppositions which can redeem the historical-critical method and that one cannot be neutral with regards to the method. He "either . . . holds the historical-critical method (that is, a naturalistic philosophy or theology) or he does not . . ."⁶⁴

Twenty years before the occurrence of the unfortunate split between the Moderates and Conservatives in the Synod over the major issue of the use of historical criticism, Professor Raymond F. Surburg had already at that time stated that there is no legitimate use of the historical method in interpreting Scripture.⁶⁵ The Conservative Caucus in the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation after studying the

⁶¹Robert Preus, The Historical-Critical Method, Cassette Tape 73-35, Side I, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

⁶²LCUSA, FODT, p. 73.

⁶³Robert D. Preus, "Current Theological Problems Which Confront Our Church," A Conference of the College of Presidents and the Seminary Faculties: LCMS (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, November 27-29, 1961), p. 38.

⁶⁴Horace D. Hummel, Critical Study and the Exodus Pericope: Biblical Studies Series #3 (St. Louis: n.p., May 1973), pp. 21-22.

⁶⁵Surburg, "The Historical Method in Biblical Interpretation," p. 94.

question of the validity of using historical criticism had expressed the judgment that the method has sub-Christian presuppositions.⁶⁶

Other Reasons Given For the Controversy

While the main bone of contention dividing the Moderates and the Conservatives stems from the former's acceptance of the historical-critical method, there are some among the Moderates who sidetrack the primary problem and give other reasons for the cause of the controversy. Some of the reasons given are doctrinal in essence but unrelated to historical criticism.

Even after admitting in 1972 that the nature of the problem centered "over our adversaries' basic understanding of the nature of the Gospel itself,"⁶⁷ John Tietjen could say three years later: "The issue of biblical authority has been manufactured in the interest of power politics."⁶⁸ This argument has been echoed by other Moderates and even by ELIM's newspaper Missouri In Perspective.⁶⁹ Ronald Paul Nickel, though not discounting the impact of doctrine in the synodical controversy, skirts the main problem by attributing much of the reason for the

⁶⁶ ACDC, p. 42.

⁶⁷ Supra, p. 2.

⁶⁸ John H. Tietjen, "Piercing the Smokescreen," Christianity Today 19 (April 11, 1975):8.

⁶⁹ John E. Groh, "An Insider Looks at the LC-MS Purge - Danker's Latest Book," Currents in Theology and Mission 4 (June 1977):181; John Constable, Synod - More Than Advisory? (St. Louis: ELIM, n.d.), pp. 1-6, and "Questions? Answers!" Missouri In Perspective, November 19, 1973, 4.

controversy on sociological factors.⁷⁰ One Moderate even ascribed the conflict on psychological personality make-up of the disputing parties.⁷¹ The late and former president of the Synod, Dr. Oliver Harms categorically stated:

I have not found a person within Christ Seminary - Seminex who denied the doctrine set forth in our Lutheran Confessions, which constitutes a faithful exposition of the Word of God.⁷²

Moderates Plea for Room Within the Synod and
Faults Synodical Fathers

There are Moderates who readily admit that the synodical problem is indeed doctrinal but insist that it is not big enough to justify the Synod splitting off into opposing theological camps. The plea for continued fraternity among theologians with divergent doctrinal teachings is based on what is alleged to be "our common understanding of and devotion to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁷³

Herbert T. Mayer contends that this unity in diversity should be maintained because Missouri Synod has never had a monolithic doctrinal position. He cited doctrinal diversities in the Synodical history such as the case of Wilhelm Sihler's understanding of faith as "the acceptance

⁷⁰ Ronald Paul Nickel, "Professional Autonomy In The Denominational Seminary: A Vulnerability Model: History and Analysis of the Conflict Between The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis 1969-1974" (Ph.D. dissertation, Washington University, 1977).

⁷¹ Leroy Haas, "Theological Stance and Personality," Currents in Theology and Mission 2 (June 1975):167-173.

⁷² "Harm's Letter Seeks New Efforts at Reconciliation in Synod," Missouri In Perspective, September 8, 1980, p. 1.

⁷³ Herbert T. Mayer, "Editorial: The Task Ahead," CTM 40 (September 1969):527.

of a series of propositions;" George Stoeckhardt theological emphases due to his strong reaction to the influence of pietism, and the legalistic stance taken by a synodical teachers' conference in 1892. Therefore Professor Mayer proposed:

Lutheran pluralism within confessional unity, which has been the source of Missouri's strength . . . must be preserved if Missouri is to begin to play a positive role in American and world Lutheranism.⁷⁴

He further argued that men with doctrinal difference with the Synod should not be eased out of the organization.⁷⁵ It has, moreover, been asserted by the Moderates but especially by Professor Edward H. Schroeder that

we've had two traditions interwoven in our past - two traditions that crash into each other at the center although many folks in the past, 'our fathers,' we ourselves, may never have noticed it before. But now that we have come to see that it is so, we must clean the bad tradition off the good one, and 'hold fast to what is good' as the Apostle counsels us.⁷⁶

Professor Schroeder has, on a number of occasions, repeated this statement.⁷⁷ The changing theological stance of the Synod towards a variety of issues, especially in the past, has been used as a defense against total doctrinal conformity.⁷⁸

⁷⁴Idem, "Editorial," CTM 42 (June 1971):339-341.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 341.

⁷⁶Edward H. Schroeder, "Critique of President Preus' Statement," Position paper read at the Northern Illinois Pastoral Conference in October, 1973, p. 2.

⁷⁷Idem, "Law-Gospel Reductionism," CTM 43 (April, 1972):246-47 and "Another Analysis of 'Statement,'" Missouri In Perspective, November 19, 1973, p. 6. Schroeder is unable to prove that Gospel Reductionism is one of the major traditions in the Synod's theology. He, however, admits that this Moderate position is different from that of the Conservatives.

⁷⁸Arthur C. Repp, "Changes in the Missouri Synod," CTM 38 (July-August 1967):458-78 passim.

The Moderates have also been judgmental of the synodical fathers' doctrinal position. Carl S. Meyer calls C. F. W. Walther a "biblicist" whose theology has significant differences with Luther and whose doctrine was shaped by the later seventeenth century orthodox theologians rather than by the Lutheran Confessions.⁷⁹ They have, in the same manner, characterized the Conservatives' understanding of Scripture.⁸⁰ C. F. W. Walther has been portrayed as the culprit⁸¹ although in the same issue of the Concordia Theological Monthly Professor Erwin Lueker sees Walther and Luther in theological agreement in their stress for a Christocentric approach to Scripture.⁸² Richard E. Koenig attributes the fossilization of the Missouri Synod into the conservative fold to what he calls "the Pieper Legacy or the Tradition." This legacy is embodied in A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States which was adopted by the Synod in convention in 1932 and whose principal author was Francis Pieper.⁸³ Without clearly admitting it, the former faculty majority of Concordia Seminary finds fault with the fathers of the LC-MS. Thus they rhetorically asked:

Is it possible that some of the orthodox fathers did orient themselves wrongly in their relationship to the Gospel? Is it possible that in their zeal to defend the Gospel they introduced an attitude of

⁷⁹Carl S. Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," CTM 43 (April 1972):262.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 262-276 passim.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 262.

⁸²Erwin L. Lueker, "Doctrinal Emphases in the Missouri Synod," CTM 43 (April 1972):201.

⁸³Richard E. Koenig, "What's behind the showdown in the LCMS? Missouri Turns Moderate, 1938-65," Lutheran Forum 7 (February 1973):20.

pharisaic separatism? Is it possible that they made the preservation of the truth of the Gospel the chief task of the church and thus introduced an element of fear of others who interpreted certain Biblical passages differently or who expressed themselves in different terms?⁸⁴

It is said that in recent years the Synodical tradition(s) has been shattered so that "there is no longer any common mind on what the synod's doctrinal position assumes or implies, on what it demands or allows, especially in the area of biblical interpretation."⁸⁵ A number of Moderate theologians state that

The Lutheran Confessions . . . do make only two assertions about the Bible. They acknowledge it as the norm of all teaching and life in the Church. And they assert that the Bible can be properly understood only if the Law and the Gospel are properly distinguished.

Every other assertion about the whole Bible in Lutheran theology is a matter of tradition, not doctrine. It is either a theological interpretation of a particular biblical passage, and such interpretations are - except when they repeat the two confessional assertions about the Bible already noted - always tradition; or it is a traditional theological opinion . . . and therefore subject to critical examination.⁸⁶

In the light of the above arguments the Moderates have asked for room for theological differences which are affirmed by the creative, loyal opposition.⁸⁷ The FCFL document calls this "freedom in the Gospel."⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Mayer, "Editorial," CTM 43 (April 1972):197.

⁸⁵ Koenig, "What's behind the showdown in the LCMS? Missouri Turns Moderate: 1938-65," p. 19. Emphasis mine.

⁸⁶ Walter E. Keller et al. "A Review Essay (Part II) of A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles," The Cresset 36 (October 1973):24.

⁸⁷ Herbert T. Mayer, "Editorial - A Place for Loyal Opposition," CTM 43 (December 1972):707-708.

⁸⁸ FCFL, pp. 4, 26-27, 42 passim.

Controversy Continues

We have asserted that the nature of the controversy was doctrinal and specifically due to the Moderates' use of historical criticism. Further explication of this will come in later chapters of this thesis.

The conflict has given birth to a new Lutheran denomination known as the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC). One would have hoped that the split would have brought an end to the dispute and that all the Conservatives would remain in the Synod and all the Moderates would have left and joined the AELC. This, however, has not been the case. Many Moderates remain in the Synod and wield an influence which, by no means, is to be underestimated. Statistically, AELC is a small Lutheran denomination compared with LC-MS. Official statistics, however, are quite deceptive. It is quite obvious that there are many Moderates and sympathizers of Moderates within the fold of the Synod. The major reason for this is due to the confusion relative to the major issues in the controversy. So the controversy is far from over.

As late as February 9, 1981 Christian News estimates that there are 58 clergymen, 15 parochial school teachers and 13 congregations listed as both members of LC-MS and AELC.⁸⁹ Not included in this count are those who are Moderates but are listed only in the LC-MS roster. Missouri In Perspective, as quoted in Christian News boasted that "1,000 pastors of the LCMS . . . support Seminex and have indicated an interest in placing its Seminex graduates in ministry." It is further alleged

⁸⁹"Mess of Dual Membership Continues in the LCMS," Christian News, February 9, 1981, p. 1.

that most of the Seminex graduates who had been certified in the past continue to support the theological position of Seminex.⁹⁰ A number of Seminex graduates continue to be called and ordained in Missouri Synod congregations.⁹¹ Many LC-MS theologians like Paul G. Bretscher and a good number of those teaching at Valparaiso University, although listed as clergymen of LC-MS, are in reality Moderates.⁹² Church leaders, pastors, and congregations, not to mention the many lay people, who are sympathetic with the Moderate theology and churchmanship continue to leave Synodical organizations although the number has become less numerous.⁹³

The Importance of The Study

History and heresies repeat themselves even though the latter may be couched in a variety of formats and expressions. The inroads which the Moderate theological position have made within the conservative theo-

⁹⁰"Turret Of The Times," Christian News, May 26, 1980, p. 3. See "Booklet Give Info on Seminex Candidates," Missouri In Perspective, May 19, 1980, p. 5. Cf. "37 Seminex Grads Interviewed at Retreats," Missouri In Perspective, March 10, 1980, p. 7.

⁹¹"37 Grads Interviewed at Retreats," Missouri In Perspective, March 10, 1980, p. 7. "Captioned picture of Karl Bliese," Missouri In Perspective, June 30, 1980, p. 1. He is a 1980 Christ Seminary-Seminex graduate called by St. Paul Lutheran Church, Fairview Heights, Illinois and "Captioned picture of Edward Stuebing III a 1980 Seminex graduate called to serve Grace Lutheran Church in Jacksonville, Florida," Missouri In Perspective, September 8, 1980, p. 3.

⁹²See 1980 Lutheran Annual (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1980), pp. 83, 153.

⁹³"Oklahoma Supreme Court's Ruling Upholds AELC Parish's 1975 Vote," and "Fairfax, Va. Congregation Joins the AELC," Missouri In Perspective, February 11, 1980, pp. 1,2.

theology of Missouri Synod is somewhat parallel to the problem faced by the Saxon Lutherans within the State Church in Germany in the early part of the nineteenth century. The rationalism within the State Church had forced many of the Saxons faithful to the Lutheran Confessions to immigrate to the United States. Not even the Moderates who constituted the milder wing of the Rationalistic movement and were known as Supernaturalists were able to stop the cessation of the Saxon Lutherans from the State Church.⁹⁴

In 1962 at the height of the Moderate strength within the Missouri Synod the Brief Statement was rescinded and a moderate leader was elected president of the Synod.⁹⁵ Three years later the Concordia Theological Monthly editorial could declare the ascendancy of a new theology in the educational institutions of the Synod.⁹⁶ Carl F. Henry, one of the recognized gurus of the Evangelical Churches in the United States, opines that one of the key issues for the 1980s will be the problem of biblical authority and the use of higher criticism.⁹⁷ Appraising the gravity of the Synodical problem, Dr. Robert Preus wrote in 1966:

⁹⁴Walter O. Forster, Zion on the Mississippi, the settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri, 1839-1841 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), pp. 11-12.

⁹⁵Proceedings of the Forty-fifth Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in Cleveland, Ohio, June 20-29, 1962 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), pp. 122-23. The rescinding of the Brief Statement was contained in Resolution 6-01 entitled "Constitutionality of Resolution 9 of Committee 3 of the 1959 Synodical Convention.

⁹⁶Herbert T. Mayer, "Editorial," CTM 36 (February 1965):68-69.

⁹⁷Carl F. H. Henry, "The Concerns and Considerations of Carl F. H. Henry," Christianity Today 25 (March 13, 1981):19.

The debate today over the inspiration, authority and inerrancy of Scripture and the related subject of Biblical interpretation is not confined to the Lutheran Church in America. It is world wide. No theologian or informed Christian can avoid it. . . . The present controversy over the nature of Scripture and its interpretation strikes at once at every single doctrine of our faith, for every article of faith is based upon Scripture and drawn from it. . . . The debate concerning the Bible has become frightfully complicated making it exceedingly difficult for layman or pastor or professor to cope with all the problems connected with Biblical authority, inerrancy, hermeneutics, etc. . . . We must face with judgment and knowledge all attacks against Scripture and its proper interpretation and refute them. Our life as a Lutheran Church depends upon this.⁹⁸

The Southern Baptist Convention is today faced with the same problem.⁹⁹ In recent days the Presbyterian Church has also experienced a split due to the rationalism brought about by the acceptance of historical criticism. The Roman Catholic Church, although not experiencing a split, is also polarized into Conservatives and Liberals and a good portion of the conflict can be traced to the use of historical criticism.¹⁰⁰ This is especially true among the advocates of Liberation Theology.

The seriousness of the problem posed by historical criticism has been well spelled out by the Eastern Orthodox scholar Konstantinos E. Papapetrou. He states that while it is true that today's theology is less liberal than in the past, the problem is much more grave than in the past. He argued that in the past radical criticism or liberal theology

⁹⁸Robert D. Preus, "Biblical Hermeneutics and the Lutheran Church Today," Proceedings of the Twentieth Convention of the Iowa District West of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (n.p. n.p., 1966), p. 29.

⁹⁹Reumann, Studies In Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 4. See "The Battling Baptists," Newsweek, June 22, 1981, p. 88.

¹⁰⁰Peter Stuhlmacher, Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture. Toward A Hermeneutics of Consent, trans. by Roy A. Harrisville (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 58.

was confined to the universities and among the scholars. However, today it has affected a broad spectrum of people within the church so much so that the majority of young West European pastors are under the influence of liberal theology. Furthermore, this subdued liberalism is today peddled through sermons and thus affecting the faith of the laity.¹⁰¹ One may counter this with the argument that what is true in Europe is not necessarily true in America, Africa, and Asia. Nevertheless, with a fast growing system of world communication, one dare not discount the influence and speed with which a theological or philosophical idea can affect the rest of the world.

The theological controversy within LC-MS, a relatively small Christian denomination compared with other Christian denominations and even in comparison among Lutheran bodies in the world, was not without its effect for the rest of the world. The conflict has affected a number of LC-MS partner churches.

The issue of interpretation of the Bible is a big one, and it has wracked Missouri-related churches in Papua New Guinea, Hong Kong, India, and throughout the world.¹⁰²

The Lutheran Diocese of Costa Rica and Panama has severed relationship with LC-MS on the basis of the latter's "rigid and unrealistic concepts of biblical interpretation."¹⁰³ While president of Concordia Seminary in Nagercoil, India, Dr. B. H. Jackaya told a conference of pastors in St. Louis of the necessity of employing historical criticism in

¹⁰¹Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 317.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁰³Ibid.

interpreting the Scripture.¹⁰⁴ Gutnius Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea has to this day eight AELC missionaries¹⁰⁵ and is apparently willing to receive more.

The Lutheran Church in the Philippines has lost a number of American missionaries not only due to the recent synodical controversy but also due to a similar dispute over historical criticism which happened in 1959. Two of them have joined the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), two are known to have affiliated with AELC, and not a few who remain members of LC-MS continue to espouse the Moderate theological position. This writer was a student in the Lutheran Church in the Philippines' (LCP) seminary when the 1959 LCP controversy took place. He was engaged in graduate study at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis when the synodical controversy was at its zenith in 1972-1974.

The controversy has also spawned a good number of unofficial religious publications and organizations within the Synod proclaiming a variety of doctrinal emphases. One needs only to read Christian News, Affirm, Lutherans United For Synod, Missouri In Perspective, and so forth, to realize the theological Babel in the existing controversy.

While articles and books have been written dealing with various facets of the controversy, no extensive study has been done on the specific effects and role historical criticism has played in the synodical

¹⁰⁴"India Seminary President: Asian Christians Puzzled by Controversy," Missouri In Perspective, December 8, 1975, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵Larry W. Neeb, Donna L. Herzfeldt, and Richard E. Mueller, eds., 1981 AELC Directory (St. Louis: n.p., 1981), pp. 46-75 passim.

dispute. This dissertation hopes to clarify, pinpoint, evaluate, and prove the major cause of the synodical controversy. This hopefully will help, not only the Missouri Synod and its Partner Churches, but also other churches which are struggling with the same problem.

Methodology

In the light of the above-mentioned reasons this writer was prompted to investigate and attempt to diagnose the problem which led to the synodical conflict.

There are, without question, theological and non-theological differences between the Moderates and Conservatives which are not directly related to the former's use of historical criticism. The role politics has played in the controversy cannot be denied. The differences regarding the practice of unionism, ecumenism, close communion, church polity, and even Synodical policies toward foreign missions have been controverted issues. But the focus of this study will be confined to verifying whether the use of historical criticism is indeed the dividing wall between Moderates and Conservatives. This research shall furthermore probe if the Moderates' hermeneutical presupposition -- the Law-Gospel reductionism restrains them from taking the logical and radical conclusions of the historical-critical methodology and whether such a governing exegetical principle indeed create a mediating theological position.

The enormity of the literature on the subject makes it necessary to limit the research to published documents. These published and distributed theological documents disseminate public doctrines which not only aid in germinating pious opinions but eventually help in the

formulation of dogmatic stance. The history of dogmas provide sufficient evidence for this assertion. In the absence of disclaimers, and especially when shared and endorsed by others through their own writings and by those who have the authority of printing and propagating them, the doctrines contained in these documents shall be considered the theological stance of this particular group of people. C. F. W. Walther said:

"The true Church is to be judged chiefly by the general true public confession by which its members acknowledged and hold themselves to be bound."¹⁰⁶ Doctrines which are publicly disseminated can either edify or destroy a church. Personal and privately held teaching when erroneous can only hurt the individual who affirms it for it can only be considered a private opinion. Theological viewpoints in conflict with the Synod's position but shared and endorsed by the Moderates shall be considered the doctrinal convictions of the Moderates even though they may have been written by Synodical theologians.

In discussing the historical-critical method the research shall concentrate primarily on the works of the Moderate practitioners (AELC and AEIC theological sympathizers). This way one avoids falling into the trap of setting up a straw man; a caricatured Moderate position. Theological views of non-participants in the controversy but pertinent to the subject of the thesis will be considered when shared or endorsed by either faction in the Synodical conflict. The Moderates and Conservatives certainly share many similar beliefs but this study shall exclusively dwell on their divergent theological views in their understanding

¹⁰⁶ Herbert T. Mayer, "Editorial," CTM 39 (October 1968):580.

and interpretation of Scripture due to the historical criticism and gospel reductionism which are, in combination, the exegetical methodology of the Moderates as shall be amply shown in the next two chapters.

This research will collate only those assumptions which are explicitly established to have been used by the Moderates. The historical development of the historical-critical method will not be included in this dissertation. There is more than sufficient literature on this topic. Neither will we dwell on the historical intrusion of the historical-critical method within the LC-MS. This particular matter can possibly provide a subject for another thesis. The opinions of seventeenth century Lutheran orthodox theologians will be sparingly included in this dissertation and only when they are judged crucial in the understanding of a particular theological position of either party in the dispute.

The variations in the exegetical methodologies lies in the presuppositional level which the practitioners of the method affirm as axiomatic. Chapter II will focus on the hypothesis that the mediating exegetical method used by the Moderates is a combination of historical criticism and gospel reductionism. This chapter will attempt to collate the presuppositions the mediating theologians employ in their utilization of the historical-critical method and gospel reductionism. Chapter III will deal with the manner these exegetes use their presuppositions in understanding and interpreting Scripture which controvert the traditional Synodical theological standpoint. Chapter IV will present some of the doctrinal convictions of Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, the Synodical fathers and present-day LC-MS theologians to show where the Moderates and Conservatives differ in theological viewpoints due to the

mediating exegetes' use of the historical-critical method. The penultimate section will provide an analysis and critique of the Moderates' theological stance. The last chapter will summarize the major issues of each chapter and pinpoint some theological issues which need further research.

The LC-MS theological position will be equated with the Conservative view. The AELC's doctrinal beliefs resulting from the use of the historical criticism and gospel reductionism will be considered the Moderate position. However, the Moderates as individual theologians may belong to other Lutheran bodies like the LC-MS and ALC. When their understanding and interpretation of Scripture are congruent with the AELC's stance in view of the similarity of the exegetical method which they use, they will be grouped among the Moderates. For this reason the term Moderates will be preferred for it is more inclusive of the mediating theologians who belong to different Lutheran bodies.

We have mentioned the fact that each group in the theological strife shall be judged by its public doctrines.¹⁰⁷ Gustav W. Lobeck has defined public doctrine as "the teaching that is accepted, believed as true, confessed and proclaimed by a church."¹⁰⁸ It is also those which are taught in the educational institutions of the church and published in official documents.¹⁰⁹ This definition has the historical support of

¹⁰⁷Supra, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰⁸Gustav W. Lobeck, "The Authority of Synod," A Conference of the College of Presidents and the Seminary Faculties: The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, November 27-29, 1961, p. 51.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

Resolution 11 of the 1959 LC-MS convention.¹¹⁰ The historical-critical method is composed of various complementary exegetical procedures. Although not all are agreed that there is one uniform version of the historical-critical method,¹¹¹ biblical scholars agree that literary criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism in concerted use constitute what is known as the historical-critical method.¹¹² Textual criticism is also considered by many exegetes as part of this methodology but is accepted as a legitimate technique by the Conservatives.¹¹³ Their objections are directed almost totally against the three above-mentioned exegetical procedures, namely, literary criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism.

¹¹⁰ LC-MS: Proceedings of the Forty-Fourth Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 192.

¹¹¹ Horace D. Hummel, "The Outside Limits of Lutheran Confessionalism In Contemporary Biblical Interpretation (Part III)," The Springfielder 36 (June 1972):44.

¹¹² Krentz, HCM, pp. 34-35; J. Coert Rylaarsdam, Foreword to Literary Criticism of the Old Testament by Norman Habel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. iii; Dan O. Via, Jr., Foreword to What Is Form Criticism? by Edgar V. McKnight (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. vii; Gene M. Tucker, Foreword to The Old Testament and the Historian by J. Maxwell Miller (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. iii and Walter A. Maier, "The Analysis of Exodus 24, According to Modern Literary, Form, and Redaction Critical Methodology," The Springfielder 37 (June 1973):35.

¹¹³ Gene M. Tucker, Foreword to The Old Testament and the Historian, p. iii; Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, pp. 38, 52; Klann, "Criticism of the Bible," p. 2.

CHAPTER II

THE MODERATES' EXEGETICAL METHODOLOGY : HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND GOSPEL REDUCTIONISM

The Historical-Critical Method

To begin with, let it be made explicitly clear that the methodology which will be defined and described is a child of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but especially of the former period which is the era known as the Enlightenment.¹ The further refinement and widespread use of the method is, of course, being made in our present twentieth century. The historical development of historical criticism will not be dealt with in this research as it has been stated in the previous chapter. Sufficient treatises and articles have been written on the subject.² Moreover, it is not indispensably pertinent to this study.

¹Edgar Krentz, The Historical-Critical Method (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 85; John Reumann, ed., Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 49-50.

²Werner Georg Kümmel, The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems, trans. S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1972); Hans Joachim Kraus, Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments 2 Aufl., (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969); Peter Stuhlmacher, Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); Krentz, HCM; Raymond F. Surburg, "The Historical Method in Biblical Interpretation," Concordia Theological Monthly 23 (February 1952):81-104, et al.

It is much more imperative to focus the discussion on the topic of what historical criticism is.

The definition and description of the historical-critical method is crucial to the understanding of this exegetical technique. The first task though much briefer than the second is, in comparison, the more difficult of the two endeavors. The Moderates and Conservatives in the Report of the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation document provide, at least, two definitions of the historical-critical method which in each case has substantial differences.³ The definition provided by Ulrich Wilckens in Professor Edgar Krentz's book does not provide sufficient justification for understanding the methodology.⁴ Dr. Richard Klann's explication is by far the more succinct and adequate this writer has come across, He defines the historical-critical method as

that method of interpreting Scripture which uses the criteria of scientific historical investigation to analyze the sacred text in terms of language, literary form, and redaction criticism for the purpose of determining how much of the historical content of the events described in Scripture can be recaptured and authenticated.⁵

However, since the spectrum of theological conviction extends from the ultra liberal to the ultra conservative with numerous variety in between, no single definition will suffice to satisfy all theologians. It is perhaps due to the fact that its full development and widespread use has only come in recent times that both Conservatives and Moderates find it

³Report of the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1976), pp. 67, 80. (This report shall henceforth be abbreviated as ACDC).

⁴Krentz, HCM, p. 33.

⁵Richard Klann, "Criticism of the Bible," Affirm: Occasional Papers, Spring 1973, p. 1.

so complex to define and have declared that there is no singular historical-critical method.⁶ However, there is a consensus among biblical scholars that the various critical techniques such as literary criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism are used in conjunction by the practitioners of the historical-critical method.⁷ In fact the complementary use of all these techniques "have been identified under the rubric 'historical-critical method.'"⁸ Textual criticism, as was mentioned earlier, is considered a part of this methodology but it is also considered legitimate and necessary by the Conservatives and in fact they include it in their approved method -- the grammatico-historical method.⁹ To acquire a better understanding of these various critical methodologies, it is imperative that at least a brief description of each be provided.

Procedures of the Historical-Critical Method

Since textual criticism is a technique approved by both factions in the LC-MS theological dispute and has not been considered by either

⁶Sverre Aalen, "The Revelation of Christ and Scientific Research," trans. Otto Stahlke, The Springfielder 34 (December 1970):208; ACDC, p. 83.

⁷Walter A. Maier, "The Analysis of Exodus 24, According to Modern Literary, Form, and Redaction Critical Methodology," The Springfielder 37 (June 1973): 35; Dan O. Via, Jr., Foreword to What Is Form Criticism? by Edgar V. McKnight (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. vii; Gene M. Tucker, Foreword to The Old Testament and the Historian by J. Maxwell Miller (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. iii; and J. Coert Rylaarsdam, Foreword to Literary Criticism of the Old Testament by Norman Habel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. iii.

⁸Tucker, The Old Testament and the Historian, p. iii.

⁹Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, pp. 336-338; 344-345; H. P. Hamann, A Popular Guide to New Testament Criticism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), pp. 11-19.

of them as a controverted issue, it shall deliberately be omitted in this discussion. Discounting textual criticism which was practised even before the advent of the historical-critical method, the section of this specific chapter shall be devoted to explaining the distinctive characteristics of the different types of critical methods.

It is generally agreed that literary criticism, excluding textual criticism, is the oldest of the triumvirate types of criticism. In proper chronological order, the other two are form criticism and redaction criticism.¹⁰ Literary criticism in the early stages of its evolution has been given different names such as source criticism, documentary criticism and source analysis.¹¹ This is due to the different ways the method has been used.¹² It is for this reason that one finds a variety of description concerning literary criticism.¹³

Literary criticism is the more popular and preferred terminology, at least, in the English-speaking world. The majority of Biblical scholars has come, more or less, to an accord on what constitutes the task of literary criticism. This method attempts to determine where a

¹⁰J. Coert Rylaarsdam, Editor's Foreword, in Literary Criticism of the Old Testament by Habel, p. iii; and Norman Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 2; J. Coert Rylaarsdam, foreword in Tradition: History and the Old Testament by Walter E. Rast (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), p. iv.

¹¹J. D. Douglas, ed., The New Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), p. 152 and Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, p. 79.

¹²Krentz, HCM, pp. 49-50.

¹³Ibid.; Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, pp. 19-32; J. D. Douglas, The New Bible Dictionary, p. 152.

portion of or the whole literature comes from; who wrote it and if possible everything about the person of the writer, the date when it was written; the location of the addressee(s) and their geographical, political, religious, and cultural situation, and their other circumstances or that of the author which prompted the latter to compose the document and finally, the authenticity of the writing.¹⁴

Also included in literary criticism is the "study of sources" to ascertain where a portion(s) of a literature has come from if it is not an original creation of the writer. It assists the expositor to enter into the religio-cultural and thought world of the writer and his readers to understand their linguistic style, their language, their patterns of thought and their concept of their own universe.¹⁵

In its historical development, form criticism in its more refined fashion, evolved next to literary criticism. It is, in fact, due to the desire to provide a fuller answer to some of the concerns of literary criticism that form criticism gradually developed into a distinct, separate methodology. Literary criticism's attempt to determine the literary form and setting of the literature as it was used by the people in its oral and partly literary stage stirred the evolution of form criticism. James Sanders writes:

¹⁴Raymond Surburg, "The Historical Method in Biblical Interpretation," Concordia Theological Monthly 23 (February 1952), 85 (hereafter cited as CTM) and George Eldon Ladd, The New Testament and Criticism (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), p. 112.

¹⁵Krentz, HCM, p. 50; Richard N. Soulen, Handbook of Biblical Criticism (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978), pp. 99-100, and H. P. Hamann, A Popular Guide to New Testament Criticism, Chapter II passim.

Form criticism is an attempt to make precise observations about the kinds of literature out of which the various units of the Bible are composed. It pressed biblical literary criticism well beyond earlier questions of authorship and composition into prior questions about the smaller literary units which the earliest authors used, and by which the early believing communities (early Israel and early church) passed on the traditions about themselves, and about what they considered important to their identity as believing communities. Form criticism has enabled biblical scholarship to press back behind early Israel and early church to some of the myths, sagas, aphorisms, proverbs, and legends which those communities adapted from their surroundings for their own peculiar traditions and needs.¹⁶

Form criticism viewed the distinctive portions of Scripture as a composite of what originally were small, individual, pericopic units which likely had a different genre as they existed independently before than after they became part of a large composition. These preliterate pieces were passed on orally and were viewed as the productions and properties of religious communities. It is for this reason that they are known as folk literature. Form criticism strives to isolate the primitive oral traditions, classify them according to their literary types and in the process is believed to aid in understanding the specific life-situations from which they arose. These in turn help the present readers understand the original content and intention of a particular genre even though it is today a part of a larger composition with likely a different thrust.¹⁷

¹⁶James A. Sanders, Torah and Canon (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), pp. xi-xii.

¹⁷Soulen, Handbook of Biblical Criticism, pp. 62-63; Richard Jungkuntz, ed., A Project in Biblical Hermeneutics (St. Louis: n.p., 1969), p. 87; Gene M. Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 9 and Ladd, The New Testament and Criticism, pp. 144-45.

It is assumed that what we have in the Pentateuch and the Gospels existed for a long time in oral form. The text underwent a historical development similar to the evolutionary theory. The simple, independent, pericopic units used in particular settings were modified, enlarged, changed in literary forms, intentions, and meanings to meet the needs of the community. The simple genres became complex and larger possibly evolving from a paragraph to a catena of two or more paragraphs. In the process some units took on a mixture of genres.¹⁸

The term form criticism is not adequate to describe this methodology for its task is not limited to identifying literary types and their Sitzen im Leben. It is equally concerned about the history of oral traditions as they underwent varied changes in different settings. Hence it is also known by the nomenclatures form history (Formgeschichte in German) and investigation of forms (Gattungsforchung).

When the form critics speak of Sitz im Leben they refer to all the sociological, political and cultic influences which helped in the production and transmission of a unit in Scripture.¹⁹ Gene Tucker states that it

refers to the sociological situation which produced and maintained the various genres - such as the activity of the cult, the legal institutions, the 'school,' the family life, the tribal institutions, or the institutions and customs of the royal court. . . . The description of the setting should follow quite directly from a

¹⁸Otto Kaiser and Werner George Kümmel, Exegetical Method: A Student's Handbook, trans. E. V. N. Goetchius (New York: Seabury Press, 1967), pp. 19-20.

¹⁹Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, pp. 25-26.

correct description of the genre itself: Hymns belong in worship and laws belong to the legal process.²⁰

In analyzing the form of a pericopic unit in relationship to its original setting the expositor must realize that the specific literary unit which in its oral stage was an independent story or saying has now been made part of a larger context. This context must be disregarded in investigating a particular literary form.²¹ The setting in which one finds the text as it is written in our present Scripture is not the original setting and possibly not the original genre and therefore had a different meaning and intention at the time the event happened and when the saying(s) was spoken.

In the oral transmission of the Gospel from the time of Jesus to the time of the evangelist there are, at least, three 'settings-in-life.' Willi Marxsen argues that these three separate settings-in-life took place first naturally at the time of Jesus; secondly, at the time of the life and work of the early church and lastly, at the time of the evangelist himself who had his own intention for transmitting the tradition.²²

In the case of the Old Testament some of the settings could have been an imitation of what took place among the neighboring tribes of Israel. The kingship and the Solomonic temple both in Jerusalem played important roles in the Israelites' cultic life. Imitating the New Year festival of the Mesopotamian people Israel used this occasion to celebrate

²⁰Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 15.

²¹Kaiser and Kümmel, Exegetical Method: A Student's Handbook, p. 22.

²²Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism?, pp. 34-35.

the lordship of Yahweh using a particular group of Psalms in this celebration. Thus we have what are known as Royal Psalms.²³ The form critic's task then is to pan and sieve the contextualized literary tradition to recover the original, oral tradition in order to understand what it meant then and there in its first and authentic historical context.

Simple, literary units, of course, did not remain as they were as is manifest in the presence of literary works which became books or epistles which in turn were grouped into corpus of related literature and finally into canonical Old and New Testament which are today revered as Scripture by the Christian Church. But even before they were grouped into a corpus and vested with canonicity, the simple, independent units were gathered, embellished, edited, and arranged into a more or less coherent and complete literary work.

To analyze these processes are the tasks of Redaction criticism. This technique is a logical and natural outgrowth of form criticism.²⁴ While form criticism was interested in identifying the original forms and settings of the various pericopic units and their transmission in their oral stage, redaction criticism deals with the written literary work - a book, a gospel or an epistle - as the prophet or evangelist himself has arranged it with his own revisions as he sees them fitting his intentions and needs of the believing community. The form critic concentrates his effort in extracting the simple, literary unit from

²³ Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, pp. 23-24.

²⁴ Dan O. Via, Jr., Foreword to What Is Redaction Criticism? by Perrin, pp. v-vi; Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p.19 and Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, pp. 78-79.

the larger literary work, classifying its genre, identifying its setting as it was passed on orally by the believing community. Redaction criticism, on the other hand, focuses its labor on the additions, subtractions, arrangement and modifications which an editor(s) or redactor(s) has done in the final stages of the literary work.²⁵

There are, however, difficulties in completely delineating the tasks of form criticism and redaction criticism. It is perhaps for this reason that some Biblical expositors, when expounding on biblical criticism, either completely avoid or refrain from discussing at length redaction criticism especially in distinction from form criticism.²⁶ In the early writings of the Biblical critics the distinction is not easily discernible.²⁷ It is in the area of the literary units' historical preservation, transmission, and used in various settings when revisions were made where Biblical scholars confuse form criticism and redaction

²⁵Soulen, Handbook of Biblical Criticism, p. 143; Rylaarsdam, Foreword to Literary Criticism of the Old Testament by Habel, p. vii; Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism?, p. 1; Krentz, HCM, p. 51; and Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 19.

²⁶Ladd, The New Testament and Criticism and H. P. Hamann, A Popular Guide to New Testament Criticism both have no sections on redaction criticism.

²⁷Edgar Krentz, Biblical Studies Today (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 34 and Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism?, pp. 2-3.

criticism. This is true with Krentz's explanation of redaction criticism which he calls tradition history in his earlier work.²⁸ However, some redaction critics speak of tradition history to refer to the development of the oral or written works as they were modified and composed into a complete document by an editor(s) or redactor(s) who is then considered the author(s) of the document.²⁹ However, the close affinity between the tasks of both methodologies in the investigation of the document's history poses the problem of drawing the line to determine exactly where form critical work ends and where redaction critical work begins. Norman Perrin admits the presence of this problem. He writes:

Form criticism and redaction criticism in particular are very closely related to one another. They are in fact the first and second stages of a unified discipline, but their divergence in emphasis is sufficient to justify their being treated separately. The present writer, however, would be the first to admit the artificiality of this procedure, especially since in a previous work he included in what he called 'the form-critical approach' to the Gospels elements from both form and redaction criticism, with no attempt to distinguish them from one another as they are here being distinguished.³⁰

In the investigation of the New Testament the preferred terminology is redaction criticism.³¹ Redaction criticism, a term which was coined by

²⁸Krentz, Biblical Studies Today, p. 34.

²⁹I. Howard Marshall, ed., New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing Co., 1979), p. 182. Strictly speaking, form criticism assumes that additions were made as the material was molded, shaped and added to at various stages and then given final shape by the final editor(s). Tradition history is concerned with why additions were made to fit the needs of the church.

³⁰Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism?, pp. 2-3.

³¹Rylaarsdam, Foreword to Tradition History and the Old Testament by Rast, p. vii.

Willi Marxsen,³² "deals with the very last stages of the editing that presents [a Scriptural document] in its fixed or final form."³³ It is concerned with the theological motivation of the author in his compositional work.³⁴

Much of redactional criticism's work has so far been confined to the Synoptic Gospels.³⁵ Since its interests lies in the synthesis of the various traditions in contradistinction to the analytical work of both literary and form criticisms, it has also been called composition criticism.³⁶ It is for this reason that redactor(s) cannot really be considered as "authors" in that they were not really the genuine and original writers of the tradition. He is the one "who arranges, revises, edits or otherwise shapes oral and literary materials into a final composition."³⁷ On the other hand, he is more than a collector or editor for

³²Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism?, p. 1.

³³Rylaarsdam, Editor's Foreword, in Literary Criticism of the Old Testament by Habel, p. vii.

³⁴Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 19; Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism?, p. 1 and Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, pp. 78-79.

³⁵Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism?, p. 2. In the Old Testament the time span between oral tradition and the redactional stage is much, much longer than that of the New Testament. Hence a working distinction is clearly made between tradition history and redaction criticism in Old Testament scholarship while there is a tendency to conflate the two disciplines in the New Testament study. Rylaarsdam, Editor's Foreword, in Tradition History and the Old Testament by Rast, p. viii.

³⁶Marshall, ed., New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods, p. 181.

³⁷Soulen, Handbook of Biblical Criticism, p. 144.

his tasks included the provision of "certain emphases . . . [and] . . . central themes through his work of composition."³⁸ On the basis of the above arguments it can be seen that there is sufficient reason to differentiate redaction criticism from form criticism. Building on the accumulated research of form criticism

the redaction critic investigates how smaller units -- both simple and composite -- from the oral or from written sources were put together to form larger complexes, and he is especially interested in the formulation of the Gospels as finished products. Redaction criticism is concerned with the interaction between an inherited tradition and a later interpretation point of view. Its goals are to understand why the items from the tradition were modified and connected as they were, to identify the theological motifs that were at work in composing a finished Gospel, and to elucidate the theological point of view which is expressed in and through the composition.³⁹

The short time between the oral tradition to the finished document in the New Testament history, in comparison with that of the Old Testament, makes the task of redaction criticism of the New Testament far easier. In contrast, the Old Testament documents have a long tradition history with oral tradition undergoing multiple revisions in various settings before the redactional task began. Thus Professor Walter Rast could reasonably speak more of the tradition history of the Old Testament while Norman Perrin concentrates on the redaction criticism of the Gospels and barely touched the tradition history of these documents.⁴⁰

³⁸Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 19.

³⁹Dan O. Via, Jr., Foreword in What Is Form Criticism? by McKnight, pp. vi-vii.

⁴⁰Cf. Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament and Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism?

One of the most recent methods of exegesis is what is today known as Structural Exegesis. However, this methodology is so recent, it played no role in the Moderate-Conservative controversy and therefore has no relevance in discussing it in this dissertation.⁴¹

It is not pertinent and would be superfluous to examine and discuss the application of each critical method in the understanding and exposition of Scripture. The modern commentaries on different books of Scripture written by advocates of the historical-critical method sufficiently cover this area of concern. However, a brief description of how historical critics view the development of Scripture from revelation to canonization is certainly consistent with the intention of this study. Such an enterprise will provide us with the presuppositions and exegetical principles at work in historical criticism's exposition of Scripture.

Presuppositions of Historical Criticism

Liberal, Moderate, and Conservative theologians are all agreed that historical criticism is not free from presuppositions.⁴² In fact

⁴¹Should anyone wish to study this new method, the following books are recommended: Daniel Patte, What Is Structural Exegesis? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); Robert M. Polzin, Biblical Structuralism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); Daniel and Aline Patte, Structural Exegesis: From Theory to Practice (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978) and Alfred M. Johnson, Jr., ed. and trans., Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1979).

⁴²Gerhard Ebeling, Word and Faith, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 42; Manfred Roensch, "A Critical Investigation of the So-called Historical-Critical Method in the Interpretation of Holy Scripture," trans. Dr. Martin Naumann, The Springfielder 28 (Spring 1964):33-34; Robert D. Preus, "May The Lutheran Theologian

the presuppositions determine the historical-critical method's exegetical conclusions.⁴³ Therefore an exegetical methodology is best understood and judged at its axiological level. Shailer Matthews is correct in concluding that the difference between Liberals and Conservatives in their understanding of Scripture lies in the method and presuppositions they use in studying the Bible.⁴⁴ In order therefore to truly understand historical criticism, it is imperative to collate the various presuppositions which are used as interpretative principles in the exegetical task.

The proponents of the historical-critical method do not accept Scripture as the Word of God.⁴⁵ Historical criticism presumes that the Scripture has a similar history like other ancient, secular and historical documents.

The historicity of the Bible, that is, the conditioned character of its contents, a conditionedness which makes them dependent upon all kinds of human limitations and situations in precisely the same way as the legacies of all sorts of historical traditions, is an assumption of modern criticism throughout.⁴⁶

Legitimately Use the Historical-Critical Method?," Affirm: Occasional Papers, Spring 1973, p. 31; Ralph Bohlmann in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 196 and Edgar Krentz, "The Gospel and the Historical-Critical Method," Address given at Grace Lutheran Church, River Forest, Illinois, March 20, 1972. Cassette Tape 72-44. St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1972.

⁴³Walter E. Keller, et al, "A Review Essay of a Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles," (Part II, The Cresset 36 (October 1973):36.

⁴⁴Shailer Matthews, The Faith of Modernism (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 48.

⁴⁵Infra, p. 79.

⁴⁶Rylaarsdam, Editor's Foreword, Tradition History and the Old Testament by Rast, p. ix.

Professor Walter J. Bartling clearly explains that all New Testament statements were influenced by the writer's perception and interpretation of the event and by the peculiarities of his own time and place.⁴⁷ It is also assumed that the Biblical writers shared in all human limitations including the proclivity to errors.⁴⁸ This human fallibility also included the fact

that in the biblical literature ancient writers were attempting to express a theological view of the world and history and of men and things in terms derived from and relative to their culture.⁴⁹

This means that the Scripture is already an interpretation of the writers and cannot strictly be called a report of divine revelation. They were, for example, influenced by the forms of language, cultic beliefs and practices and their view of the world which naturally had an effect in their proclamation of God's Word to the people of their days.⁵⁰

This influence should be understood to the extent that even though the biblical writers employed the literary type of a historical narrative, they were not in reality relating history. And even if they intended to write history their concept of it certainly would be

⁴⁷Walter J. Bartling, "Hermeneutics and Pauline Parenthesis," in A Project in Biblical Hermeneutics, ed., Richard Jungkuntz, p. 75.

⁴⁸Robert D. Preus, "Current Theological Problems Which Confront Our Church." A Conference Of The College of Presidents And The Seminary Faculties: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. St. Louis, Concordia Seminary, November 27-29, 1961. (St. Louis: n.p., 1961), p.26.

⁴⁹CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation (St. Louis: n.p., 1973), p. 10.

⁵⁰Evangelical Lutherans in Mission (ELIM), The Historical-Critical Methodology (St. Louis: n.p., n.d.), p. 1.

different from the modern understanding of history.⁵¹ This is assumed to mean that the biblical writers used the literary forms and conventions of their day.⁵² Since God chose to use human beings and their language to impart His revelation, it is reasonable to conclude that He used natural means to do so. This means that the Scripture has no qualitative difference from other human documents.⁵³ Like any other ancient, secular writing, and especially due to its long historical development, it is to be expected that the Scripture would have discrepancies, contradictions, mistaken notions, and diverse theologies.⁵⁴ Therefore, following Johann David Michaelis, the first and foremost practitioner of historical criticism which Semler initiated, the Moderates in accepting the presuppositions mentioned above could thus justify the use of historical criticism in the same manner it was and is used in the investigation of other literary works.⁵⁵

It is presupposed by those who espoused historical criticism that the biblical writers, being culturally conditioned, had an antiquated, unscientific and incorrect view of the universe and of many other things.

⁵¹CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, p. 11.

⁵²Krentz, HCM, p. 62 and ACDC, p. 61.

⁵³Keller, et al, "A Review Essay of A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles," (Part II), p. 26.

⁵⁴ACDC, p. 2; LCUSA, The Function of Doctrine and Theology in Light of the Unity of the Church (New York: n.p., 1978), p. 12 (hereafter cited as LCUSA, FODT); Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, pp. 206, 307 and Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 18.

⁵⁵Krentz, HCM, p. 62 and CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, p. 3. On Michaelis see Kummel, The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems, pp. 69-73 passim.

Certainly, their conceptual framework is not identical with our own.⁵⁶ For example, they certainly did not have the sense of history that people have today,⁵⁷ and this had an important effect in the way they wrote literature and what they considered historical. What they wrote was interpreted history.⁵⁸ With regards to the historical in Scripture in our modern sense, there is among the Moderates an anti-historical bias so that it is said that

even if it were the text's (biblical) intention to relate history the interpreter must not expect the biblical authors to operate with the same criteria of what is history or accuracy as we do.⁵⁹

One of the basic assumptions of historical criticism is the absence of the art of writing especially at the time and prior to the time of Moses.⁶⁰ It is argued that the recipients and transmitters of divine revelations were originally speakers and not writers.⁶¹ The oral

⁵⁶Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, pp. 296, 321.

⁵⁷Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism?, p. 73 and William A. Beardslee, Literary Criticism of the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 9.

⁵⁸Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 36 and Erich Kiehl, A Case Study In Contemporary Biblical Interpretation: The Exodus Account, Biblical Series #2 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Print Shop, August 1978), p. 3.

⁵⁹CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, p. 14.

⁶⁰Arlis Ehlen, "Deliverance at the Sea: Diversity and Unity in a Biblical Theme," CTM 44 (May 1973):168-191 passim.

⁶¹Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, pp. 56, 64; Jungkuntz, A Project in Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 92 and Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, p. 58.

testimonies to divine revelations were communicated in separate, individual units in particular settings.⁶² In this oral stage

the stories of the patriarchs or of Jesus were preserved and transmitted among the people of God as parts of sermons, liturgies, and educational materials and even bed-time stories.⁶³

It is asserted that there were prophetic schools or circles who preserved the teachings of the prophets and finally put them into writing.⁶⁴ From the oral stage to the literary period the original prophetic utterances have undergone changes.⁶⁵ All these conjectures were, of course, popularized by Herman Gunkel and the Uppsala School which "held that no Biblical writings were put in written form till after 587 B.C."⁶⁶ While similar views concerning the historical development of the New Testament were asserted by New Testament scholars, an exemption was made particularly with regard to the Passion Narratives.⁶⁷ The witnesses to divine

⁶² Kiehl, A Case Study in Contemporary Biblical Interpretation: The Exodus Account, p. 4; Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, p. 1; McKnight, What Is Form Criticism?, p. 18 and H. T. Mayer, "Editorial," CIM 37 (September 1966):468.

⁶³ Ralph A. Klein, "A Response by Ralph W. Klein," Responses to Presentations Delivered at Theological Convocation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri: A Study Document Offered to the Members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod by Evangelical Lutherans in Mission, n.p., n.d., p. 7.

⁶⁴ Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, p. 58.

⁶⁵ Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, pp. 56, 64.

⁶⁶ Jungkuntz, A Project in Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 92.

⁶⁷ Walter A. Maier, "The Historical-Critical Method As Employed In The Study of the New Testament," The Springfielder 36 (June 1971):35-36 and Harold H. Buls, "Redaction Criticism And Its Implications," The Springfielder 36 (March 1973):261.

revelations were preserved and used in cultic communities.⁶⁸ It is therefore said that "all Israelites over many centuries contributed to the making of the Bible."⁶⁹

The interactions of the Israelites with various groups of people such as the Canaanites, Egyptians, and Mesopotamian peoples greatly influenced their religious beliefs.⁷⁰ This influence included myths.⁷¹ Similarly New Testament personalities had the same experience. This literary influence included the borrowing of non-historical genres like myths, legends, and sagas.⁷² The Gospel of Mark, for example, is regarded as "a strange mixture of history, legend, and myth."⁷³ This borrowing is much more evident in the Old Testament. It is presumed that when similarities appear between Israelite religion and culture with Near Eastern civilization, the former must have borrowed from the latter by the fact that the latter is thought to have been historically older than the former⁷⁴ even though as conquerors at the time of David and

⁶⁸"The Church's One Foundation," Missouri In Perspective, August 26, 1974, p. 2.

⁶⁹Rylaarsdam, Editor's Foreword, in Tradition History and the Old Testament by Rast, pp. vii, ix-x.

⁷⁰Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 22 and Albert E. Glock, "The Study and Interpretation of the Old Testament," CTM 38 (February 1967):105-106.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 27 and Ralph Gehrke, "Genesis Three in the Light of Key Hermeneutical Considerations," CTM 36 (September 1965):555.

⁷²Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, pp. 30, 32, 38, 52.

⁷³Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism?, p. 75.

⁷⁴Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, p. 23. Tucker holds that myth was the dominant form of religious expression of the peoples surrounding Israel and therefore it was inescapable for Israel not to be influenced by it. Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 27.

Solomon, the Israelites could have immensely influenced the culture and religion of the Near East as had happened in many vanquished nations in modern history.

Herman Gunkel asserted the presence of sagas in the Old Testament. This is a genre which describes the affairs of men especially with something incredible. A saga is "a story . . . explaining the circumstances surrounding the origin of an institution, custom, human condition, or the name of a site."⁷⁵ Etiological sagas are attempts to explain the unknown in the universe of men. These, of course, are non-historical and unscientific.⁷⁶ They narrate to us "the life and time of the period in which they were circulated and written down than they do about the events they mean to describe."⁷⁷

Not only are many portions of Scripture especially of the Old Testament, regarded as non-historical but even entire books which in the past were viewed as historical are now considered symbolical. Such is the case with the books of Jonah and Esther which are considered fictions and parabolic.⁷⁸ Some of the Old Testament genres even went further in development not only in changing genres but even giving birth to other genres.⁷⁹ It is therefore reasonable not to automatically understand Scripture in a literal sense even though Scripture itself may present

⁷⁵Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, pp. 78.

⁷⁶Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, pp. 30-32.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 16, 20.

⁷⁸Surburg, "The Historical Method in Biblical Interpretation," CTM, p. 89.

⁷⁹Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 8.

its account as literal and historical.⁸⁰ The Israelites in their historical, geographical and cultural proximity with the Semitic peoples freely borrowed not only literary forms and literature but including

institutions and rites common to other Semitic faiths, such as the Sabbath, circumcision, sacrifice, priesthood, prophecy, prayer, feasts, fasts, menhirs, and ethicized and spiritualized them.⁸¹

Historical criticism has accepted the assumption advanced by H. S. Nyberg that most of the Old Testament literature which was transmitted orally was put into writing created by the redactor(s) during the crisis of the exilic period.⁸²

Historical critics do not believe that the Scriptures have authors in the modern sense of that word.⁸³ Professor McKnight believes that all four gospels were written anonymously and that it was later tradition which ascribed to them names.⁸⁴ The four-source hypothesis relative to the Synoptic Gospels was offered to New Testament scholarship by Burnett Hillman Streeter in his magnum opus The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins first published in 1924. In this work he asserted that Mark is the

⁸⁰Walter E. Keller, "A Scrutiny of A Statement on Scripture," The Cresset 35 (June 1972):8.

⁸¹Surburg, "The Historical Method in Biblical Interpretation," pp. 89-90.

⁸²Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, pp. 9-10; Surburg, "The Historical Method in Biblical Interpretation," p. 87 and Surburg, "Implications of the Historico-Critical Method in Interpreting the Old Testament," The Springfielder 26 (Spring 1962):12.

⁸³Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 18 and E. Basil Redlich, Form Criticism Its Value and Limitations (London: Duckworth, c. 1939), p. 9. Cf. Kaiser and Kümmel, Exegetical Method: A Student's Handbook, pp. 15-16.

⁸⁴McKnight, What Is Form Criticism?, p. 1.

primitive gospel and that the other accounts found in Matthew and Luke were taken from hypothetical sources designated as M and L and that sayings of Jesus found in Matthew and Luke but not in Mark come from the source known as Q for the German word quelle, meaning source.⁸⁵ Although there is still much debate on this matter, most New Testament scholars have accepted this hypothesis as the most plausible solution to the sources of the synoptic gospels.⁸⁶ In accord with the deduction of the historical critics a guest professor at Concordia Seminary in 1967 put it this way:

the synoptic evangelists were not so much free authors as collectors or collators of originally isolated pieces of tradition which were not only preserved by the early church, whether in its preaching, teaching, its apologetics, or whatever the need may have been. That is, the original pericopes arose out of the situation of the early church and thus reflect its thinking and theology.⁸⁷

The collators, according to the historical critics, felt free to completely rework the oral or literary pieces of tradition to suit their intentions and the needs of the cultic communities.⁸⁸ A book or a literary corpus could have had multiple authors as is the case with the Pentateuch whose multiple authorship had been posited by Karl Heinrich Graf and Julius Wellhausen.⁸⁹ It is even theorized that in the process of

⁸⁵Soulén, Handbook of Biblical Criticism, p. 65; Ladd, The New Testament and Criticism, pp. 127-128 and McKnight, What Is Form Criticism? pp. 38-39.

⁸⁶Soulén, Handbook of Biblical Criticism, pp. 157-158.

⁸⁷V. C. Pfitzner, "The Hermeneutical Problem and Preaching," CTM 38 (June 1967):351.

⁸⁸Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 345; and McKnight, What is Form Criticism?, p. 8.

⁸⁹Soulén, Handbook of Biblical Criticism, pp. 69-70.

collation the words of the prophets have been handled and edited carelessly and haphazardly though not necessarily by deliberate action.⁹⁰ In fact the arrangement of the biblical text is not completely reliable for "sections which were originally closely connected may very probably have been separated from each other by redactional work."⁹¹ Therefore, many consider it warranted to break up a unified document, especially the Psalms, into literary units or genres.⁹² In the study of these edited and collated literary pieces "we learn of the author's, evangelist's, transmitter's theology."⁹³ Moderates like Klein hold that all these processes of oral tradition, preservation, editorial work, and redaction were under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁴

The changes which have taken place in the long history of the text obviously included changes in meanings of the text.⁹⁵ It is

⁹⁰Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 11.

⁹¹Kaiser and Kümmel, Exegetical Method: A Student's Handbook, p. 18.

⁹²Jungkuntz, A Project in Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 92 and Kaiser and Kümmel, Exegetical Method: A Student's Handbook, pp. 15-16. Kaiser and Kümmel comment that "in the Old Testament period . . . individual books do not represent unified literary compositions. . . . The task of literary criticism . . . is to separate the original content of a book, of a source document, or of an individual tradition from later accretions." Ibid.

⁹³Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism?, p. 66. In the same book Perrin says: ". . . the Gospels offer us directly information about the theology of the early church and not about the teaching of the historical Jesus . . ." Ibid., p. 69. Or, as R. H. Lightfoot phrased it: the Gospels provide us with "only the whisper of Jesus' voice." Ibid.

⁹⁴Klein, "Responses by Ralph W. Klein in Interpreting the Scriptures," p. 8.

⁹⁵John Strietelmeier, "Orthodoxy vs. Fundamentalism," The Crescent 35 (May 1972):28.

conceived that some of the declarative sayings of Jesus were later made hortatory and thus altering their meanings and emphases. Some sayings were even invented by the Christian communities and attributed to Jesus.⁹⁶ Reumann hence could say that there are different levels of meaning for the text in its long history.⁹⁷ The majority members of essayists in LCUSA--sponsored dialogues could only agree and declare: "the meaning of the text is not bound to the historical intention of the author."⁹⁸ Reumann clearly shows doubt regarding the constancy of the meaning of the text of Scripture from the time of its writing to the present.⁹⁹

On the basis of the assumptions which have been presented, the procedure of going behind the biblical texts to non-canonical sources has been seen as imperative and legitimate. This technique brings present-day readers of Scripture to the original meaning, intention, and setting of the text as it was in its oral form. This method entails the task of separating the original text from the accretions made by the

⁹⁶McKnight, What Is Form Criticism?, pp. 25, 27, 29, 31.

⁹⁷John Reumann, "Exegetes, Honesty and the Faith: Biblical Scholarship in Church School Theology," Currents in Theology and Mission 5 (February 1978):19, 23.

⁹⁸LCUSA, FODT, p. 92. Duane A. Priebe Lutheran Professor at Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa categorically states that the text as we have it today "does not have a simple single meaning. It has its original historical meaning, which may or may not be recoverable. But it also has other meanings in the context of Israel's history . . ." Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, pp. 309-310.

⁹⁹Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 55.

cultic community.¹⁰⁰ Form critics believe that to fully understand Scripture one needs to go back to the oral tradition.¹⁰¹ Hence Krentz maintains that the theological views and history of the Jews after the exile cannot be adequately described without the use of extra-biblical literature.¹⁰² This places the historical value of Scripture equal to all other historical sources.¹⁰³ Thus critical analysis and judgment of the sources and a study of their history becomes imperative.¹⁰⁴

If the extra-biblical sources were used only to illuminate the biblical text while allowing it to remain authoritative, this would be a legitimate critical procedure. But this has not been the case because the biblical account is seen as borrowed while "the non-biblical documents are generally firsthand in the sense that we have the originals rather than copies of copies."¹⁰⁵ Moreover, Old Testament documents were written centuries after the events which they report happened. Their writers were not interested in history as we understand it today "but in

¹⁰⁰Dan O. Via, Jr., Foreword in What Is Form Criticism? by McKnight; p. vi; Walter A. Maier, "The Historical-Critical Method as Employed in the Study of the New Testament," p. 28 and Surburg, "The Historical Method in Biblical Interpretation," p. 86.

¹⁰¹Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 1.

¹⁰²Krentz, HCM, p. 48. Cf. LCUSA, FODT, p. 73 and Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 38.

¹⁰³Kurt Marquart, "The Swing of the Pendulum: An Attempt to Understand the St. Louis Affirmations and Discussions," Affirm: Occasional Papers, Spring, 1973, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴Kaiser and Kümmel, Exegetical Method: A Student's Handbook, p. 23.

¹⁰⁵Miller, The Old Testament and the Historian, p. 20.

matters of faith and theology.¹⁰⁶ When biblical and non-biblical sources provide similar accounts, the latter is assumed to be the original and when discrepancies are noted, the norm for historicity are the non-biblical sources.¹⁰⁷ Therefore the authoritative and original sense of the text are in the sources behind the biblical texts.¹⁰⁸

Although the Scripture is, to a certain extent, held to be the work of the Holy Spirit, they are "on the one hand like other books produced by humans, growing out of and addressing historical situations."¹⁰⁹ In view of this presupposition it is a requisite that the Bible be studied by the same method used in studying any other literature.¹¹⁰ For it is reasoned that the Bible "is equally susceptible of investigation and description by the canons and techniques of the secular historian."¹¹¹ It must be treated "like witnesses in a court of law: they

¹⁰⁶Tucker, Foreword in The Old Testament and the Historian by Miller, pp. iii-iv.

¹⁰⁷Helmut Echtermach, "The Lutheran Doctrine of the 'Autopistia' of Holy Scripture," CTM 23 (April 1952):265 and Krentz, HCM, p. 48.

¹⁰⁸R. Preus, "Current Theological Problems Which Confront Our Church," pp. 38-39; Horace D. Hummel, Critical Study and The Exodus Pericope, Biblical Studies Series #3 (St. Louis: n. p., May 1973), p. 5; Rylaarsdam, Foreword in Tradition History and the Old Testament by Rast, p. vii; Wolfhart Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology: Collected Essays, trans. George H. Kehm, 3 Vols. (London: SCM Press, 1970), 1:196 and Kaiser and Kummel, Exegetical Method: A Student's Handbook, p. 32.

¹⁰⁹ICUSA; FODT, p. 11.

¹¹⁰CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, pp. 8-9.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 4. Cf. Surburg, "The Historical Method in Biblical Interpretation," p. 83 and Krentz, HCM, pp. 42, 45, 47, 52.

must be interrogated and their answers evaluated."¹¹² The interpreter and his critical reason is the ultimate judge in determining what is authentic and inauthentic in the literary sources including those reported by Scripture.¹¹³ This means that the biblical interpreter must have the mind set of the historian who in his quest for truth begins by doubting the truth of his sources.¹¹⁴ Therefore the historical critic cannot have the Christian presuppositions concerning Scripture. He must abandon the a priori assumptions that the Biblical accounts are God's revelation, inspired, inerrant, authoritative, and so forth.¹¹⁵ He needs to do this because the historical critic's task is to

determine the precise literary and conceptual singularity of the book, and its form, intention, and purposes in order to pass judgment on the accuracy and completeness of the historical reports in it.¹¹⁶

Or as Van Harvey says: "The historian confers authority upon a witness."¹¹⁷ Historical criticism rejects the presupposition that the Scripture is self-authenticating.¹¹⁸

The historicity and cultural conditionedness of the Old Testament require of the historical critic an interpretation that would maintain

¹¹²Krentz, HCM, p. 42.

¹¹³Ibid., pp. 4, 70.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 45.

¹¹⁵Surburg, "The Historical Method in Biblical Interpretation," p. 83.

¹¹⁶Krentz, HCM, p. 52.

¹¹⁷Van A. Harvey, The Historian and The Believer (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 42.

¹¹⁸Klann, "Criticism of the Bible," p. 2.

the integrity of this ancient and religious document.¹¹⁹ This means that the Old Testament should not automatically be understood in the light of the New Testament interpretation. The truth of this assumption will be shown in the next chapter.

Although the Moderates certainly do not reject the possible intrusion of God into human history, they demonstrate through the influence of historical criticism an anti-supernaturalistic bias. This is understandable in the light of the fact that consistent historical criticism includes the presupposition of a naturalistic worldview.¹²⁰ As a historian the concept of the supernatural or miraculous must needs be disregarded in his investigation of past events.¹²¹ The principle of correlation and analogy rules out divine intervention, such as miracles and salvation history.¹²² This is what makes historical criticism scientific for it makes "historical knowledge . . . capable of verification or correction by a reexamination of the evidence."¹²³ In fact

the more numerous the parallels that exist between a given supernatural event recorded in contemporary pagan literature of the same

¹¹⁹Miller, The Old Testament and the Historian, p. 13.

¹²⁰R. Preus, "Current Theological Problems Which Confront Our Church," p. 35.

¹²¹Miller, The Old Testament and the Historian, p. 13.

¹²²Krentz, HCM, p. 55, 59; Miller, The Old Testament and the Historian, p. 18; ACDC, p. 67 and Kiehl, A Case Study in Contemporary Biblical Interpretation: The Exodus Account, p. 3.

¹²³Krentz, HCM, p. 56.

area, the greater the probability that the Biblical event did not actually occur but rather was probably a common legend or myth that numerous religions used for didactic purposes.¹²⁴

The principles of analogy and correlation which have predisposed the minds of historical critics were ushered into historical criticism through Ernst Troeltsch's essay "On Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology" (1898).¹²⁵ While indeed the Moderates reject the positivistic view, their theological position is more compatible with that of Van Harvey who allows the possibility of miracles but says: "'nothing can be said in [its] favor and a great deal counts against it.'"¹²⁶

The beginning of this chapter stated that even though the AELC and other Moderate Biblical scholars use historical-criticism, their exegetical conclusions take on a moderating trend. This was attributed to the safeguard exercised by gospel reductionism to which almost all, if not all, of the Moderates subscribe.¹²⁷ The next chapter will show the Moderates' application of this method in their views of the nature, attributes, and interpretation of Scripture. Suffice it to say here that this hermeneutical principle sets the boundary of their exegetical Tendenz. Whether the Moderates will keep this barricade solidly intact

¹²⁴Steven Hein, "The Crisis on Biblical Authority: A Historical Analysis," Concordia Theological Quarterly 41 (October 1977):71.

¹²⁵Krentz, HCM, p. 55.

¹²⁶Terence E. Fretheim, "Source Criticism, O.T.," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume, General ed., Keith Crim, 5 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), p. 838 and Krentz, HCM, p. 59.

¹²⁷Milton Rudnick, "Letter to the editor," Lutheran Witness Reporter, July 3, 1966, p. 8.

is hard to foretell. There are signs that a few Moderates have already begun to pierce this wall and have become more liberal in their exegetical enterprise. One needs only to read the articles published in recent years in Currents in Theology and Mission to verify the truth of this assertion.

Gospel reductionism has supplanted sola Scriptura as the norm for Christian doctrines and practices by making the former the judge of Biblical and theological issues which are important for the theology of the church. This combined use of historical criticism and gospel reductionism is similar to the sense of what Paul G. Bretscher calls the "theological reality" which comes from God and the "historical reality" which comes from men.¹²⁸

Brief Historical Background of Gospel-Reductionism

Professor Edward H. Schroeder, the foremost proponent of gospel-reductionism, argues that it is explicitly traceable to the Lutheran reformers. He writes:

The confessors evaluated the abuses in teaching and practice of the late medieval church tracking down their actual or potential impingement on the Gospel. The reformers actually put into practice a means of evaluating issues by leading them back (reducere) to the Gospel. If there was no way that the Gospel was either abated or abetted by a particular practice or Biblical interpretation, then the confessors were content to ignore it or, at most, to give it skimpy treatment.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Paul G. Bretscher, After the Purifying (River Forest, Illinois: Lutheran Educational Association, 1975), pp. 78, 87.

¹²⁹ Edward H. Schroeder, "Law-Gospel Reductionism in the History of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod," CTM 43 (April 1972):235.

Professor Herbert J. A. Bouman asserts that this was precisely the principle which Luther used in rejecting a whole series of teachings and practices as can be seen in the Smalcald Articles. He declares that for Luther this was "the decisive principle, the hermeneutic, if you will, according to which he determined whether a thing was Scriptural or not . . ." ¹³⁰ The sense of the gospel here, of course, is limited to its narrow sense. This use of gospel-reductionism is especially evident in Apology IV of the Lutheran Confessions.

The reintroduction of this hermeneutical principle within Missouri Synod is associated with the late Lutheran theologian Werner Elert (d. 1954). A number of theological teachers within the Synodical educational system of higher education either studied under Elert or studied his works. Some of them not only brought his theological thoughts to Synod's colleges and seminaries but also translated his works for the English-speaking world. ¹³¹ It is especially the reintroduction of the concept of Gospel-reductionism which Professor Schroeder considers one of the most important theological contributions of Elert to present-day Lutheranism.

Professor Schroeder alleges that the term Gospel-reductionism was made popular by John Warwick Montgomery's essay which was delivered on eight different occasions in the Spring and Fall of 1966. Montgomery

¹³⁰ Herbert J. A. Bouman, "Some Thoughts on Authentic Lutheranism," CTM 42 (May 1971):286.

¹³¹ Schroeder, "Law-Gospel Reductionism in the History of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod," p. 233 and Schroeder, "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutics," in The Lively Function of the Gospel, ed. Robert W. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 234.

does not subscribe to gospel-reductionism but his essay was soon reprinted by Lutherans Alert. Montgomery traces the origin of this methodology to Walter R. Bouman who in turn took it from Elert.¹³²

Gospel-Reductionism

This hermeneutical principle is sometimes called Law-Gospel reductionism. However, the abbreviated terminology "Gospel-reductionism" is more appropriate. The terms Law and Gospel are used to give the impression that this is the application of the Lutheran Confessions and the Reformers' Law-Gospel principle which was used by the Lutheran confessors to interpret the status of human existence before God. Moreover, the Moderates, as will be shown in the following chapter have not provided sufficient evidence as to how the Law portion is used as an exegetical principle. The Moderates themselves use only the gospel part of this dialectic in their interpretive works and, in fact, limit the term to gospel-reductionism.

According to the Moderates, gospel-reductionism does not mean reducing the gospel. The term "reductionism" was coined from the Latin reducere which means - to return, to lead back. Gospel-reductionism according to them means leading back and evaluating biblical texts and theological issues in the light of its significance to the gospel.¹³³ Although the Moderates agree that the term is of recent coinage and has a polemical overtone, they nevertheless use the principle, and if not

¹³²Schroeder, "Law-Gospel Reductionism in the History of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod," p. 232.

¹³³Ibid., p. 235 and ACDC, p. 41.

the term, then its synonyms,¹³⁴ such as justification by faith, sola gratia, promissio, and so forth.

In using the principle the Moderates insist that "doctrinal formulations are to be made in the light of the doctrine: justification by faith."¹³⁵ They emphasized that the gospel is not only to be the sole norm but also the source of true doctrine.¹³⁶ The criterion of interpretation for the evangelical use of the Bible is the Gospel.¹³⁷ Schroeder contends that this "one article of Christian theology (solus Christus, sola gratia, sola fide, or justification by faith or gospel) is the one principle and key for interpreting the Scriptures."¹³⁸

While this hermeneutical principle is truly Lutheran when used as a key for interpreting the substance and intent of Scripture, it becomes unLutheran and unbiblical when it is used as a wedge to divide what is considered important and unimportant in Scripture as if there is any element in God's Word which is not significant and can be discarded without Scriptural warrant and poses no danger to the Christian faith.

¹³⁴ACDC, p. 40. Cf. Schroeder, "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutics," pp. 90-91.

¹³⁵ACDC., pp. 40-41.

¹³⁶"The Church's One Foundation," Missouri In Perspective, August 26, 1974, p. 2.

¹³⁷Edgar Krentz, "Truly Evangelical-Truly Lutheran," Currents in Theology and Mission 6 (October 1979):275.

¹³⁸Schroeder, "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutics," p. 90. This view is shared by almost all Moderates. Cf. for example Herbert J. A. Bouman, "Some Thoughts on the Theological Presuppositions for a Lutheran Approach to Scriptures," Aspects of Biblical Hermeneutics: Confessional Principles and Practical Applications, Concordia Theological Monthly Occasional Papers #1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 16.

This is exactly what Professor Schroeder does when he distinguishes between what he calls "gospel" and "sub-gospel" matters in Scriptures.¹³⁹ So Schroeder proposed that all teachings and practices must be "upgraded" via gospel-reductionism to determine their significance for salvation.¹⁴⁰ This means that matters which have no salvific importance even though found in Scripture should not be a bone for contention. The CTCR is right in stating that this method of theologizing "suggest that considerable freedom should be allowed within the church in matters which are not an explicit part of the Gospel."¹⁴¹ Professor Robert W.

¹³⁹Schroeder, "Law-Gospel Reductionism in the History of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod," p. 235. While indeed that principle was used to distinguish between the good news and the bad news, it was not employed to relativize non-gospel portions of Scripture. Nowhere in the Lutheran Confessions was the Gospel used to reject the facticity of any statement in Scripture. Some ordinances in Scripture were indeed asserted to be no longer binding but not because the Gospel said so but because Scripture itself either explicitly said so or clearly implied via the analogy of faith.

This is evident in a series of theses asserted and explained by Schroeder. Edward H. Schroeder, "Current Implications of The 'We Condemn' Statements In the Lutheran Confessions," Currents in Theology and Mission 2 (February 1975):5-9 . Cf. The answer of H. Armin Moellering to Schroeder's article. H. Armin Moellering, "A Rejoinder With Reprising Notes," Currents in Theology and Mission 2 (February 1975):10-18. Dr. Moellering's article, I believe, has adequately refuted Professor Schroeder's contentions. Dr. Schroeder contends that "the Reformers use the Gospel of 'faith-alone' (Justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone is their full expression) as their yardstick for measuring all past and present traditions of doctrine and practice." Again and again Schroeder insists that this should be the principle of judging any doctrine or practice.

¹⁴⁰Schroeder, "Law-Gospel Reductionism in the History of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod," p. 235.

¹⁴¹CTCR, Gospel and Scripture (St. Louis: n.p., November 1972), p. 4.

Bertram, in fact, limits the authoritative canon to the gospel.¹⁴²

Schroeder is in substantial agreement with this conviction when he says:

If a supposed article of faith has nothing to do with this one article i.e., justification by faith . . . whatever we let go without letting go of this one gracious gift is no real loss; we are still fully and truly Christian, and we dare let no one convince us that we are not.¹⁴³

Some non-AELC and LC-MS Moderate theologians affirm gospel-reductionism. Some say that theological views which deal with the nature and interpretation of Holy Scripture even when they are in the Lutheran Confessions must be rejected if they "do not deal directly with the gospel itself."¹⁴⁴ In complete agreement with the FODT document Harold H. Ditmanson maintains that "the Confessions contain a true exposition of the Bible, but not the true exposition."¹⁴⁵ This means that these theologians make dubious their quia subscription to the Lutheran Symbols. One of them even goes a step further by suggesting that it may be needful at times to preach against the biblical text. His justification for this is that

not every text in the New Testament can be taken as it stands. Where the text, after being carefully examined, does not stand for sola gratia, something radical must take place. The text must be either reinterpreted or preached against or omitted.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴²Ralph Bohlmann and Robert Bertram, The Holy Scriptures and the Gospel, Cassette Tape 73-20, Part I (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, n.d.) Cf. Part II.

¹⁴³Schroeder, "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutics?," p. 83.

¹⁴⁴LCUSA, FODT, p. 12.

¹⁴⁵Harold H. Ditmanson, "Perspective on the Hermeneutics Debate," in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 92.

¹⁴⁶Joseph A. Burgess, "Confessional Propria in Relation to New Testament Texts," in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 265.

Gospel-reductionism, however, poses a dilemma for the Moderates. This is evident in what seems to this writer to be two contradictory statements when the Moderates say:

We do not assume that anything in the Bible is unimportant or to be treated lightly. But we do have to relate everything in the Scriptures ultimately to the Gospel as Scripture's center. This principle enable us to understand the Bible and helps determine the relative significance of a given part of Scripture for our faith and teaching.¹⁴⁷

Gospel-reductionism then provides the Moderates with an avenue to use historical criticism, especially on portions of Scripture which they regard to have no gospel significance.

Conclusions

This chapter has briefly explained the historical-critical method composed of the following steps: literary criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism. Textual criticism, which is actually the first step in the methodology has been deliberately omitted in the discussion of historical criticism for the precise reason that this specific step is not only chronologically prior to the historical-critical method but more importantly it is not a controverted procedure between the Moderates and the Conservatives.¹⁴⁸ We have seen how each step is an outgrowth of a prior procedure as the historical critics extended their quest for a rational explanation concerning the origin and development of Scripture. In the process they have constructed hypotheses upon hypotheses to come up with more or less plausible answers.

¹⁴⁷ACDC, p. 62. Emphasis mine.

¹⁴⁸Klann, "Criticism of the Bible," p. 2.

More important for this research which formed the bulk of this chapter is the presentation and description of the presuppositions of the historical-critical method which we have asserted to be the crux of the problem between the Moderates and the Conservatives. However, the Moderates are a different breed of historical critic. They have superimposed upon this methodology the governing principle known as gospel-reductionism. Gospel-reductionism as a hermeneutical axiom has provided the moderating exegetical conclusions and, to a large extent, a justification for seeking to be considered Lutherans.

The combination of the use of historical criticism and gospel-reductionism in understanding and interpreting Scripture as the Moderates' exegetical methodology will be shown in the following chapter which will present their views and works.

CHAPTER III

THE MODERATES' EXEGETICAL METHODOLOGY AS APPLIED TO SCRIPTURES

The Canonization Process

The mediating theologians do not deny that the Holy Spirit works through the canonical Word to convict and convince people of God's judgment and mercy. But the same theologians assert that in the historical development of Scripture "authority was actually vested on them by the people rather than by an expressed revelation of God."¹

The association of independent, pericopic units with others to form a larger account is attributed to an editor(s) or redactor(s) who reshaped and arranged the various accounts according to his own interest, intention and in accord with the needs of the believing community. It is assumed that at this stage most of the accounts were in written form so that the interrelated accounts now form a document.² This document, or as some surmise oral episodes, formed what are known as cycles. These

¹Rudolph Gehle, "Outline for a History of the Old Testament Canon," Concordia Theological Monthly 17 (November 1946):810-811.

²John Reumann, "Exegetes, Honesty and the Faith: Biblical Scholarship in Church School Theology," Currents in Theology and Mission 5 (February 1978):16 and Walter E. Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), p. 55.

various cycles were either associated with personages or places.³ These cycles were then collected according to authorship or assumed authorships or subjects. Thus we have the Pauline corpus, the four-fold gospel, the Pentateuch, and so forth.⁴ These various literary corpuses were gradually vested with authority and thus the process of selecting what are canonical took place.

The gradual process of canonization is used by the historical critics as an argument against Scripture's declaration of its self-authenticating authority.⁵ It is no wonder that Reumann "Questioned the principle that the canonical word is the authoritative one for us."⁶ Dr. Erwin Lueker proposed an open canon and that "scholarship is to be involved in determining the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments. . . ."⁷ Sharing a similar view a number of Balparaiso University professors cite the fact that the Lutheran Confessions not only do not have a list of canonical writings but also quote, seemingly

³Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, pp. 33-56 passim.

⁴Reumann, "Exegetes, Honesty and the Faith: Biblical Scholarship in Church School Theology," p. 17.

⁵Gehle, "Outline for a History of the Old Testament Canon," pp. 808-809.

⁶Reumann, "Exegetes, Honesty and the Faith: Biblical Scholarship in Church School Theology," p. 29.

⁷Erwin Lueker, "Doctrinal Emphases in the Missouri Synod," Concordia Theological Monthly 43 (April 1972);205. Hereafter referred to as CTM.

as authoritative, other sacred writings which today are rejected by all Lutheran Churches.⁸

Professor Harold H. Ditmanson of the American Lutheran Church (ALC) somehow has a peculiar theory of canonization. He said: "It was because of the efficacious divine message or kerygma present in our Gospels that the early church placed them in the canon."⁹ How this applies to the rest of the New Testament and especially of the Old Testament was never explained. This, obviously, was a theological deduction taken from Luther's "Preface" to the New Testament (1522).¹⁰ Following what has been misunderstood in Luther's statement, Ernst Käsemann has formulated what is known as a "canon within a canon" by stating that "the canon . . . is only the Word of God in so far as it is and becomes the

⁸Walter E. Keller et al, "A Review Essay of A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles," (Part II) The Cresset 36 (October 1973):17.

⁹Harold H. Ditmanson, "Perspectives on the Hermeneutics Debate" in John Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 101.

¹⁰Martin Luther, "Preface to the New Testament," in Luther's Works, Helmut T. Lehmann, gen. ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), pp. 357-411. Hereafter this will be cited as LW. Luther declared: "All genuine sacred books agree in this, that all of them preach and inculcate [treiben] Christ. And that is the true test by which to judge all books, when we see whether or not they inculcate Christ. For all the Scriptures show us Christ, Romans 3 :21 ; and St. Paul will know nothing but Christ, 1 Corinthians 2 :2 . Whatever does not teach Christ is not yet apostolic, even though St. Peter or St. Paul does the teaching. Again, whatever preaches Christ would be apostolic, even if Judas, Annas, Pilate, and Herod were doing it." LW, 35, p. 396.

Gospel."¹¹ Other Lutherans have aligned themselves with this concept.¹² One thus sees the issue of the canon treated by the mediating theologians through the use of historical criticism and gospel reductionism.

Scripture As Divine Revelation and Word of God

Johann Semler distinguished between divine revelation and Scripture contending that the latter contains the human witness to God's revelation. Semler's argument proceeds from his rejection of verbal inspiration.¹³ Applying one of the presuppositions of historical criticism, Ditmanson argues that the Biblical accounts are interpretation of God's saving activities.¹⁴ The LCA and ALC theologians following a mediating and reductionist stance state that

the Scriptures are the record of God's saving acts, the authoritative interpretation of their significance, and the instrument by which the knowledge of God's saving purposes is communicated to generations chronologically and culturally remote from the revelatory events themselves.¹⁵

¹¹ Ernst Käsemann, Essays on New Testament Themes, trans. W. J. Montague, Studies in Biblical Theology 41 (London: SCM Press, 1964); 106.

¹² Edgar Krentz, The Historical-Critical Method (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 9. and Douglas Carter, "Luther As Exegete," CTM 32 (September 1961): 522 and Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 256.

¹³ Fred Kramer, "The Introduction of the Historical-Critical Method and Its Relationship to Lutheran Hermeneutics," in Aspects of Biblical Hermeneutics: Confessional Principles and Practical Applications. CTM Occasional Papers #1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), pp. 70-72.

¹⁴ Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 80.

¹⁵ Lutheran Council in the United States of America. Studies: The Function of Doctrine and Theology in Light of the Unity of the Church (New York: n.p., 1978), p. 11. (Hereafter cited as LCUSA: FODT)

The bias against the divine intervention in the production of Scripture makes the historical-critical method assume that the books of the Bible came into being much like any other literature.¹⁶ The Moderate position, however, allows the intrusion of the divine into human history and its universe. So the Moderates who espoused the historical-critical method allow the concept of revelation. This revelation is what Reumann calls a "happening . . . an event or historical occurrence, or utterance which our text enshrines."¹⁷ The event is beyond historical investigation as it cannot be repeated. The witness to the event naturally spoke of it to others and the others passed it on in oral testimony. There are two assumptions here: one, that writing, especially at the time of the patriarchs was either absent or was not the popular manner of "recording" an event. Two, that the oral witness to the happening was not always recounted as it actually happened because of the rise of new situations.¹⁸ It is also assumed that the new setting(s) prompted the transmitters of the oral tradition to revise the account and provide it with new meanings fitting for the new setting(s).¹⁹

¹⁶Robert Preus, "May The Lutheran Theologian Legitimately Use The Historical-Critical Method?" Affirm: Occasional Papers, Spring 1973, p. 33.

¹⁷Reumann, "Exegetes, Honesty and the Faith: Biblical Scholarship in Church School Theology," p. 16.

¹⁸John Strietelmeier, "Orthodoxy vs. Fundamentalism," The Cresset 35 (May 1972):28; Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, pp. 309-310.

¹⁹Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 308.

Historical critics also emphasized the opinion that the prophets were speakers rather than writers.²⁰ The oral tradition to divine revelation had a long history. During this period and in the process of transmission from one generation to another the wordings, genres, meanings, and intention(s) were either deliberately or unintentionally changed. The changes came about due to: (a) human errors, (b) the speaker's interest and intention, (c) change of setting in life, and (d) change in the needs of the community.²¹

The independent, pericopic witness to a particular revelation became, in the course of time, more structured and even associated with other independent oral tradition to form an expanded version of the divine revelation.

This structuring goes beyond a more formal, consistent way of recounting the happening, and involves its inclusion in a larger account or longer sequence of testimony. This larger, more formal structured witness may well have been written.²²

It is the task of source criticism to probe into the sources of what were once independent accounts.²³ One important assumption which can be deduced from the above discussion of the biblical accounts in oral tradition

²⁰Gene M. Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 56, 64.

²¹Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, chap. I passim. The classic and lengthy example of an explanation for this assumption of oral tradition is Herman Gunkel's work The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History, trans. W. H. Carruth (New York: Schocken Books, 1964).

²²Reumann, "Exegetes, Honesty and the Faith: Biblical Scholarship in Church School Theology," p. 16.

²³Richard H. Soulen, Handbook of Biblical Criticism (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978), pp. 99-100 and Reumann, "Exegetes, Honesty and the Faith: Biblical Scholarship in Church School Theology," p. 18.

is the fact that divine revelation is prior to Scripture. This revelation could have been an event, a historical occurrence or an utterance. Some biblical scholars consider these the only absolutely authoritative and inerrant Word of God.

The recognition and interpretation of divine revelation as the saving act of God which needs to be preserved and communicated are attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit.²⁴ In spite of this conviction, it is nonetheless a human interpretation of divine revelation.²⁵ In fact, this was not perceived as divine revelation until much later when Israel realized the significance of the past events in its life.²⁶ Professor Gehrke said that revelation came to Israel, particularly concerning Genesis 3 after "a centuries-long practical and meditative wrestling with the problem of evil."²⁷ With these assumptions, the Scriptures which present the intentions and interpretations of the human writers necessarily need to be examined and judged by means of the use of historical criticism.²⁸ And it becomes revelation when it is directed pro me.²⁹ It is evident that the presuppositions of historical criticism are

²⁴LCUSA, FODT, p. 11.

²⁵Ralph W. Klein, Faith At Work: Studies in Genesis, Cassette Tape 72-2 Pt. II (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, n.d.)

²⁶Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, p. 76.

²⁷Ralph Gehrke, "Genesis Three in the Light of Key Hermeneutical Considerations," CTM 36 (September 1965): 542.

²⁸Klein, Faith at Work: Studies in Genesis, Cassette Tape 72-2 Pt. II.

²⁹Reumann, "Exegetes, Honesty and the Faith: Biblical Scholarship in Church School Theology," p. 26.

not consistently carried out due to the imposition of a gospel-oriented view of revelation.

In accord with Semler the Moderates do not equate Scripture with the Word of God.³⁰ This concept had the support of neo-orthodoxy as exemplified in the works of Karl Barth.³¹ The late professor Martin Franzmann lamented the fact that this belief has a widespread following even in Lutheranism.³² Nevertheless, the Moderate theologians call the Bible the Word of God.³³ In the Report of the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation the Moderates acknowledge that "the Scriptures are the written Word of God. The internal testimony of the Bible assures us that God is speaking to us in the words originally given to His prophets and apostles."³⁴ On the basis of such a declaration one would expect that there would be complete concord on this matter. That, however,

³⁰ Idem, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 118. Here the views of Karl Barth, Peter Stuhlmacher, Warren Quanbeck and Duane Priebe concerning the non-equation of Scripture and the Word of God are presented by Samuel H. Nafzger. Their views are shared by Edgar Krentz in Biblical Studies Today (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 20. Krentz says: "God's Word is before the Scriptures, is witnessed to in the Scripture, but is not identical with the Scripture."

³¹ John T. Mueller, "Karl Barth," CTM 15 (June 1944):367. Cf. Samuel H. Nafzger, "Scripture and Word of God," in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, pp. 109-112.

³² Martin H. Franzmann, "The Nature of the Unity We Seek," CTM 28 (November 1957):804.

³³ Herbert T. Mayer, Interpreting the Holy Scriptures (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), pp. 12-13 and Report of the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1976), p. 38, 74, 75. (Hereafter cited as ACDC.)

³⁴ ACDC, p. 38. Emphasis mine.

is not the case. Paul G. Bretscher rejects the equation - Scripture is the Word of God. He admits that in the Synodical tradition and piety the Scriptures are identified with the Word of God.³⁵ The "Schwan" Catechism of 1890 and the Synodical Catechism of 1943 popularized the same teaching. Bretscher sees this as the great deceit brought by Satan.³⁶ In an earlier book entitled After The Purifying Paul G. Bretscher contends that there have been two understandings of the term "Word of God" in Missouri Synod. One equates it with the whole Scriptures and the other equates it with the Gospel. The latter, he argues, is the truly Lutheran tradition.³⁷ He concedes that the prevailing theology of Missouri Synod on this subject is that of identifying Scriptures and Word of God.³⁸

For the Moderates like Bretscher the phrase "Word of God" refers to the Gospel alone. He writes:

I have found no Biblical text . . . which defines the term 'Word of God' to mean the holy, inspired, divinely authored Bible. . . . What the Bible advertises as 'the Word of God' is Christ and the Gospel . . .³⁹

Edward Schroeder insists that this was the Reformers' understanding of the terminology "Word of God."⁴⁰ Non-gospel matters, though found in

³⁵Paul G. Bretscher, "An Inquiry into Article II," Currents in Theology and Mission 1 (October 1974):40.

³⁶Idem, The Sword of the Spirit (St. Louis: ELIM, 1979), p.15,18.

³⁷Idem, After The Purifying (River Forest, Ill.: Lutheran Education Association, 1975), pp. 14-17, 62.

³⁸Ibid., p. 63 and Idem, The Sword of the Spirit, p. 18.

³⁹Idem, The Sword of the Spirit, p. 9.

⁴⁰Edward Schroeder, "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutics," in Lively Function of the Gospel, ed. Robert Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 84.

Scriptures, are not to be considered the Word of God. Bretscher complains that "the historical setting [in the Scriptures] is glorified as though it were in itself the word of God . . ." ⁴¹

To be able to apply historical criticism and gospel-reductionism to Scriptures, the Moderate theologians split the Scriptures into two portions: the human side and the divine side. The human side is subject to the method of historical criticism. The divine side which is the Gospel is accepted by faith. The Moderates do not even discuss the divine Law for it obviously poses more problems in determining which is divine and eternally valid and which is human and historically conditioned. The combined hermeneutical methodology of historical criticism and gospel-reductionism is made possible when they declared:

On the human level Scripture is to be interpreted like any literary document, but at the same time it is God's Word and hence to be interpreted in ways different from any other literature. ⁴²

The above declaration necessitates two methods of interpretation: historical criticism and gospel-reductionism. The latter limits the former from judging the whole of Scripture like any human literary document and provides a foundation for faith.

Unity and Clarity of Scripture

The Moderates reject the idea of an organic unity of Scripture. The ALC and the LCA, with which the AELC in the congregational level are practicing altar and pulpit fellowship, speak of different theologies

⁴¹Bretscher, "An Inquiry into Article II," p. 41.

⁴²ACDC, p. 75.

and even contradictions within Scripture.⁴³ The presupposition of historical criticism which states that in its long period of historical development the Biblical text underwent various changes in wordings, meanings, genres, intentions, and Sitzen im leben fully support their rejection of Scriptural unity and consistency. But the Moderates do speak of the unity of Scripture and relate it "at the level of its witness to God's judgment and mercy, but not at the level of agreement in all its teachings."⁴⁴ Professor Walter E. Keller rejects the organic unity of Scripture on the basis of the dialectical relationship between the Law and the Gospel.⁴⁵ Here one sees the rejection of the Bible's organic unity on the basis of the assumptions of the historical-critical method and yet at the same time the unity is affirmed in its witness to the Law and Gospel.

The mediating theological position denies the perspicuity of Scripture by arguing that

biblical literature is so completely conditioned by the culture which produced it that apart from a thorough acquaintance with the categories, thought patterns, and literary genres of the period from which it came, this literature cannot be understood at all.⁴⁶

⁴³LCUSA, FODT, p. 13 and ACDC, p. 2.

⁴⁴Commission on Theology and Church Relations, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches To Biblical Interpretation (St. Louis, n.p., 1973), p. 7. (Hereafter cited as CTCR)

⁴⁵Keller, et al, "A Review Essay of 'A Statement' of Scriptural and Confessional Principles," (Part II), p. 29.

⁴⁶CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches To Biblical Interpretation, p. 10.

While, to some extent, there is truth in the above statement, the clarity of Scripture is compounded by many of the assumptions of historical criticism which declares that the Bible did not only undergo various accidental changes but that there were deliberate changes undertaken by the writer(s), editor(s) and redactor(s). The obscurity of the Scripture extends even to those matters which are reasonably clear because historical criticism cannot assure present-day Christians that the canonical Word was written in the original words given to the prophets and evangelists. To understand Scripture requires either a special gnosis, namely, a thorough acquaintance of the historical-critical method or a magisterium of historical critics to interpret the biblical texts.

The Moderates, however, while accepting the judgment of historical criticism, do affirm the clarity of a portion of Scripture, namely, those portions which pertain to justification by faith alone or to passages proclaiming the benefits of Christ.⁴⁷ It is stressed that

Scripture is clear in its Gospel thrust even if it is obscure in minor matters. Perspicuity can be established by clarifying one passage by another and by seeing a specific matter in the light of the whole Gospel.⁴⁸

Nothing is said about the role of the Law in clarifying the judgment of God and the task of the Holy Spirit in creating a clear conviction of the addressee's sinfulness. The clarity of Scripture is confined to that "which is necessary for our salvation: that is, grace in Jesus

⁴⁷Robert Bertram, "The Confessions for Today's Student of Theology: A Session with Schneeweiss on Scripture," The Springfielder 25 (Autumn 1961):34-35.

⁴⁸Thomas W. Strieter, "Luther's View of Scripture," Currents in Theology and Mission 1 (December 1974):93.

Christ."⁴⁹ This definition about the clarity of Scripture is shared by Karlfried Froehlich.⁵⁰ The roles of historical criticism and gospel-reductionism are clear in the Moderates' explanations of the clarity of Scripture.

Verbal And Plenary Inspiration of Scripture

Influenced by the presuppositions of the historical-critical method, the Moderates reject the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scripture.⁵¹ This teaching is alleged to have been invented by theologians of the seventeenth century Lutheran Orthodoxy.⁵² The Moderates' problem on this subject stems from the terms "verbal" and "plenary." They argue that this doctrine cannot be demonstrated scientifically but flows from faith in the Gospel.⁵³ Moreover, since it is not clearly established in Scripture it should not be a controverted issue.⁵⁴ It should be considered a theological problem especially because the New

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Karlfried Froehlich, "Problems of Lutheran Hermeneutics," in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, pp. 134, 136.

⁵¹Martin Scharlemann, "Some Sobering Reflections on the Use of The Historical-Critical Method," Affirm: Occasional Papers, Spring 1973, p. 5.

⁵²Traugott H. Rehwaldt, "The Other Understanding of the Inspiration Texts," CTM 43 (June 1972):356. The same view is expressed though assailed in Helmut Echemach, "The Lutheran Doctrine of the 'Autopistia' of Holy Scripture," CTM, 23 (April 1952):244 and Douglas Carter, "Luther As Exegete," CTM 32 (September 1961):519.

⁵³ACDC, p. 38.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 14, 15.

Testament passages used to support this doctrine do not specify a canonical Scripture.⁵⁵

It is clear that even though the mediating theologians reject the doctrine of verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture, they are not quite willing to wholly surrender the concept of inspiration. On April 26, 1960 the faculty members of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis issued the document A Statement on the Form and Function of the Holy Scriptures. In this document they stated: "The Scriptures are given by divine inspiration according to both content and word."⁵⁶ Many of those who endorsed the document later on walked out and joined the Moderates in organizing Christ Seminary - SEMINEX and left the Synod to join the AELC. That confession is explained differently by the Moderates who repudiate verbal and plenary inspiration. While retaining the concept of inspiration, its definition and descriptions are far from the traditional expositions it used to have in the public doctrine of the Synod. The influence of historical criticism is today evident in the Moderates' understanding of inspiration.

Those who were inspired "include precanonical 'writers, editors, and bearers of the tradition."⁵⁷ It is said that "the Holy Spirit

⁵⁵Keller, et al, "A Review Essay of 'A Statement' of Scriptural and Confessional Principles," (Part II), p. 26.

⁵⁶Faculty of Concordia Seminary, "A Statement on the Form and Function of the Holy Scriptures," CTM 31 (October 1960):626. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁷Faculty of Concordia Seminary, Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the 'Report of the Synodical President.'" (St. Louis: n.p., n.d.), p. 14.

influenced the whole process from the formation of the earliest oral tradition to the final draft of the redactors . . ."⁵⁸ The inspired men

reproduced statements and speeches exactly as did their contemporaries in the field of ancient historiography. As He inspired them, God did not give them any new astronomical, geological, physical, or biological knowledge.⁵⁹

The condescension of the Holy Spirit in the task of inspiration included His sharing in the frailty of human words.⁶⁰

With regards to the Gospels Professor Everett Kalin concurring with the assumptions of the historical-critical method theorizes that inspiration was effected on the whole religious community. What Jesus said and did were passed on by the church in its preaching, worship, and instruction modifying, reinterpreting, and rephrasing them apparently in accordance with the needs of the community. All these processes were parts of the Holy Spirit's act of inspiration.⁶¹ What Professor Kalin is emphasizing is that the oral tradition and its development were also inspired.⁶²

Historical critics do not limit the experience of inspiration to the prophets and evangelists and to the nation of Israel. Other nations also had experienced inspiration. Moreover, inspiration is not to be

⁵⁸CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches To Biblical Interpretation, p. 4.

⁵⁹Rehwaldt, "The Other Understanding of the Inspiration Texts," p. 263.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 362.

⁶¹Everett Kalin, "The Inspired Community: A Glance at Canon History," CTM 42 (September 1971):541.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 548-549.

predicated of the written document but of the writers.⁶³ This personal rather than verbal inspiration is declared to be continuing to this day "in the Church through the means of grace, that is, the Word and the Sacraments . . ."⁶⁴ This inspiration continues to take place as the Holy Spirit through men and His Word and Sacraments continues to call, gather enlighten, and sanctify people.⁶⁵ The fact that preachers continue to preach Law and Gospel and through them reprove sin and proclaim absolution proves that the Holy Spirit continues to inspire men.⁶⁶

The Moderates have interjected a new and broadening concept of inspiration not only in their rejection of verbal and plenary inspiration and the acceptance of the presuppositions of historical criticism but also in relating the doctrine to the Law and Gospel. And this gospel-reductionism of inspiration is made explicit when they say: "inspiration also pertains to Scripture's causative authority, which refers to its power in Law and Gospel to lead people to saving faith in the Gospel of

⁶³Raymond F. Surburg, "The Historical Method in Biblical Interpretation," CTM 23 (February 1952):88.

⁶⁴Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the 'Report of the Synodical President, p. 14. Cf. John D. Frey, Is the Bible Inerrant? (Prairie Village, Kansas: n.p., n.d.), p. 32 and Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Faithful To Our Calling, Faithful To Our Lord (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, January 1973), pp. 35-37. (Hereafter cited as FCFL.)

⁶⁵Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the 'Report of the Synodical President,' p. 14.

⁶⁶Keller, et al, "A Review Essay of 'A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles,'" p. 14.

of Jesus Christ."⁶⁷ Again and again this idea of personal inspiration which brings salvation is emphasized.⁶⁸ Pastor Armand J. Boehme complains that the Moderates confused the nature and efficacy of Scripture. He declares that the distinction is muddled between what Scripture is and what it does.⁶⁹

Inerrancy Of Scripture

Historical criticism presupposes that the Scripture is a human book and had a history similar to any other ancient, secular document. Therefore the notion of inerrancy cannot be harmonized with the historical-critical method.⁷⁰

It is adduced that the Scripture was not written with the standards of historicity and factuality of the twentieth century.⁷¹ They then try to prove where Scripture has erred.⁷² This conclusion is reached

⁶⁷ACDC, p. 2.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 63, 64 and FCFL, pp. 36-37.

⁶⁹Armand J. Boehme, "The Smokescreen Vocabulary," Concordia Theological Quarterly 41 (April 1972):26.

⁷⁰Robert D. Preus, "Biblical Hermeneutics and The Lutheran Church Today," in Proceedings of the 20th convention of the Iowa District West of LC-MS (n.p., n.p., 1966), p. 49; Surburg, "The Historical Method in Biblical Interpretation," pp. 83-84 and ACDC, p. 89.

⁷¹FCFL, p. 37.

⁷²Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "What Does 'Inerrancy' Mean?," CTM 36 (September 1965):586; "Some Common Sense on 'Inerrancy'," Missouri In Perspective, November 19, 1973, p. 5 and James M. Childs, "Responses to A Presentation by Howard W. Tepker On the Inspiration and Inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures," Responses to Presentations Delivered at Theological Convocation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri: A Study Document Offered to Members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod by Evangelical Lutherans in Mission (St. Louis: ELIM, n.d.), p. 3.

because the Moderates deny the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture which in turn is an influence brought about by their advocacy of historical criticism's presuppositions. Hence, they say:

The Holy Spirit accommodated the language of the Scriptures to the peculiar characteristics and limitations of their authors and audiences throughout a lengthy and complex history of textual development and transmission.⁷³

Furthermore, the mediating theologians assert that the doctrine of inerrancy is "inconsistent with the testimony of the Scriptures themselves . . ."⁷⁴ It is also asserted that it is unLutheran⁷⁵ and goes beyond the standard set by the Lutheran Confessions,⁷⁶ and that it does not have the support of Luther.⁷⁷

The Moderates, albeit, are not ready to part with the term "inerrancy." So while the late Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn, on the one hand, could write,

It does not seem to this writer that we are serving the best interests of the church when either we continue formally to reaffirm the inerrancy of the Sacred Scriptures or even continue to employ the term.⁷⁸

He also said: ". . . We must take care not to deny the inerrancy of the

⁷³ ACDC, pp. 4, 19-20 and Piepkorn, "What Does 'Inerrancy' Mean?," p. 588.

⁷⁴ ACDC, p. 39.

⁷⁵ FCFL, p. 21.

⁷⁶ John George Huber, "Theses on Ecumenical Truth and Heresy," CTM 40 (May 1969):297.

⁷⁷ Keller, et al; "A Review Essay of 'A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles,'" (Part II), p. 27 and Robert H. Smith, "Scriptural Authority Among Lutherans," Lutheran Forum 2 (October 1968):14.

⁷⁸ Piepkorn, "What Does 'Inerrancy' Mean?," p. 588.

Sacred Scriptures . . . for pastoral reasons . . ."79 The Moderates, in a similar argument, "reject the elevation of any understanding of inerrancy to the status of a doctrine in the church . . ."80 and plead for toleration of different interpretations and definitions of inerrancy.⁸¹

The Moderates define the inerrancy of Scripture to mean that it is "wholly reliable, true, and trustworthy."⁸² In a similar tone the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, as early as 1960 had expressed the same view when they wrote:

The Scriptures express what God wants them to say and accomplish what God wants them to do. In this sense and in the fulfillment of this function they are inerrant, infallible, and wholly reliable . . . for Scriptures neither go astray nor lead astray.⁸³

But they say the Bible does have errors. It does not have complete harmony in all its teachings.⁸⁴ It contains errors in historical, geographical and scientific matters.⁸⁵ These happened because God in the act

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 593.

⁸⁰ACDC, p. 14.

⁸¹Childs, "Responses To a Presentation by Howard W. Tepker," p. 4 and ACDC, p. 59.

⁸²Herbert T. Mayer, "Editorial: The Task Ahead," CTM 40 (September 1969):527.

⁸³Faculty of Concordia Seminary, A Statement On The Form and Function of the Holy Scriptures, p. 626. Similar views have been expressed by Keller, et al, in "A Review Essay of 'A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles,'" pp. 37-38; Piepkorn, "What Does 'Inerrancy' Mean?" p. 577; ACDC, pp. 14-15, 29 and Frey, Is the Bible Inerrant?, p. 40.

⁸⁴CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches To Biblical Interpretation, p. 8.

⁸⁵Rehwaldt, "The Other Understanding of the Inspiration Texts," p. 362. Some of the errors are pointed out in "Some Common Sense on 'Inerrancy'," Missouri In Perspective, November 19, 1973, p. 5 and in Piepkorn, "What Does 'Inerrancy' Mean?," p. 586.

of inspiration did not eliminate from man the capacity to make mistakes.⁸⁶

To be able to accept the assumptions and conclusions of historical criticism and at the same time affirm a qualified doctrine of inerrancy, they provide it with a gospel-reductionistic definition. They have thus given it a functional definition. By inerrancy they do not specifically mean the inerrant nature of Scripture but rather the dynamic effect of Scripture. This is exactly the way Dr. Piepkorn explained the Concordia Seminary faculty's understanding of inerrancy in the document A Statement on the Form and Function of the Holy Scriptures of 1960.⁸⁷ With a functional and gospel-reductionistic orientation they defined inerrancy of Scripture to mean that the Spirit, active in the word, "leads us into the whole truth about what God was doing in Jesus Christ, that we might be redeemed. . . . In disclosing that Truth God does not err."⁸⁸

One may still speak of inerrancy, but not on the level of errorless biblical statements about history and nature, for inerrancy pertains exclusively to the biblical witness concerning sin and grace through which God calls mankind to salvation.⁸⁹

The Moderates in advocating both historical criticism and gospel-reductionism are compelled to evaluate which matters in Scriptures are of salvific significance and therefore must be affirmed inerrant and which

⁸⁶Frey, Is the Bible Inerrant?, p. 31.

⁸⁷Piepkorn, "What Does 'Inerrancy' Mean?," p. 577.

⁸⁸FCFL, p. 37.

⁸⁹CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches To Biblical Interpretation, p. 8. This viewpoint is shared by H. T. Mayer, "Editorial," CTM 36 (September 1965):500 and by the Moderate side in the AGDC, p. 40.

are non-gospel elements and may thus be evaluated as erroneous. In 1957 some Moderate students in reply to the charge made by Conservative students that they deny the inerrancy of Scripture replied:

In view of the content of the New Testament Kerygma, we have not placed the Genesis account of the creation on the same level as the witness of the Apostles to the deity of Christ, the redemption effected by our Lord on the cross, His resurrection, or the new life in Christ.⁹⁰

The criterion for such a judgment is gospel-reductionism. A decade and a half later Moderate theologians echo the same argument when they declare:

The birth, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and session of Jesus Christ, as the ecumenical creeds enumerate them, are needed - they must have 'actually happened.' If these did not happen, there is no Gospel. The raising of the son of the Shunamite, the floating axe-head, the swallowing of Jonah, and others are a different matter: whether or not these events 'actually happened,' the proclamation both of God's Law and God's Gospel remains equally valid. . . . Historians may judge their 'historicity' without the same burden of theological necessity.⁹¹

They furthermore argue that the historicity of the Fall of Adam and Eve, the brazen serpent miracle need not be upheld for "these are not relevantly related to the gospel. The resurrection of Christ however must be affirmed for the sake of the Gospel."⁹²

One can readily see that the sole rule, norm and judge of Christian teaching has become no longer sola Scriptura but rational historical criticism and Gospel-reductionism. Historical criticism has been given

⁹⁰Herman Otten, ed., State of the Church (n.p., n.p., 1961), p. 82.

⁹¹Keller, et al, "A Review Essay of 'A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles,' (Part II), p. 35.

⁹²Steven A. Hein, "'A Scrutiny' Scrutinized," The Cresset 36 (January 1973):21.

the license to judge any account of Scripture to verify its historicity and facticity except those relative to the Gospel. So the Moderates could insist that the focus of our attention should not be on the historical factuality of Scripture but on the need for Christ.⁹³ However, with regard to the promise, the Moderates insist on grounding this in historical events.⁹⁴

The working principle of historical criticism is prevented from taking its natural, logical and consistent conclusion by the restriction imposed by gospel-reductionism. This way the Moderates are able to affirm the inerrancy and authority of Scripture but confined to matters related to the gospel. On the basis of this reason they say that the Scriptures' purpose is not the "presentation of exact, inerrant information on matters totally unrelated to salvation, sanctification. . ."⁹⁵ But when it is related to the Gospel they say:

[the Promise] is not an empty agreement of good intent; it is grounded in the saving acts of God. These saving deeds are bound up with the hardcore events of human history: the liberation of Israelite slaves from Egypt, the birth of a carpenter's son in a manger at Bethlehem, the death of Jesus Christ on a Roman cross, and His resurrection to new life on the third day.⁹⁶

On non-gospel matters the Moderates allow historical criticism to take its logical course. But on matters related to salvation human rationality as employed in historical criticism is suspended and faith in the Gospel becomes the supreme judge. Once again one sees the application

⁹³CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches To Biblical Interpretation, p. 14.

⁹⁴FCFL, p. 25.

⁹⁵ACDC, p. 40.

⁹⁶FCFL, p. 25.

of historical criticism and gospel-reductionism in the explication of a Biblical attribute - the inerrancy of Scripture.

Authority of Scripture

In denying the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture and its inerrancy, it is to be expected that the Moderates would also reject the authority of Scripture. This is inevitable in the light of their acceptance of historical criticism and its presuppositions. The Scripture is not accepted for what it says since the historical critic is required to verify the adequacy, veracity, and intelligibility of its account.⁹⁷ The historical critic with his methodology is the final judge of the Truth reported in the Scripture.

Professor Harold Ditmanson denies that the church's authority rests solely on Scripture. He asserts that the church's authority is derived from three sources: the Scripture, tradition, and experience.⁹⁸ He further argues that the final and ultimate authority is the Gospel to which all three sources bear witness.⁹⁹ Professor Robert H. Smith, formerly an exegetical professor of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, but now of Christ Seminary - SEMINEX, says that Luther and the Confessions did not posit the authority of Scripture on the basis of its origin but on its content of Law and Gospel. "The Bible is authority because

⁹⁷Krentz, HCM, p. 34.

⁹⁸Harold Ditmanson in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, pp. 97-98, 100-101, 104.

⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 98, 101.

it judges and it pardons, it kills and it quickens."¹⁰⁰ Following this gospel-reductionistic explication of Biblical authority James M. Childs could then stress his view that the authority of Scripture comes from its power to create faith in Jesus Christ.¹⁰¹ The authority of Scripture is therefore upheld on the basis of solus Christus.¹⁰² Professor Edward H. Schroeder declares:

We dare call them [Scriptures] Word of God; because the one righteousness of God is contained and conveyed in that original apostolic testimony about Christ. . . . We have no access to the Word of God (Him) except the Word of God (it), the witness of the apostles and prophets.¹⁰³

Dr. Kent S. Knutson in an approved article published in the *Concordia Theological Monthly* in effect denied sola Scriptura as the formal principle when he wrote:

The authority is in its material principle, in its substance, not in the character of its form. In the Scriptures God speaks to us His judgmental and His redemptive word, and we hear Him speak. That is its power. That is its authority.¹⁰⁴

This Law-Gospel reductionism then means that all of God's words and commands before the Fall when everything was good cannot be authoritative even when they are God's words because they can neither be judgmental nor redemptive words. In acquiescence to historical criticism which presupposed no divine authority to any literary document or on the

¹⁰⁰ Smith, "Scriptural Authority Among Lutherans," p. 13.

¹⁰¹ Childs, "Responses to a Presentation by Howard W. Tepker," p. 1.

¹⁰² Strieter, "Luther's View of Scripture," pp. 92-93 and Mayer, "Editorial," *CTM* 36 (September 1965):499.

¹⁰³ Schroeder, "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutics?," p. 86.

¹⁰⁴ Kent S. Knutson, "The Authority of Scripture," *CTM* 40 (March 1969):164.

basis of divine inspiration and the fact that the Scripture is the Word of God, the Moderates cannot postulate an authoritative Scripture. But their faith in God's Law and Gospel force them to acknowledge a limited authority to Scripture. Historical criticism with gospel-reductionism has been the methodology used by the mediating theologians in explaining the attributes of Scripture. In further support of this thesis we shall examine how this is applied in interpreting hermeneutical principles.

Hermeneutical Principles

One of the principles of interpretation of Scripture which has been used by the Early Church and even by Scripture itself is the concept of analogy of faith or as the Reformers termed it, "Scripture interprets Scripture." This means that no portion of Scripture contradicts any other part of Scripture and that Scripture itself helps illuminate the obscure portion of Scripture. Historical criticism in stressing the historical and cultural conditionedness of Scripture and the complexity of its development has denied to Scripture an organic unity. Therefore it precludes in its exegetical methodology the principles of analogy of faith and of Scripture interpreting Scripture. The Gospel reductionists who have accepted the presuppositions of the historical critical method have redefined the analogy of faith to be understood "only in the article of justification for Christ's sake through faith."¹⁰⁵

When speaking of the unity of Scripture the Moderate exegetes emphasized the continuing presence of Heilsgeschichte from the Old

¹⁰⁵Gehrke, "Genesis Three in the Light of Key Hermeneutical Considerations," pp. 552-553.

Testament to the New Testament. It is this salvation history which is used to explicate the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. The Good News of the saving acts of God is the key to unlock the incomprehensible in Scripture. Norman Habel explained this rule when he wrote:

This rule means that the clear passages of Scripture, namely those which display the teaching of justification by grace through faith in all its force and glory, must be used to interpret and evaluate those portions of Scripture where this truth is obscure. In short, the right distinction between Law and Gospel must be rigorously maintained in all biblical exegesis.¹⁰⁶

The most important exegetical principle which Luther had clearly enunciated and which made him break with the medieval manner of Biblical exegesis is the principle that the Biblical text has a single literal sense. Luther writes:

The Holy Spirit is the plainest writer and speaker in heaven and earth and therefore His words cannot have more than one, and that the very simplest sense which we call the literal, ordinary, natural sense.¹⁰⁷

Historical criticism with its presuppositions that the Biblical text in its long historical development passed through different sociological and religious settings cannot accept the principle that it retained a constant, singular meaning. The historical-critical method theorizes that there are different layers of meaning in our present Biblical text

¹⁰⁶ Norman Habel, The Form and Meaning of the Fall Narrative, A Detailed Analysis of Genesis 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Print Shop, 1965), p. 1. A similar explanation is given by Edward H. Schroeder in "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutics?," pp. 86-87. Cf. ACDC, p. 76.

¹⁰⁷ Martin Luther, Dr. M. Luther's Answer to the Superchristian, Superspiritual, and Superlearned Book of Goat Emser of Leipzig, with a Glance at His Comrade Murner, 1521, trans. A. Steimle, Works of Martin Luther, III (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1930), p. 350.

and to extract the original and historical sense one needs to use the methodology of historical criticism.¹⁰⁸ The original historical sense may be completely different from its present literal, ordinary, and natural sense. It may even contradict its present, natural sense. This will be shown in the following pages as we discuss some of the Moderates' exegeses. However, most Moderates, in order to maintain this hermeneutical principle, confine the single literal sense to the res or central message of Scripture, namely, the Gospel. Karlfried Froehlich implies that Luther's insistence on the one, clear, simple, literal sense of all Scripture is with reference to the Scriptures' emphasis on Christ.¹⁰⁹ The same argument is used by McCurley when he said that by a literal sense "Luther meant a christological exegesis whereby Old Testament texts of varied types point in a prophetic way to the coming of Christ."¹¹⁰

One sees from these rationalizations that the incompatibility of the historical-critical method and the traditional meanings and implications of the different hermeneutical principles are harmonized through a gospel-reductionistic re-definition of the hermeneutical principles. Historical criticism's rejection of the organic unity of Scripture and its insistence that the integrity of the Old Testament should not be

¹⁰⁸ LCUSA, FODT, pp. 89-90; Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, pp. 42, 86, 303.

¹⁰⁹ Froehlich, "Problems of Lutheran Hermeneutics," in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 128.

¹¹⁰ Foster R. McCurley, "Confessional Propria as Hermeneutic - Old Testament," in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, pp. 233-234.

impaired by the presuppositions of the New Testament are abandoned by the Moderates in their imposition of gospel-reductionism.

The Moderates' Views and Interpretations of The Old Testament

It is obvious that one cannot discuss all the controverted issues between the Moderates' and Conservatives' views and interpretations of Scripture. However, it is necessary to deal with most of those matters which have arisen in the forefront of the exegetical controversy. We shall deal first with matters relative to the Old Testament. In dealing with the Old Testament the Moderates have difficulty in proving that the historical critics' views and interpretations can be related to the Law and Gospel because the various hypotheses concerning the Old Testament simply do not lend themselves to gospel-reductionism.

The Moderates, following the presuppositions of historical criticism, view the Pentateuch as a composite of various traditions brought together by different writers, editors, and redactors. These anonymous authors were given the designations J, E, D, and P.¹¹¹ The first two letters were appellations thought to have been applied by the two traditions using only a specific name for God: the oldest J for Jahweh (German: Jahve) and E for Elohim. These apply to those portions of the Pentateuch where these names appear.

¹¹¹ Norman Habel, Literary Criticism of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 4, 11-12, 23-24; Arlis Ehlen, "Deliverance at the Sea: Diversity and Unity in a Biblical Theme," CTM 44 (May 1973):181; Albert E. Glock, "The Study and Interpretation of the Old Testament," CTM 38 (February 1967):96; and Carl Graesser, Jr., "The Message of the Deuteronomic Historian," CTM 39 (September 1968):542. The acceptance of the documentary hypothesis is undeniably clear in the 1978-1980 Christ Seminary-SEMINEX Catalog (St. Louis: n.p., 1978), p. 36.

The "D" stands for the Deuteronomic historian who was responsible for editing and compiling not only Deuteronomy but including all those documents up to and including the Book of Kings but only in portions where the characteristics of the literary style of the Deuteronomic historian appears.¹¹² The "P" is used to designate the Priestly historian whose literary interest focused on the religious activities and beliefs of the Hebrews. The existence of a Priestly author was first suggested by Hermann Hupfeld in 1953.¹¹³ The presence of an "E" or Elohist author was first proposed by Jean Astruc in 1753.¹¹⁴ The Deuteronomic author's interest was in the compilation of the various laws of Israel.¹¹⁵

There is no complete agreement on which portions of which documents of the Pentateuch or, as some Biblical scholars suggest, the Hexateuch and even through the Second Book of Kings were the responsible

¹¹²Graesser, "The Message of the Deuteronomic Historian," p. 542 and Glock, "The Study and Interpretation of the Old Testament," p. 96. It was Martin Noth who popularized the hypothesis in 1934. Cf. Ralph W. Klein, Israel In Exile; A Theological Interpretation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 23.

¹¹³Soulen, Handbook of Biblical Criticism, p. 117.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 51.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 44. Otto Eissfeldt holds that the purpose of the Deuteronomic historian in compiling the laws was to provide a basis for the reform of Josiah in 621 B. C. Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction, trans. P. R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), p. 220. This reform has a political purpose, viz., to win the northern kingdom and that this can best be accomplished through cultic unity and purity. Ibid., p. 232.

authorship of the anonymously designated authors J, E, D, and P. The refinement of this theory is attributed to K. H. Graf and Julius Wellhausen and thus it has become known as the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis.¹¹⁶

The traditional unitary authorship of the Pentateuch is discounted by the Moderates' acceptance of historical criticism's conclusions that there are diversities of accounts for the same narrative.¹¹⁷ Walter Wegner sees more than one account of the creation and concludes that this portion of the Pentateuch is an edited and compiled text rather than written by a single author. Furthermore, the use of different names for God is employed as a proof for the multiple authorship of the Pentateuch.¹¹⁸ Habel contends that the literary style, thought patterns, idioms, groups of expressions which are different in Deuteronomy from the rest of the Pentateuch show that this particular book has a different author(s) from the rest of the Pentateuch.¹¹⁹

In consonance with the assumption of historical criticism, the Moderates believe that there is a great temporal distance between the revelatory events and the time of writing of those divine revelations.

¹¹⁶Soulen, Handbook of Biblical Criticism, pp. 69-70.

¹¹⁷Ehlen, "Deliverance at the Sea: Diversity and Unity in a Biblical Theme," pp. 175-179 passim.

¹¹⁸Walter Wegner, "Creation and Salvation: A Study of Genesis 1 and 2," CTM 37 (September 1966):520, 521.

¹¹⁹Habel, Literary Criticism of the Old Testament, pp. 11-12. Cf. Gehrke, "Genesis Three in the Light of Key Hermeneutical Considerations," p. 544.

It is postulated that the accounts of the events were passed on through several generations by means of oral tradition.¹²⁰ Professor Glock maintains that Genesis 1 must have come from the time of the exile or shortly thereafter.¹²¹ In view of the length of time which had passed from the time of revelation to the time of writing, the literary accounts cannot therefore be fully trusted.¹²²

The diversities in the various accounts and especially of the Pentateuch are offered as proofs that Israel freely borrowed ideas from its neighbors the Canaanites and other tribal groups. Psalm 29, for example, is said to be a Canaanite song "adapted to Israelite use by substituting Yahweh for Ba'al wherever the latter name occurred."¹²³ Genesis 6-9 is posited to have been borrowed from Mesopotamian traditions since the patriarchs of Israel had been associated among the Hurrian and Aramean peoples of upper Mesopotamia.¹²⁴ Even Israel's scientific knowledge had been borrowed from the advance culture of Mesopotamia.¹²⁵

¹²⁰Gehrke, "Genesis Three in the Light of Key Hermeneutical Considerations," p. 541; Ehlen, "Deliverance at the Sea: Diversity and Unity in a Biblical Theme," pp. 168-191 passim.

¹²¹Glock, "The Study and Interpretation of the Old Testament," p. 95.

¹²²Gehrke, "Genesis Three in the Light of Key Hermeneutical Considerations," p. 541.

¹²³Glock, "The Study and Interpretation of the Old Testament," pp. 95-96.

¹²⁴Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, p. 7.

¹²⁵Gehrke, "Genesis Three in the Light of Key Hermeneutical Considerations," p. 542.

Various opinions have been advanced concerning the genre of Genesis 1-3. It has been labeled as a "liturgical hymn,"¹²⁶ as "pictures of creation,"¹²⁷ as "figurative,"¹²⁸ and as "a poetry in prose."¹²⁹ The seven-day account of creation is opined to be simply a literary style.¹³⁰ The only genre which is negated is the traditional one which considers this part of Genesis as a historical narrative.¹³¹ Many conjectures have been made to explain the seven days in the Genesis story of the creation; all of these deny the facticity of the seven-day account of Genesis' narration of the creation of the world.¹³² Therefore, they say Genesis 1-3 should not be interpreted literally.

While the historicity of the creation and the Fall are rejected as historical accounts, the doctrinal contents are nevertheless affirmed.¹³³ Therefore, these first few chapters of Genesis contain both a divine and didactic purpose: to provide an etiology for the presence of man and his universe and to explain the existence of sin.¹³⁴ God allowed

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 545.

¹²⁷FCFL, p. 14.

¹²⁸ACDC, p. 86.

¹²⁹Thomas C. Hartman, "Some Ancient Documents and Some Current Thoughts," CTM 41 (September 1970):475.

¹³⁰Walter Wegner, "Creation and Salvation: A Study of Genesis 1 and 2," CTM 37 (February 1967):529.

¹³¹David Lotz, A Brief Synopsis of the Major Theological-Doctrinal Issues, A mimeographed essay distributed for wider use in the Atlantic District, p. 8.

¹³²Wegner, "Creation and Salvation: A Study of Genesis 1 and 2," p. 529.

¹³³ACDC, p. 86.

¹³⁴Gehrke, "Genesis Three in the Light of Key Hermeneutical Considerations," pp. 546, 549-550.

the use of the common genres of those days even to the extent of recording distorted facts for the sake of conveying the meaning of God's word to men.¹³⁵ The accounts do not tell us what really happened but rather why the world and man exist as sinful.¹³⁶ Some even say that in reality these portions of Genesis are sermons.¹³⁷

While admitting the presupposition of historical criticism that the Biblical accounts of the creation and the Fall were written in non-historical genres, the Moderates plead for the acceptance of their views on the basis that no doctrinal teaching is denied by them. They entreat others to focus on the meaning of the stories and not on the historicity of the data.¹³⁸ The Moderate theologians consider the historicity of the persons of Adam and Eve to be a matter of indifference.¹³⁹ They constantly emphasize that "the message remains the same whether we consider the text of Genesis 2-3 a literal historical account or some other kind of literature."¹⁴⁰ Concerning the methodology and chronology of creation,

¹³⁵LCUSA, FODT, p. 79.

¹³⁶Gehrke, "Genesis Three in the Light of Key Hermeneutical Considerations," p. 543.

¹³⁷FCFL, p. 16. Walter Wegner in explaining the Genesis account of creation argues that its sole purpose is to teach a theological truth summarized in the First Article of the Creed: "God created heaven and earth." Wegner, "Creation and Salvation: A Study of Genesis 1 and 2," pp. 528-29.

¹³⁸FCFL, pp. 13-14.

¹³⁹Walter E. Keller, "Necessary and Relevant To What?," The Cresset 36 (February 1973):22-23 and "Seminary Professor Reacts to Investigation," Christian News, July 31, 1972, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰FCFL, p. 17.

Walter Wegner asks that these be considered open questions.¹⁴¹ The former faculty majority clearly leaves the impression that they reject the facticity of the data recorded in the first three chapters of Genesis.¹⁴²

It is argued that when Jesus spoke of Moses as the author of the Pentateuch and of Jonah being three days in the belly of the fish, Jesus simply was repeating the common popular belief of the people of his day. The same can be said of His reference to Psalm 110 and to Isaiah 40-66. He was not teaching the historicity of these matters.¹⁴³

Walter Rast maintains that Genesis 25:27-34 is a form of "ancient folk literature" intended to explain the existence of Israel.¹⁴⁴ He even goes so far as to doubt the existence of Jacob and his sons. The account could have been created to explain and justify the amphictyony.¹⁴⁵ The blessings declared to Jacob is seen as an etiological explanation of the greatness of the Davidic empire.¹⁴⁶ Following Herman Gunkel and Gerhard von Rad, Rast believes the Jacob accounts to be etiological sagas which

¹⁴¹Wegner, "Creation and Salvation: A Study of Genesis 1 and 2," p. 530.

¹⁴²Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the 'Report of the Synodical President', pp. 45-46.

¹⁴³Glock, "The Study and Interpretation of the Old Testament," p. 104. Cf. Rehwaldt, "The Other Understanding of the Inspiration Texts," p. 365.

¹⁴⁴Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, pp. 37-38, 44, 55-56.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁴⁶Habel, Literary Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 58.

attempt to explain the greatness of the Davidic empire and were made to appear retroactive prophetic promises.¹⁴⁷ The Jacob accounts are said to be various independent units or episodes consisting of the Jacob-Esau stories, the Jacob-Laban accounts and the divine theophanies which were then conflated into a single, connected narrative.¹⁴⁸ The theophanic traditions are divided according to places of importance in Israel: the Bethel-Shechem, the Edom, and the Mesopotamian sites. These theophanic traditions "were probably employed to present and validate the history of several important sites and sanctuaries in ancient Israel."¹⁴⁹

The Moderates as historical critics insist that their methodology "produces history in the modern sense, for it consciously and critically investigates biblical documents to write a narrative of the history they reveal."¹⁵⁰ Using this as a working principle, Professor Ehlen attempted to explain the seeming diversities he found in Exodus 13-15. Adapting the presuppositions of the historical-critical method to a variety of sources for, and multiple authors of the Pentateuch, he then assigned those portions which used the name Yahweh for God to author "J." The commands which have theological import, he assigned to author "P" (Priestly). He assigned portions for which he found it hard to ascertain authorship to "E" in view of their use of Elohim. In agreement with redaction critics he holds that a redactor "brought the several sources

¹⁴⁷Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, pp. 38, 43.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 33, 34-35.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 36, 54.

¹⁵⁰Krentz, HCM, p. 35.

together into the canonical form of Exodus 13-15."¹⁵¹ The redaction of diversities is explained to be due to the redactor's fear of losing something of importance to the faith if he omitted some portions.¹⁵² He goes on to support the documentary hypothesis on the basis of the contradictions he had pointed out.¹⁵³

In explicating Habakkuk 3:8-15 which deals with the same topic treated in Exodus 13-15 Professor Ehlen writes: "The prophet seems to have consciously 'historicized' the mythical battle by revising it in terms of Yahweh's victory over Egypt at the Reed Sea."¹⁵⁴ Historical criticism's anti-supernatural bias is here made manifest. Attempting to apply Form criticism's search for the Sitz im Leben, Arlis Ehlen explained that the Reed Sea narratives were first used in a liturgical setting of a great festival celebrating the remembrance of the mighty acts of God probably near the Jordan River.¹⁵⁵

In examining Exodus 24 like a free historical critic, Norman Habel found the narrative to be filled with inconsistencies.¹⁵⁶ He also sees two versions and two introductions to the Flood stories and even two

¹⁵¹Ehlen, "Deliverance at the Sea: Diversity and Unity in a Biblical Theme," pp. 185-191 passim.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 181.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 180. The anti-supernatural bias was clearly seen by Dr. Erich Kiehl when he said that the Crossing of the Red Sea is denied and the miraculous divine acts are attributed to natural causes. Kiehl, A Case Study in Contemporary Biblical Interpretation: The Exodus Account Biblical Studies Series #2 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Print Shop, 1978), pp. 8-9.

¹⁵⁵Ehlen, "Deliverance at the Sea: Diversity and Unity in a Biblical Theme," p. 173.

¹⁵⁶Habel, Literary Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 2.

authors or organizers who arranged the stories for their own specific purposes.¹⁵⁷ Walter Wegner argues that there are conflicting reports on the story of the Tower of Babel, in the giving of the Law to Moses and in the information on the locale of Aaron's death.¹⁵⁸

In assenting with the historical critics, the mediating theologians affirm the theory that the book of Isaiah is composed of three collections written by three writers living at different times.¹⁵⁹ These three collections are Chapters 1-39, Chapters 40-55 and Chapters 56-66. "Only chapters 1-39 are commonly associated with the 'prophet Isaiah ben Amoz.'"¹⁶⁰ The certainty of Isaiah 40-55 as the Second Isaiah is considered by Dr. Ralph Klein to be "the most unassailable discovery of the critical method."¹⁶¹ He dates this particular division of Isaiah about the sixth century when Israel was in exile in Babylon and depressed due to the realization of its sins.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 29, 31, 38-39.

¹⁵⁸Wegner, "Creation and Salvation: A Study of Genesis 1 and 2," pp. 521-22.

¹⁵⁹James A. Rimbach, "Those Lively Prophets . . . Isaiah ben Amoz," Currents in Theology and Mission 5 (February 1978):47; Ralph W. Klein, "Going Home - A Theology of Second Isaiah," Currents in Theology and Mission 5 (August 1978):198 and Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, pp. 57-58.

¹⁶⁰Rimbach, "Those Lively Prophets . . . Isaiah ben Amoz," p. 47.

¹⁶¹Ralph W. Klein, A Response by Ralph W. Klein: Interpreting the Scriptures. Responses to Presentations Delivered at Theological Convocation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri: A Study Document Offered to the Members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod by Evangelical Lutherans in Mission, n.p., n.d., p. 9.

¹⁶²Ibid., pp. 9-10.

The Book of Jonah has been characterized in various ways regarding its genre. Alfred von Rohr Sauer, James Mayer and William Danker call it an invented story with an aetiological purpose - a parable. They write:

It (Jonah) very likely comes from a time after the exile when the Jewish community was just as rigidly nationalistic and exclusive as any of the nations of the world are today. At the rebuilding of the temple shortly before 500 B.C., the Samaritans came along and offered to help, but the Jewish builders said, "No, this job is just for us." Later when Ezra and Nehemiah wanted to set up shop, they insisted that some of the Hebrews in the restored community who had married native women would have to give them up; if they didn't they would disturb the purity of the Jewish stock. Such a narrow viewpoint on the part of God's people called for the production of the four chapters of Jonah which would overrule the whole order of the day . . . ¹⁶³

In another essay on the same subject, Dr. Sauer calls the book of Jonah a parable, a didactic narrative, and not factual history. ¹⁶⁴

Hans Walter Wolff, a favorite German theologian of SEMINEX, asserts that Jonah is a poetic fiction with a didactic intention. ¹⁶⁵ These Moderate theologians deny the miracles reported in the book. ¹⁶⁶ By not recognizing the Book of Jonah as a historical narrative, Hans Walter Wolff falls into the trap of allegorical interpretation. Thus he considers Jonah a representation of Israel and Israel of the present-day Church.

¹⁶³ Alfred von Rohr Sauer, James Mayer and William Danker, "Jonah: Fishin' or Mission?," Currents in Theology and Mission 1 (October 1974):44.

¹⁶⁴ Alfred von Rohr Sauer, The Book of Jonah (St. Louis: ELIM, n.d.), pp. 2-6 passim.

¹⁶⁵ Hans Walter Wolff, "Jonah - The Reluctant Messenger In A Threatened World," Currents in Theology and Mission 3 (February 1976):9 and Idem, "Jonah-The Messenger Who Obeyed," Currents in Theology and Mission 3 (April 1976):86, 87, 91.

¹⁶⁶ Idem, "Jonah - The Messenger Who Obeyed," pp. 86, 87. Cf. Alfred von Rohr Sauer, The Book of Jonah, pp. 2-6.

Nineveh is representative of contemporary powers.¹⁶⁷ The fish could refer to any power God used and is using.¹⁶⁸ The forty days left for Nineveh to repent means that the days of our own world are numbered.¹⁶⁹ Through this interpretation the Book of Jonah loses its historical sense and its unus sensus literalis. While Hans Walter Wolff's view of the Book of Jonah upholds historical criticism's anti-supernatural bias and Form criticism's assumption concerning its genre, it violates historical criticism's axiom that the evaluation should be historical and critical. His allegorical method runs counter to historical criticism.

We have shown in a good number of examples of how the Moderates understand and interpret various portions of the Old Testament using the presuppositions of historical criticism. But their exegetical methodology does not end here. To maintain their Lutheran Confessional heritage, they resort to Gospel-reductionism in their views and treatment of the Old Testament. Ralph W. Klein stresses that the task of historical criticism is not sufficient. There is a greater theological task in understanding Scripture than what is provided by historical criticism. He sees this fulfilled in Gospel-reductionism. In reviewing Brevard S. Childs' book Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture Professor Klein writes:

What is it that gives the Scriptures their authority? Does their authority reside in their canonical character? Or is it not the word of gospel/promise they contain that gives the Scriptures their authority? The latter formulation is one Seminex has stood for at great

¹⁶⁷Hans Walter Wolff, "Jonah - The Reluctant Messenger In A Threatened World," p. 9.

¹⁶⁸Idem, "Jonah - The Messenger Who Obeyed," p. 87.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 90.

expense. . . . Is it the framework given to Second Isaiah that makes him accessible to Israel of every age, or is it that we read there of a God of promise, faithful to a particular people, and realize that this faithful God of promise addresses us in our particularity, analogously, and as the same promiser? Does not this promiser show up most of all on the cross and there give us the hermeneutical glasses to go back and see the text of Second Isaiah anew.¹⁷⁰

Walter Wegner expressed similar views when he admits that the presuppositions and conclusions of historical criticism point to errors and contradictions in the Pentateuch, particularly in Genesis 1 and 2. But he could also say that these

divergent parallels are in complete harmony with one another in what they teach about God and His relationship to His people, about divine wrath and mercy, sin and grace, judgment and redemption, Law and Gospel.¹⁷¹

The attributes of Scripture such as its clarity, inspiration, inerrancy, and authority are summarized in one single function, namely, its message of Law and Gospel. This Law-Gospel reductionism is used to offset the adverse judgment of historical criticism on the Old Testament. This Wegner does by asserting that although the creation account is not historical, it does explain Israel's existence, predicament and provides the reason "why in the person of Jesus Christ the Creator Himself had to enter the world."¹⁷² This is considered the ultimate meaning: the theological truth Genesis conveys.¹⁷³ It serves "to make us wise: wise not in the realm of science, but 'wise unto salvation through faith in

¹⁷⁰Ralph W. Klein, "A Book Worth Discussing: Brevard S. Childs' Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture," Currents in Theology and Mission 7 (February 1980):63.

¹⁷¹Wegner, "Creation and Salvation: A Study of Genesis 1 and 2," p. 523.

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 536.

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 528.

Christ Jesus."¹⁷⁴ Without any further explanation the Moderates even go on saying that the documentary hypothesis helps us to "understand better God's revelation of judgment and grace to the early Hebrews."¹⁷⁵

It is very evident that in substance gospel-reductionism has very little to offer in redeeming the adverse views of historical criticism towards the Old Testament. Try as hard as they can, the Moderates have difficulty in finding the Old Testament orientated towards the Gospel and specifically toward the person of Jesus Christ. This becomes manifest in their treatment of what have traditionally been accepted as Messianic prophecies.

The Moderates' views of Messianic Prophecies
and of Christ

One would expect that the traditionally-understood Messianic prophecies could provide the mediating theologians with an effective means of promoting gospel-reductionism in the Old Testament. However, their use of historical criticism in interpreting Messianic prophecies poses an enigmatic problem for this methodology with its bias against supernatural phenomena such as miracles and predictive prophecies. Moreover, the historical-critical method insists on understanding an ancient document in terms of its own historical context. By espousing these presuppositions of the historical-critical method the Moderates find it difficult to reconcile the exegetical conclusions of the historical-critical method not only with the traditional Lutheran interpretations

¹⁷⁴Ibid., p. 536.

¹⁷⁵"Questions? Answers: About Mosaic Authorship," Missouri In Perspective, March 25, 1974, p. 4.

of Messianic prophecies but even with the New Testament's christological expositions of Old Testament prophecies relative to Jesus Christ.

An Australian Moderate and former member of the faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Norman Habel contended that the promise made to Abraham consisted of only two elements; a land and numerous seed. These promises were continually modified in the course of time not only in Genesis but also in other books of the Old Testament.¹⁷⁶ What, however, is clear is the fact that the promise did not include the Messiah for Abraham who was not yet a "Christian" and was not hoping for a Messiah.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Abraham was saved by faith even though it was not faith in the coming messianic savior.¹⁷⁸ In Galatians 3:6-9 Paul clearly reinterpreted the prophecy by including the person of Jesus Christ in the promise made to Abraham.¹⁷⁹

Ralph Klein rejects the traditional messianic interpretation of Genesis 3:15. Contradicting Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, and the Synodical fathers,¹⁸⁰ messianic interpretation of this text, Professor Klein says:

¹⁷⁶Norman Habel, "The Gospel Promise to Abraham," CTM 40 (June, July-August, 1969):348.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., p. 350.

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p. 353.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 355.

¹⁸⁰Martin Luther, Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, 55 Vols. Vol. 1: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1-5 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), pp. 189-194 passim; Concordia Triglotta (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), pp. 265, 959; Ludwig Ernst Fuerbringer, Exegesis of Messianic Prophecies (St. Louis: n.p., n.d.), p. 5 and Walter A Maier, Sr., Genesis (n.p. n.p., n.d.), pp. 90-97 passim.

Careful exegesis . . . shows that the text means only that sin has terrible consequences; people and wild animals are always in mortal combat as a result of our fall.¹⁸¹

Deuteronomy 18:15-18 predicted the advent of a great prophet. With the Scriptures, the Lutheran Churches have unanimously understood this in the past to refer to Christ. Norman Habel, however, regards the singular prophet as a collective term for all prophets beginning with Joshua and including Micah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Ultimately it included Christ but the Old Testament text was directly and primarily referring to Joshua.¹⁸²

Hosea 11:1 is understood by Matthew 2:15 as a fulfillment of the prophecy regarding the Holy Family's return from Egypt. The Moderates reject this Matthean interpretation of Hosea 11:1 and argue that Hosea in this particular passage was

not even looking forward from 740 B.C. . . . He is rather looking backward across the centuries and recalling the day when God called his son, the people of Israel, out of their Egyptian bondage, according to Exodus 4:22 . . . Matthew 2:15 . . . creates a prophecy out of a prophetic word which is not predictive in any apparent sense. . . . In fact, in his eagerness to employ the scheme of prophecy/fulfillment, St. Matthew in 2:23 announces the fulfillment of a prophecy for which no Old Testament Scripture passage can be found.¹⁸³

Swayed by historical criticism the Moderates have a predilection against the supernatural and the predictive. In their interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6 they not only reject the interpretation that

¹⁸¹Ralph W. Klein, "The Bible According to Beck," Currents in Theology and Mission 3 (April 1976):106.

¹⁸²Norman C. Habel, "Deuteronomy 18 - God's Chosen Prophet," CTM 35 (October, 1964):578-580.

¹⁸³Keller, et al, "A Review Essay of 'A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles'," (Part II), p. 32.

this was a prophecy of the coming Savior but also of the doctrine of the virgin birth. They say that Isaiah was speaking of a young woman of his own time who will give birth to a child and will be given the name Immanuel. This royal figure will be given "throne names like 'Mighty God' and 'Prince of Peace'"¹⁸⁴

From the foregoing section we see that historical-critical methodology has made captive the minds of the mediating theologians to the extent that the promissio which they claim they zealously safeguard, has been jeopardized by the presuppositions of the methodology. This pervasive influence of historical criticism affects the whole of Scripture including the New Testament.

The Moderates' Views And Interpretations Of The New Testament

Paul G. Bretscher as a strong advocate of the Moderate position unequivocally admits that his use of the historical-critical method does not fundamentally differ from that of Rudolf Bultmann. Concurring with the assumptions of historical criticism, he holds that the gospels are composites of what were originally independent units passed on orally in sermonic or liturgical notes. In the course of their historical development they accumulated layers of various interpretations and even interpolations. All these were later collated and edited into the canonical form in which we have them today. It is for this reason that the gospels are not coherent unities.¹⁸⁵ This stance is shared by William

¹⁸⁴ FCFL, p. 29.

¹⁸⁵ Paul G. Bretscher, The Baptism of Jesus, Critically Considered, Biblical Studies Series #5 (St. Louis: n.p., 1973), p. 9.

A. Beardslee who stressed that the Christians' "memories of Jesus . . . were modified and supplemented drastically in the one to two generations which passed between the time of Jesus and the time of the writing of the Gospels."¹⁸⁶

In evaluating the Gospel of Matthew, Jack Dean Kingsbury assents to the judgment of historical criticism describing this particular gospel as a "'literary mosaic,' for it encompasses a great number of diverse paragraphs, first formulated, not by Matthew himself, but by a previous generation of Christians."¹⁸⁷

Professor Victor C. Pfitzner asserts that the gospels and the Book of Acts including the New Testament epistles are a compendium and interpretations of the various independent oral and written traditions transmitted, collated, and interpreted for specific purposes, primarily the proclamation of the gospel. In the transmission process these varied traditions have had probably three Sitzen im Leben: the first was when Jesus spoke the words; the second, when the words were used by the primitive church, and thirdly, when the evangelists edited and put them all together in a book or epistle form for the Christian communities.¹⁸⁸ What we therefore have in the New Testament are not historical reports of what Jesus actually said and did but what the early Christians

¹⁸⁶William A. Beardslee, Literary Criticism of the New Testament, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 26.

¹⁸⁷Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Retelling the 'Old, Old Story': The Miracle of the Cleansing of the Leper as an Approach to the Theology of Matthew," Currents in Theology and Mission 4 (December 1977):342.

¹⁸⁸Victor C. Pfitzner, "The Hermeneutical Problem and Preaching," CTM 38 (June 1967):351-52.

composed, providing these with authority by ascribing them to Jesus.¹⁸⁹
 This was done "to meet certain needs in the primitive Christian community."¹⁹⁰

Professor Robert H. Smith understands the Gospel of Mark as "an interpretation of the Christian tradition" addressed to the Christians who were being persecuted by the Romans between 64-70 A.D.¹⁹¹ Beardslee considers the Book of Acts as "the record of a community's story written as a confession of faith by a member."¹⁹² The two or four source hypotheses of the Synoptic Gospels is generally accepted. Mark is said to have had oral sources and that this Gospel was the first one written. Luke and Matthew borrowed from Mark although there are portions of each of these Gospels which came solely from their own independent sources.¹⁹³

In accepting the theories and findings of historical criticism, the Moderates have no qualms in declaring that there are historical inaccuracies in the New Testament Gospels. The intention of the writers

¹⁸⁹CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, p. 15.

¹⁹⁰CTCR, Gospel and Scripture (St. Louis; n.p., 1972), p. 12.

¹⁹¹Robert H. Smith, "Darkness at Noon: Mark's Passion Narrative," CTM 44 (November 1973):325-328 passim.

¹⁹²Beardslee, Literary Criticism of the New Testament, p. 46.

¹⁹³Kingsbury, "Retelling the 'Old, Old Story'," pp. 343-344. Cf. Frederick W. Danker, "Fresh Perspective on Matthean Theology," CTM 41 (September 1970):480 and Paul G. Bretscher, The Baptism of Jesus, Critically Considered, p. 9.

was to proclaim the Good News.¹⁹⁴ Joseph A. Burgess alleged that there are even contradictory doctrines in the New Testament. The Letter to the Hebrews' doctrine of no second repentance and James' emphasis on good works are pinpointed as dissenting from Paul's doctrine of justification by faith.¹⁹⁵

Professor Edgar Krentz claims that Colossians 1:15-20 is a hymn which was not composed by Paul but which he incorporated in his Colossian letter.¹⁹⁶ Pastor Wilmar Sihite, a non-advocate of historical criticism who was forced to use the method for his doctoral dissertation, came up with the conclusion that the makarisms in the Gospels did not actually come from Jesus but from the Post-Easter Christian community.¹⁹⁷

A non-advocate of historical criticism Dr. Martin Scharlemann showed how Joachim Jeremias, following the principle of the historical-critical method in treating the parable in Matthew 20:1-16 had to go behind the text to determine the original setting and words of Jesus. It is presumed that this can only be determined through the use of the historical-critical method which investigates, evaluates, selects, judges,

¹⁹⁴FCFL, pp. 25-26; Arland J. Hultgren, "Hermeneutical Tendencies in the Three-Year Lectionary," in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 152 and Donald H. Juel, "The Parable of the Mustard Seed," in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 356.

¹⁹⁵Joseph A. Burgess, "Confessional Propria in Relation to New Testament Texts," in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 261.

¹⁹⁶Edgar L. Krentz, "Hermeneutics and the Teacher of Theology," CTM 40 (May 1969):274.

¹⁹⁷Wilmar Sihite, "The Verb Makarizien and Cognates in the New Testament: A Study in Christian Identity," Th.D. dissertation, St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1974, p. 103, 232.

and extrapolates the genuine words from the accretions. It can be concluded therefore that the authoritative words are not necessarily in the biblical text.¹⁹⁸

Professor Frederick Danker says: "It is impossible to recover . . . the very words of Jesus . . ."¹⁹⁹ Some of the Moderates say this is due to the fact that Jesus spoke in Aramaic.²⁰⁰ One historical critic consequently argues that if the saying is in Aramaic, then it is most likely authentic.²⁰¹

Dr. Martin Franzmann in examining the exegetical works of those he considered conservative exegetes who used the historical-critical method (Moderate is probably the better term) has provided us with some of their findings: (a) The story of the Magi is not authentic history but a Christian Midrash; (b) Matthew 5:17-19 concerning Jesus' teaching about the Law is regarded as pure rabbinism and cannot have possibly come from Jesus' lips; (c) Matthew 9:15 which presents a concept of a Bridegroom Messiah cannot be of Jewish origin. This image of Jesus must have been the product of the Christian community; (d) Matthew 14:28-31, which describes Peter's walking on the sea, is a Christian Midrash; (e) The stories about the Widow's Mite and the blasting of the Fig Tree were

¹⁹⁸Martin H. Scharlemann, Just What Did Jesus Say? Paradigm: Matthew 20:1-16 The Parable in the Vineyard Biblical Series #1 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Print Shop, 1976), pp. 3, 6.

¹⁹⁹Frederick W. Danker, Jesus and the New Age According to Luke (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1972), p. xviii.

²⁰⁰Keller, et al, "A Review Essay of 'A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles,' (Part I), p. 17.

²⁰¹Edgar McKnight, What Is Form Criticism? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 65.

probably originally parables and (f) The raising of Lazarus is simply pure fiction with a good theological purpose.²⁰² One can add here Paul G. Bretscher's interpretation of the descent of the dove at Jesus' baptism which he considers a verbal imagery.²⁰³ It is contended that Jesus' descent into hell is not imported from 1 Peter 3:19. The real meaning of the creedal statement, it is alleged, is to convey nothing else than that Jesus really died.²⁰⁴

The Moderates are almost unanimous in asserting that the traditional interpretation of John 10:35 which was used to defend Biblical inerrancy is a mistake. They say that the verse really meant that the Scripture cannot be restrained from fulfilling its purpose.²⁰⁵ Professor Krentz is not bothered by the judgment that many portions of Scripture are considered non-historical by historical criticism. For him faith is better off without the crutches of history.²⁰⁶

The above demonstrates the mediating theologians' complete capitulation to the historical-critical method. One is tempted to ask how

²⁰²Martin H. Franzmann, "The Historical-Critical Method," Concordia Journal 6 (May 1980):101.

²⁰³Bretscher, The Baptism of Jesus, Critically Considered, p. 8.

²⁰⁴Ralph W. Klein, "Issues: Bible Inerrancy Tired Slogans," Missouri In Perspective, November 22, 1976, p. 6.

²⁰⁵Richard Jungkuntz, "An Approach to the Exegesis of John 10:34-36," CTM 35 (October 1964):560, 565 and Keller, et al, "A Review Essay of 'A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles,'" (Part II), p. 27.

²⁰⁶Krentz, HCM, p. 67. Cf. Roy A. Harrisville, His Hidden Grace: An Essay on Biblical Criticism (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 52-53.

reliable the Good News can be in the light of all these negative verdicts on the many declarations of Jesus and the Scripture. The Law-Gospel reductionism principle has not been able to play any role in restricting some of these off-beat speculations. In fact historical criticism has overruled the moderating influence of Gospel-reductionism even in the area of Christology.

Professor Regin Prenter of Aarhus University in Denmark clearly admits that historical criticism has no room for the creedal faith that Christ is true God.²⁰⁷ While this is certainly not the conviction of the Moderates, their espousal of historical criticism endangers their faith in the deity of Christ. In following the historical-critical method's argument, the mediating theologians hold that Jesus completely accommodated Himself to the culture and ideas of the people of His days.²⁰⁸ The humanity of Jesus is so emphasized to the extent that His divinity recedes to the background and the Moderates go even as far as to avoid the subject in theological discussion. The two natures are still affirmed but the communication of attributes is ignored, if not denied, in Jesus' historical and earthly life. Thus, Harrisville asserts that Jesus did not know nor did he assert that He was the Christ or Messiah.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Regin Prenter, Creation and Redemption (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 433.

²⁰⁸ ACDC, pp. 85, 101.

²⁰⁹ Harrisville, His Hidden Grace: An Essay on Biblical Criticism, pp. 52-53. Dr. Scharlemann writes: "The exegete who uses the method of historical-criticism and wants to achieve what it sets out to do must discard the Biblical teaching on the communication of attributes between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ." Scharlemann, Just What Did Jesus Himself Say? Paradigm: Matthew 20:1-16 The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, p. 10.

The Moderates' dilemma is heightened by historical criticism's rejection of historical data which are crucial for the truth of the Gospel even though they stress the importance of directing people's attention to what they call the "promise . . . addressed to our faith."²¹⁰ With relatively little historically authentic data to support the promise, its reliability becomes more an empty promise. In an article in the official publication of The Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the church body with which AELC seems to be eager to establish altar and pulpit fellowship, an LCA pastor is unsure of the resurrection accounts given in Scriptures. N. Leroy Norquist writes concerning the resurrection of Christ:

We have to admit that we do not know precisely what happened on Easter morning. . . . What we do know is that in some way, through vital encounters with him, the disciples experienced the Jesus they had known when he was alive and still with them.²¹¹

Therefore, in further explaining the promise of Jesus to be present with the believers till the end of the age, Norquist explains it as follows:

Jesus promised to be present wherever two or three of the family gathered in his name. And it has been the experience of Christians through the centuries that Jesus, who no longer is physically present, has been present in and through this family. Whether it be in the form of a mother and a father, or a teacher, or the worshiping congregation, those new sisters and brothers have mediated the life and truth of Jesus to us.²¹²

It is argued that the Gospels as historically conditioned documents do not provide their readers with an authentic picture of Christ.

²¹⁰FCFL, p. 25.

²¹¹N. Leroy Norquist, "What Happened on Easter?," The Lutheran 17 (April 1979):5.

²¹²Ibid., p. 6.

What one learns from these documents are the interpretations of the early Christian community's post-Easter faith regarding Jesus. Some of these interpretations even contradict each other. We cannot hence extrapolate from the New Testament a reliable Christology.²¹³

There is an ambiguity, if not a clear contradiction in the Moderates' understanding of the Old Testament witness to Christ. They are, of course, aware of Luther, the Lutheran Confessions and the Synodical Fathers' Christological interpretation of many texts in the Old Testament. In agreement with this Christocentric interpretation of the Old Testament, Dr. Ralph W. Klein writes:

We further assure the Church that the Old Testament must be understood in the light of the New. Jesus is the complete fulfillment of God's Word in the Old Testament and its ultimate interpretation.²¹⁴

In the former faculty majority's response to the Synodical President's report they state: "The Old Testament--on its own terms--does not explicitly bear witness to Jesus Christ, but it proclaims the words and deeds of God for Israel."²¹⁵ This latter statement shows the influence of historical criticism's presupposition based on a naturalistic view which denies the supernatural including also predictive prophecies. This predisposed the Moderates to deny the historicity of the messianic prophecies. With the rejection of many messianic prophecies in the Old

²¹³CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches To Biblical Interpretation, pp. 14-15 and Surburg, "The Historical Method in Biblical Interpretation," pp. 93-94.

²¹⁴Klein, A Response by Ralph W. Klein: Interpreting the Scriptures, p. 9.

²¹⁵Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the 'Report of the Synodical President,' p. 32.

Testament it cannot but be concluded that the Old Testament was an obscure book since the key to interpreting it was not explicitly given in the Old Testament. This is the obvious deduction we can arrive at in view of the Moderates' deficient Christocentric view of the Old Testament, due to the acceptance of historical criticism's principles of interpretation, namely, that the Old Testament should be interpreted on its own terms because it is historically and culturally conditioned and that the concept of divine intervention in human history should be rejected. Historical criticism's attempt to interpret the Old Testament on its own terms has tended to redefine the Gospel to mean the mighty saving acts of God without necessarily including or even anticipating the ultimate deeds of God through Jesus Christ. It can even be said that the object of faith for justification may not include the person and redemptive deeds of Jesus Christ. The Moderates do indeed stress Gospel-reductionism, but with the use of historical criticism it at times becomes a different Gospel.

The Moderates' Views of Biblical Miracles

The historical critics not only have an anti-supernatural bias but restrict the view of reality on the basis of cause and effect. There can, therefore, be no miracle or a divine, causative act.²¹⁶ J. Maxwell Miller says that such is also the attitude of the historian.²¹⁷ Ernst Käsemann proudly declares that the bitter battle concerning miracles in the New Testament is over "not perhaps as yet in the area of church

²¹⁶Krentz, HCM, pp. 56, 58.

²¹⁷J. Maxwell Miller, The Old Testament and the Historian (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 17.

life, but certainly in the field of theological science. It has ended in the defeat of the concept of miracle."²¹⁸ The miracles in the Scripture are adjudged by historical critics to have been originally not miraculous at all. In the process of transmitting orally God's action in history, the ordinary were intentionally made miraculous to justify the present beliefs of the religious communities.²¹⁹

The Moderates do not a priori accept or reject the authenticity of any reported miracle in the Scripture. However, they reserve the right of judging its facticity on the basis of what they are convinced is a rational and scientific method, the historical-critical method. The divine intrusion into the ordered universe is oftentimes minimized by positing natural causes for what otherwise is a supernatural event.²²⁰ Those who strictly follow Form Criticism have a way of denying the reported miraculous events in the Bible. They do this by classifying the literary accounts as non-historical genres such as legends, sagas, fables, and apocalyptic.²²¹

The dilemma the Moderates have put themselves in is evident in their inconsistent view pertaining to miracles narrated in Scripture. In their FCFL document the former faculty majority declared:

²¹⁸Ernst Käsemann, Essays On New Testament Themes, p. 48.

²¹⁹Horace D. Hummel, Critical Study and the Exodus Pericope, Biblical Study Series #3 (St. Louis: n.p., 1973) p. 15 and Richard Klann, "Criticism Of The Bible," Affirm: Occasional Papers, Spring 1973, p. 3.

²²⁰Hummel, Critical Study and the Exodus Pericope, p. 16.

²²¹Richard Jungkuntz, ed. A Project In Biblical Hermeneutics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969), pp. 104, 105.

When Christians today read the miracle accounts of the Scriptures, they are tempted to play down the supernatural elements as fantasy or to assume that God no longer performs spectacular miracles like those of the biblical era.²²²

The above statement of the former faculty majority gives the impression that they accept the miraculous accounts in the Bible as factual and that they chide those who believe otherwise. But such, unfortunately, is not the case for two sentences later the same group of theologians stated:

The miracle accounts of the Scriptures are neither scientific reports nor tests of just how much we are willing to believe. . . . To edify the Church, we ought to focus on this central meaning of the miracle accounts for us instead of dwelling on the authenticity of isolated miraculous details.²²³

The miraculous in the events recorded in Scripture is toned down. This is the case with the Crossing of the Red Sea. It is said that it was not the Red Sea but the Reed Sea. This is what the historical critics do. They

tend to emphasize the natural rather than the supernatural aspects of the phenomenon. That is, they generally speak in terms of a low tide and high winds and either suggest that Yahweh worked 'indirectly' through these natural phenomena or leave the question of his involvement open altogether.²²⁴

This is exactly what a Catholic Commentary (1953) does when it states:

The crossing was not miraculous in itself since the natural force of the wind divided the waters of the ford. . . . But it was miraculous in the intensity and continuity of the wind, in the circumstances of

²²² FCFL, p. 19.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Miller, The Old Testament and the Historian, p. 17.

time and place, and in the pillars of cloud and fire by which the Israelites were accompanied.²²⁵

The Moderates do not deny the possibility of the virgin birth of Christ but reject the predictive prophecy concerning the virgin birth of Jesus and minimize the extraordinary in this particular event. Professor Alfred von Rohr Sauer says that the Hebrew word almah in Isaiah 7:14 should be translated "maiden" which could mean virgin without necessarily stressing that fact.²²⁶

After yielding to the assumptions and conclusions of the historical-critical method, the Moderates try to salvage the relevance of non-historical miracles by pointing to their importance as vehicles for the proclamation of the gospel. The Reed Sea event should therefore be seen as the salvation wrought by Yahweh for His people and that the people would know that Yahweh was its God.²²⁷ Professor Ehlen, in fact, asserts that it may not be possible at all to describe what actually happened or even agree on the historicity of the various details of the event. But what he considers significant is that the diverse testimonies make God's words and deeds applicable to the different situations in our lives reaching its climax in the deeds and life of Christ.²²⁸ They argue that the miracles have been designed

²²⁵ Dom Bernard Orchard, et al, A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1953), p. 215.

²²⁶ Alfred von Rohr Sauer, "The Almah Translation in Isaiah 7:14," CTM 24 (August 1953):553.

²²⁷ FCFL, p. 19

²²⁸ Ehlen, "Deliverance at the Sea: Diversity and Unity in a Biblical Theme," CTM 44 (May 1973):191.

to lead human beings to the Creator and Redeemer behind the accounts. Only through the eyes of faith can his presence there be seen, and only from the perspective of the cross can the ultimate purpose of all miracles be discerned.²²⁹

Again one sees the mediating theologians' exegetical methodology, the application of historical criticism and gospel-reductionism in the interpretation of Biblical miracles. Biblical miracles which seemingly do not have gospel significance may therefore be regarded as non-factual without any danger to the Christian faith.²³⁰

The Moderates' Views On Women's Ordination

Using historical criticism's assumptions that the Scripture is culturally and historically conditioned, the AELC theologians say that the Pauline injunctions (1 Corinthians 14:33b-38 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15) against women's usurpation of the office of the ministry is no longer applicable to our present day.²³¹ It is stated that in Paul's time women had a subordinate position to men and that Paul shared in this past cultural view.²³² The prohibition on the pastoral role of women is said to have not been meant for all times. They were only "the words

²²⁹FCFL, p. 19.

²³⁰Cf. Supra, p.92, footnotes 90 and 91.

²³¹Walter E. Keller, "The Question of the Ordination of Women," The Cresset 42 (January 1979):19.

²³²Faculty of Christ Seminary - SEMINEX, "For the Ordination of Women," Currents in Theology and Mission 6 (June 1979):133-134.

of men for their own times."²³³ Therefore, the authority of Paul's command proceeds purely from human authority and is restricted to his time.²³⁴

It is also argued that the subordinate position of women in the order of creation has been transcended in the act of redemption through Christ. In fact, it is reasoned that in Genesis 1 man and woman were equal and that Christ's redemptive work restored women to the intended and original status of Genesis 1.²³⁵ In support of this position, Galatians 3:27-28 is used.²³⁶ It is also said that Pauline rule on the subordination of women to men may have been a Pauline lapses back into his rabbinical background.²³⁷

Sometimes the rationale used in favor of women's pastoral role borders on the ridiculous. C. K. Barrett believes the biblical prohibition is a marginal gloss and that the term "women" really meant "wives." Therefore the prohibition was against wives who interrupted their husbands in public worship with questions regarding the husbands'

²³³Marjorie Lieneck, "The Role of Women In The Church," Currents In Theology and Mission 2 (June 1975):147. Emphasis mine.

²³⁴William A. Poovey, "Question Box," The Lutheran Standard, July 29, 1980, p. 35 and Richard Klann, "Criticism of the Bible," Affirm: Occasional Papers (Milwaukee: Walther Memorial Lutheran Church, 1973), p. 3.

²³⁵John Reumann, "What in Scripture Speaks To The Ordination of Women?," CTM 44 (January 1973):11-12.

²³⁶Ibid., pp. 12, 14-15.

²³⁷Ibid., p. 11.

pastoral role.²³⁸ The same argument is reiterated by Ralph W. Klein and Gloria Weber.²³⁹ Reumann further argues that

if a rigorous historical criticism is applied, some of these texts most frequently cited against ordaining women can be excluded (as glosses) or demoted in value (as deuterio-Pauline).²⁴⁰

Reumann also sees that the late placement of the Pauline injunction against women's role in the church's public ministry as found in 1 Timothy 2:11-14 in Paul's career exhibits features of 'Early Catholicism.'²⁴¹ This is believed to mitigate the argument against the Pauline prohibition.

If at all possible, the Moderates do not want to leave any biblical or theological issue simply to the interpretation of the historical critics. They know this would lead to a devastating result. Therefore, Professor Edward H. Schroeder, while dissenting from the Synodical teaching on this matter, contends that the issue is not doctrinal for it cannot be shown to do violence to the Gospel.²⁴² Here we see the issue of women's ordination being regarded as a matter of indifference on the basis of an attempt to judge it by means of Gospel-reductionism. The Moderates also stress that to insist on the timelessness of this Pauline injunction

²³⁸ Charles Kingsley Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle To The Corinthians, 2nd ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1979), p. 332.

²³⁹ Gloria Weber and Ralph W. Klein, "The Ordination of Women in the Lutheran Church," Currents in Theology and Mission 4 (June 1977):151-52.

²⁴⁰ Reumann, "What in Scripture Speaks To The Ordination of Women," pp. 28-29.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁴² Edward H. Schroeder, "The Orders of Creation - Some Reflections on the History and Place of the Term in Systematic Theology," CTM 43 (March 1972):177.

is to emphasize legalism over against the freedom which the Gospel gives.²⁴³ In this matter Gospel-reductionism is being used to relativize the teaching of Scripture to the extent that it has been emphasized as solely a Pauline rather than a divine teaching in the Bible.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown that the Moderates' views and interpretations of Scripture stem from their combined use of the historical-critical method and Law-Gospel reductionism. They have attempted to apply this methodology in explaining the different theological issues relative to the Scripture such as its canonization, its nature, its attributes, the passages with reference to women's ordination, Messianic prophecies and the miracles reported in Scripture. Not all of the Biblical references related to these theological issues were discussed. The Biblical references have been limited to those theological issues which have contributed to the theological controversy between the Moderates and the Conservatives.

The mediating theologians have also used their method in explicating the traditional Lutheran hermeneutical principles, in their understanding of the genres of books and texts in Scripture and in the expositions of some Biblical passages the exegeses of which have diverged from the traditional Lutheran understanding of the texts.

In each instance the attempt was made to mitigate the negative conclusions of historical criticism by orienting each biblical or

²⁴³ACDC, p. 66.

theological issue to Law-Gospel reductionism even though in most cases the reduction process was limited to the Gospel. This method has forced the Moderates to redefine the traditional terminologies used in explaining the nature and attributes of Scripture and the principles of interpreting it. This was done to accommodate the presuppositions and findings of the historical-critical method. But the Gospel-reductionism method has resulted in relativizing the normative character of Scripture and has not adequately proven to contain the magisterial use of human reason in historical criticism which is the culprit in weakening the authority and reliability of the whole of Scripture. Law-Gospel reductionism has proven to be inadequate in restraining the liberalizing tendency of historical criticism even in the crucial issues regarding messianic prophecies and the sayings, deed and person of Christ.

The combined methodology of historical criticism and Gospel-reductionism is a simplistic attempt to find a conciliating point between human reason and faith in the Word of God. The methodology has only made the interpreter and his reason the ultimate judge with Scriptural authority subservient to them except in matters directly relevant to the Gospel although even in this latter assertion there is much which is debatable. One thing, however, is clear; historical criticism with Gospel-reductionism is the Moderates' exegetical methodology in understanding and interpreting Scripture.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONSERVATIVES' VIEWS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF SCRIPTURE

The Conservatives reject the use of the historical-critical methodology in understanding and interpreting Scripture. This repudiation of the historical-critical method is explicit in Resolution 3-11 of the Synodical convention in Dallas, Texas in 1977. But even in 1973 in the New Orleans convention one Moderate already saw the Synod's rejection of the historical-critical method.¹

Canonization Process

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS) accepts the traditional Protestant canon of Scripture and so do most of the Moderates. Those among the Moderates who call for a broader canon are, however, not agreed on what are the criteria and limits of such a canon. The Moderates attribute more to human ingenuity, the literary production and canonization of Holy Writ without denying that the whole historical processes were under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. While not denying the human contributions in the production of Scripture, the Conservatives stress the divine activity in the process of providing men the Holy Scriptures. It is for this reason that the Conservatives speak unequivocally of

¹Walter E. Bauer, "Some Observations on History, Historicity, and the Historical-Critical Method," The Cresset 40 (September/October, 1977):24.

Scripture as divine revelation, God's Word, inspired, inerrant, authoritative, and so forth.² For them there is no other authoritative Word of God save the Scripture which is equated with the traditional Protestant list of canonical writings. The Conservatives reject the exegetical process of going beyond or behind the canonical text into some kind of precanonical traditions or sources to discover what seemingly is the genuine and authoritative word of God.³

The Conservatives agree that the Scripture had a genuine historical development. Literary sources and oral traditions were used by the Biblical writers.⁴ They also used literary genres common in their days and even borrowed popular terms and mythical phrases.⁵ The Conservatives, however, deny that Holy Scripture in its historical development either in its oral or literary stage, underwent changes either deliberately or unintentionally in its meanings and intentions. Furthermore, they reject the assertion that the transmitters of God's Word modified the meanings of the texts to suit the settings and needs of the people to whom they were addressed. They also reject the assumption that the Holy Spirit's

²Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Inspiration of Scripture (St. Louis: n.p., 1975), pp. 17-18 (hereafter cited as CTCR) and "A Statement on Scripture Adopted by the Joint Committee of the Synodical Conference," Concordia Theological Monthly 30 (February 1959):138 (hereafter cited as CTM.) Cf. Walter W. F. Albrecht, "Holy Scripture The Word of God," in The Abiding Word, Vol. 2, ed. Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 1-7.

³Report of the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), p. 89. (Hereafter cited as ACDC.)

⁴CTCR. The Inspiration of Scripture, pp. 6-7.

⁵Ibid., pp. 9, 17.

accommodation in the process of inspiration included the use of myths, sagas, and legends.⁶ There was no "wholesale borrowing of entire genres."⁷

The Scripture presents us with history inextricably intertwined with theology. This is the substance of the Biblical genre we call gospel. The fiducia is not independent from a fides historica. The promise is grounded in God's action in human history.⁸ This being the case, the Bible also provides us with information about matters other than theology.⁹ In all matters there are no inconsistencies and contradictions in the Bible.¹⁰ This assertion is made on the basis of the Conservatives' affirmation that God was the active initiator in the whole process of the production and canonization of Scripture and therefore it is His Word.

The Conservative position is stated thus:

God used the church to gather and preserve the holy writings in which He willed to give to mankind His saving Word until the end of the time. The role of the church in the formulation of the canon was not active but passive. The church did not create the canon when it sought to determine on the basis of certain criteria that it set up, which books were authentic and which are not. . . . The church served merely as the community in which the Sacred Writings authenticated themselves by their inherent power to convince God's people that they are His Word. . . . God led the church to recognize and preserve

⁶Ibid., p. 9.

⁷Robert D. Preus, "Biblical Hermeneutics And The Lutheran Church Today," in Proceedings of the Twentieth Convention of the Iowa District West of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (N.p. n.p. 1966), p. 41.

⁸Martin H. Franzmann, "The Quest for the Historical Jesus," Concordia Journal 6 (May 1980):103.

⁹CTCR, Gospel and Scripture (St. Louis: n.p., 1972), p. 12.

¹⁰CTCR, The Inspiration of Scripture, pp. 9, 13.

certain writings as His Word because they speak with prophetic and apostolic authority and are the vehicles of divine power calling sinner to repentance and to faith in the Christ to whom they bear witness.¹¹

The Conservatives further assert that although the Bible is a historical document, its doctrinal teachings are not culturally conditioned in such a way as to make them valid only at the time of their original revelation. They affirm their normative nature for all times,¹² excepting, of course, those which God Himself abrogated. Moreover, the Conservatives insist that an exegete has to work with the given text and not to theorize what might be the real meaning and purpose of the text as it stands as a unit in a different context and situation as Form criticism surmised.¹³

Scripture As Divine Revelation and Word of God

The Reformers accepted the Bible as God's revelation which antedates Moses but was handed down via oral tradition from generation to generation until, to preserve its purity, God commanded Moses to put it into writing.¹⁴ Revelation therefore antedates Scripture but Scripture is nothing else than divine revelation. The Word of God as it resides in His mind is no different from what is revealed in Scripture because God Himself revealed it through inspiration.¹⁵ All the self-disclosures of God in both words and deeds as recorded in Scripture are God's revelation.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 17-18.

¹²Ibid., p. 17.

¹³AGDC, p. 89.

¹⁴Fred Kramer, "Chemnitz on the Authority of the Sacred Scripture," The Springfielder 37 (December 1973):167-168.

¹⁵Robert D. Preus, "The Word of God in the Theology of Lutheran Orthodoxy," CTM 33 (August 1962):471, 474.

Therefore the Scripture can justifiably be termed God's revelation.¹⁶
 These divine revelations are both past and objective, ephapax and
 dynamic.¹⁷

C. F. W. Walther acknowledged that the canonical writings of the
 Old and New Testaments are God's revelation.¹⁸ The late Professor
 Martin H. Franzmann, highly respected by both Conservatives and Moder-
 ates, was aware of the distinction modern theologians make between reve-
 lation and Scripture and stressed that the Bible is "not only a record
 of revelation, but itself the revelation of God."¹⁹ This divine reve-
 lation was passed on in different manners²⁰ and was later set forth in
 human language.²¹

¹⁶ Martin H. Franzmann, "Revelation - Scripture - Inspiration,"
A Symposium of Essays and Addresses given at the Counselors Conference,
 Valparaiso, Indiana, September 7-14, 1960 (St. Louis: Concordia Publish-
 ing House, 1960), p. 54.

¹⁷ Robert D. Preus, "Current Theological Problems Which Confront
 Our Church," in A Conference of the College Presidents and the Seminary
Faculties, St. Louis, Concordia Seminary, November 27-29, 1961 (St. Louis:
 n.p., 1961), p. 24.

¹⁸ Carl S. Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," CTM 43
 (April 1972):265.

¹⁹ Martin H. Franzmann, "Essays in Hermeneutics," CTM 19 (October
 1948):738.

²⁰ Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," p. 265.

²¹ Ludwig Ernest Fuerbringer, Theological Hermeneutics, An Outline
for the Classroom (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924), p. 2.

In the Middle Ages the whole Christian Church accepted the Bible as the Word of God.²² Luther explicitly affirmed the Scripture to be the Word of God. Luther wrote:

Die heilige Schrift ist Gottes Wort, geschrieben und (dass ich so rede) gebuchstabet und in Buchstaben gebildet, gleich die Christus ist das ewige Wort Gottes, in die Menschheit verhullet.²³

One sees that Luther recognized the indivisibility of the human and the divine in Scripture. If it were possible to separate the human from the divine in Scripture, then one could perhaps apply historical criticism legitimately to that human portion of Scripture. But Luther says the Scripture is like the person of Christ indivisibly both human and divine. At the Diet of Worms Luther interchangeably used "Scriptures" and "Word of God."²⁴ Luther asserted that "what Christ and the Apostles spoke and wrote is God's Word."²⁵ Hence, Luther could say that he who wants to hear God must read the Scripture.²⁶ Even the Epistle of James which Luther

²²Frederick E. Mayer, The Religious Bodies of America, 4th ed., revised by Arthur Carl Piepkorn (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), p. 144.

²³Martin Luther, D. Martin Luthers Werke, kritische Gesamtausgabe, 57 vol. (Weimar: Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1927), 48 band, p. 31, par. 4. (Hereafter cited as WA)

²⁴Lewis W. Spitz, Sr., "Luther's Sola Scriptura," CTM 31 (December 1960):741.

²⁵Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, I (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 278.

²⁶Ewald M. Plass, Comp., What Luther Says: An Anthology, I (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 166.

criticized, he nevertheless quoted with reverence as the Word of God in his argument with Erasmus.²⁷

The theologians today who do not agree with Luther's views of Scripture nonetheless admit that he affirmed the divine authorship of Scripture. Paul Althaus, himself a Moderate German theologian, in assessing Luther's view of Scripture wrote:

Although Luther criticized the Bible in specific details, he nonetheless followed the tradition of his time and basically accepted it as an essentially infallible book, inspired in its entire content by the Holy Spirit. It is therefore "the word of God," not only when it speaks to us in law and gospel . . . but also - and this is a matter of principle - in everything else that it says. Seen as a totality, its historical accounts, its world view, and all the miracle stories are "God's word" given by the Holy Spirit; they are therefore all unquestionable truths, to be "believed" precisely because they are contained in the book.²⁸

However, these theologians argue that Luther simply shared in the common belief of his age.²⁹

The Luther scholar, A. Skevington Wood, says that Luther held to the belief that the Bible is God's Word. Luther called the Bible "Divine Scripture," "God's Scripture," "God's Word" or simply "God's Book."³⁰ For this reason, Luther could declare that everything in Scripture has a

²⁷Eugene Klug, "Comment on 'The Lutheran Confessions' and 'Sola Scriptura,'" The Springfielder 33 (Spring 1969):22.

²⁸Paul Althaus, The Theology of Martin Luther, trans. R. C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 50-51.

²⁹Karlfried Froehlich, "Problems of Lutheran Hermeneutics," in John Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 133.

³⁰A. Skevington Wood, Captive to the Word (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1969), p. 140.

purpose because it is God's Word.³¹ As if anticipating the Moderates' theological stance toward Scripture, Luther wrote:

My friend, God's Word is God's Word; this point does not require much haggling! When one blasphemously gives the lie to God in a single word, or says it is a minor matter if God is blasphemed or called a liar, one blasphemes the entire God and makes light of all blasphemy. . . . You see, the circumcision of Abraham Gen. 17: 10ff. is now an old dead thing and no longer necessary or useful. But if I were to say that God did not command it in its time, it would do me no good even if I believed the gospel. So St. James asserts, "Whoever offends in one point is guilty in all respects." He possibly heard the apostles say that all the words of God must be believed or none, although he applies their interpretation to the works of the law.³²

Luther here is saying that every word of God has a salvific or gospel significance. One may distinguish between Law and Gospel but no one is licensed to discriminate against either word of God.

The Lutheran Confessions state that the Scripture is the Word of God and therefore declared that "no human being's writings dare be put on a par with it."³³ The Confessors did not search for hidden, oral traditions; hypothesized on some unknown documentary sources; theorized on layers of traditions and meanings, or postulate ideas of accretions and modifications through the works of editors, redactors or even of a whole religious community. In a good number of instances the Lutheran Confessions equate the Scripture with the Word of God, not that it only contains

³¹WA, 50, p. 282.

³²Martin Luther, Luther's Works, 55 Vols., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-1967), 26. (Hereafter cited as LW.)

³³Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration Summary 9 in Theodore G. Tappert, trans. and ed., The Book of Concord (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 505. (Hereafter cited as BC.) Cf. BC, Epitome, Comprehensive Summary, 2, pp. 464-465.

the Word of God. The Confessions call the Bible the "Scripture of the Holy Spirit";³⁴ that its words came from the Holy Spirit;³⁵ it is called "divine Holy Scripture";³⁶ and in the German and Latin versions it is called the "Scriptures of God."³⁷ It is also specifically called the "Word of God."³⁸ A Moderate, Herbert J. A. Bouman, admitted that the Lutheran Confessions equate Scripture with the phrase "Word of God" at least seventy-seven times.³⁹

Article II of the Constitution of the LC-MS is very explicit in stating that "the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament [are] the written Word of God."⁴⁰ C. F. W. Walther clearly considered the Scripture the Word of God.⁴¹ In his foreword to the fourteenth annual edition of Der Lutheraner Walther wrote:

. . . die Bibel Alten und Neuen Testamentes ist Gottes unwandelbares ewiges Wort, vom ersten Buch Mosis an bis zur Offenbarung St. Johannis vom Heiligen Geiste eingegeben Wort für Wort.⁴²

³⁴BC, Apology, Preface 9, pp. 98-99. (Hereafter cited as Ap.)

³⁵BC, Apology IV, 107-08, p. 122. Cf. BC, Augsburg Confession, 28, par. 49, p. 89. (Hereafter cited as AC.)

³⁶BC, AC, 28, par. 28, p. 85.

³⁷Concordia Triglotta (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921). AC, 28, pars. 43-49, 88-90.

³⁸BC, Ap. XII, par. 123, p. 200.

³⁹Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 125.

⁴⁰Handbook of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1973 edition (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), p. 15.

⁴¹Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," pp. 262-63.

⁴²"Vorwort des Redacteurs," Der Lutheraner, September 8, 1847, p. 1.

Walther argued that the Scripture does not simply contain the Word of God, but is the Word of God.⁴³

The LC-MS theologians who followed Walther simply echoed his theological views concerning Scripture. Francis Pieper called Scripture the Word of God.⁴⁴ He said that the phrases "Holy Scripture says" and "God says" mean the same thing.⁴⁵ Moreover, he argued that what the prophets and apostles wrote were God's Word.⁴⁶ Even those who do not agree with Pieper admit that he equated Scripture and Word of God.⁴⁷

The other outstanding theologians of the Synod regarded Scripture as the Word of God. Theodore Engelder states that "Scripture and the Word of God are interchangeable terms."⁴⁸ The well-known exegete William Arndt shared this view.⁴⁹ Paul M. Bretscher, father of the popular Moderate Paul G. Bretscher, affirmed Scripture as the Word of God and that it is inerrant.⁵⁰

⁴³C. F. W. Walther, "The False Arguments for the Modern Theory of Open Questions," trans. Alex Wm. Guebert, CTM 10 (August 1939):588.

⁴⁴Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, I, pp. 213-14, 216.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 216.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 229.

⁴⁷Traugott H. Rehwaldt, "The Other Understanding of the Inspiration Texts," CTM 43 (June 1972):356.

⁴⁸Theodore Engelder, "Holy Scripture or Christ?," CTM 10 (July 1939):495.

⁴⁹William Arndt, "The Interpretation of Difficult Bible Passages," CTM 17 (March 1946):182.

⁵⁰Paul M. Bretscher, "Take Heed Unto The Doctrine," Proceedings of the Forty-Fourth Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), pp. 14, 24, 26.

The classical statement of the LC-MS views on Scripture is contained in the Brief Statement, a document adopted by the Synodical Convention in 1932. This document states:

We teach that the Holy Scriptures differ from all other books in the world in that they are the Word of God. They are the Word of God because the holy men of God who wrote the Scriptures wrote only that which the Holy Ghost communicated to them by inspiration, 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21. We teach also that the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is not a so-called "theological deduction," but that it is taught by direct statements of the Scriptures, 2 Tim. 3:16; John 10:35; Rom. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:13. Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10:35.⁵¹

This theological position of the Synod towards the Bible has not been rescinded even though the document Brief Statement was rescinded due to its unconstitutionality and not for its theological declaration. Further discussions on the contents and status of the Brief Statement will be taken up in the latter part of this chapter.⁵² The theological views of the Brief Statement are reiterated by present-day Synodical theologians.⁵³

Professor Eugene Klug emphasizes

that the Scriptures are the Word of God ontologically, that is, in their very being, in their very form as God-given text, and also

⁵¹"Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod," CTM 2 (June 1931):401. Emphasis mine.

⁵²Infra, pp. 181-82 for a more detailed discussion of this matter.

⁵³Ralph A. Bohlmann and Horace D. Hummel in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 81. Cf. Jacob Aall Ottesen Preus, A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles (St. Louis: n.p., 1972), pp. 18-20.

functionally or dynamically, because they bring God's Word to the hearts and minds of sinners to work faith.⁵⁴

Not all statements of Scriptures are articles of faith but each statement is important for they are authoritative in whatever matter they express.⁵⁵

Unity and Clarity of Scripture

Luther,⁵⁶ the Lutheran Confessions, and the theologians of the LC-MS affirm the unity of Scripture. This unity is manifest in the Lutherans' use of different parts of Scripture to complement and clarify matters dealing with the same subject and which shows that Scripture is in agreement with itself.⁵⁷ The organic unity of the whole of Scripture is an article of faith.⁵⁸ This rationale is rooted in the assertion that the whole Scripture has primarily a single author - the Holy Spirit who inspired "all Scriptures."⁵⁹ This organic unity has been recognized

⁵⁴Klug, "Comment on 'The Lutheran Confessions' and 'Sola Scriptura,'" p. 13.

⁵⁵Ralph A. Bohlmann, "The Position of the LC-MS on the Basis For Fellowship," in Lutheran Council in the United States of America, Studies: The Function of Doctrine and Theology in Light of the Unity of the Church (New York: n.p. 1975), p. 37. (Hereafter cited as LCUSA:FODT.)

⁵⁶LM, 15, pp. 267-68.

⁵⁷Robert D. Preus, "Biblical Authority in the Lutheran Confessions," Concordia Journal 4 (January 1978):22.

⁵⁸Walter R. Roehrs, "The Unity of Scripture," CTM 31 (May 1960): 277.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 278; CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation (St. Louis: n.p., 1973), p. 13 and "A Statement on Scripture Adopted by the Joint Committee of the Synodical Conference," CTM 30 (February 1959):139.

by the Christian Church for centuries and for this reason its liturgical practice has included readings from both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Synodical theologians insist that the New Testament is decisive in determining the meaning of the Old Testament.⁶⁰ And this is precisely the way the Lutheran Confessions viewed the relationship between the Old Testament and the New. They saw the unity of the whole Scripture especially in its witness to Christ. Therefore the Confessors speak of Daniel knowing the forgiveness of sins in the promised Christ.⁶¹ The vicarious death of Christ is proven from such passages as Hosea 13: 14.⁶² Isaiah 53 is seen as a prophecy concerning Christ.⁶³ Luther and his fellow-confessors saw abundant proofs for a christology in the Old Testament.

Luther is quite explicit in declaring the clarity of Scripture.

He says:

No clearer book has been written on earth than the Holy Scripture. It compares with other books as the sun with other lights. . . . If faith only hears Scripture, it is clear and plain enough to enable it to say without the comments of all fathers and teachers: That is right. I, too, believe it.⁶⁴

⁶⁰"A Statement on Scripture Adopted by the Joint Committee of the Synodical Conference," p. 139.

⁶¹BC, Ap. IV, 262, p. 145.

⁶²BC, Ap. XII, 140, p. 204.

⁶³BC, Ap. XX, 5, p. 227; Ap. XXIV, 23, p. 253 and Smalcald Articles, Part II, 1, 2, 5, p. 292.

⁶⁴Plass, I, p. 73.

He further argued that Scripture is its own light and therefore explains itself.⁶⁵ The Scripture is particularly clear in matters related to salvation. If it is obscure, then it becomes unreliable.⁶⁶ It is for this reason that all other writings and statements of all other teachers must be judged by Scripture.⁶⁷ The Lutheran Confessors, like Luther, asserted the clarity of Scripture and therefore insisted that it be "the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged. . . ."⁶⁸

The clarity of Scripture has been declared by Scripture itself. Timothy is said to have known it [the Old Testament] even when he was a child (2 Timothy 3:15). Ludwig E. Fuerbringer therefore stated that the science of hermeneutics is not absolutely essential because "the Scriptures are clear in themselves and may be understood by simple minds."⁶⁹ The signatories in the document Speaking the Truth in Love contend that the doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers can only be honestly maintained if the great principle of the clarity of Scripture is also retained.⁷⁰

This perspicuity of Scripture is in fact essential to the affirmation regarding the authority of Scripture. If the Scripture is not clear,

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 74

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 74-75

⁶⁸BC, Formula of Concord, Epitome, Part I, 1-2, 7, pp. 464-65. (Hereafter cited as FC, Ep.) and FC, Solid Declaration, 3, pp. 503-04 (Hereafter cited as FC, SD).

⁶⁹L. E. Fuerbringer, Theological Hermeneutics, an Outline for the Classroom (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924), p. 3.

⁷⁰Speaking the Truth in Love (Chicago: The Willow Press, n.d.), p. 6.

then the Church will inevitably need a teaching authority or a scientific methodology to interpret the Word of God to the vast majority of non-theologians in the church. This teaching authority or interpretative methodology becomes the authority.⁷¹

The lucidity of the Bible, of course, does not mean that everything in it is clear. But the obscure passages in it do not adversely affect doctrinal affirmation. Rather, most of them pertain to chronology, topography, archaeology, historical data and those dark statements which concern doctrines are treated clearly elsewhere by Scripture.⁷² However, there may be groups of passages which are clear but which may not seem to harmonize theologically. None should be rejected nor reinterpreted to fit human reason.⁷³

L. Fuerbringer contended that the New Testament is the clearer portion of Holy Writ and therefore the Old Testament must be expounded in the light of the New Testament.⁷⁴

Verbal and Plenary Inspiration of Scripture

Luther, in accord with the teaching of the Early Church, taught the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scripture. Thus, he calls the

⁷¹Robert D. Preus, "Walther and the Scriptures," CTM 32 (November 1961):680.

⁷²Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, I, p. 324.

⁷³Francis Pieper, "Gebrauch und Missbrauch der Analogie des Glaubens," in Martin Flor, "The Free Conferences of 1903-1906 and the Concept of Analogia Fidei," CTM 40 (April 1969):224.

⁷⁴Fuerbringer, Theological Hermeneutics, an Outline for the Classroom, p. 16.

Bible the book of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵ He contended that everything in Scripture is inspired. What St. John spoke came from the Holy Ghost.⁷⁶ Even those which are seemingly unimportant, like the report that Jesus' bones were not broken and that a spear opened His side in reference to the testimony of Christ's crucifixion, are considered by Luther to have come from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and even were predicted in the Old Testament (Exodus 12:46 and Zechariah 12:10).⁷⁷ The manner in which some of the statements in Scripture is expressed, even sometimes in an ungrammatical fashion, were wrought by the Holy Ghost.⁷⁸

The Lutheran Confessions do not speak of the inspiration of Holy Scripture but in their use of the Bible they accept its words to have come from the Holy Spirit.⁷⁹ Since it was not a controverted issue at the time of the Reformation, one can safely surmise that the Lutheran Confessors agreed with Luther and the Middle Ages' belief in the inspiration of the Bible which is a doctrine plainly taught in Scripture itself.

Professor Edward H. Schroeder admits that the Lutheran reformers believed in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible.⁸⁰ Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn said that this is one point of universal agreement among all the parties involved in the Reformation controversy and the

⁷⁵Plass, I, p. 62.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 63

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 64.

⁷⁹BC, Ap. IV, 108, p. 122.

⁸⁰Edward Schroeder, "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutics?," in Lively Function of the Gospel, ed. Robert Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 84.

reason why the Lutheran Symbols did not find it imperative to have an article on Sacred Scripture.⁸¹ The great German theologian Werner Elert wrote:

The fact that the Augsburg Confession says nothing about this principle [Luther's Scriptural principle] shows that it recognizes Luther's position about the Scripture. Had it begun with special statements about Scripture - say, that the Scripture is God's Word, that it is inspired, that it is necessary for the knowledge of God and salvation - this would have been wasted effort against Roman opposition, Rome did not question these statements.⁸²

Vergilius Ferm, who was not at all sympathetic to this doctrine of inspiration, admitted that the Lutheran Confessions affirmed an infallible and verbally inspired Bible.⁸³

The doctrine of Biblical inspiration does not refer to inspiration of subject matter or of persons.⁸⁴ It pertains to verbal inspiration. It is for this reason that the Scripture is called God's Word.⁸⁵ Professor Franzmann stressed that inspiration of the Bible is both verbal and plenary and it was so divinely planned for the effective ministry

⁸¹ Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "The Position of the Church and Her Symbols," CTM 25 (October 1954):740.

⁸² Werner Elert, The Structure of Lutheranism, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), p. 190.

⁸³ Vergilius Ferm, ed., What Is Lutheranism? (New York: Macmillan Company, 1930), p. 279.

⁸⁴ Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, I, p. 217.

⁸⁵ Walter W. F. Albrecht, "Holy Scripture The Word of God," in Theodore Laetsch, ed., The Abiding Word, Vol. 2 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 16.

of the prophets and apostles to mankind.⁸⁶ C. F. W. Walther believed that the concepts, the words, and the impetus to commit God's revelation into writing were all parts of the inspirational process done by the Holy Spirit.⁸⁷ Dr. A. L. Graebner expressed the same faith when he said that

the Holy Spirit . . . not only prompted and actuated them (the Biblical writers) toward writing what they wrote, but also suggested to them both the thoughts and the words they uttered as they wrote.⁸⁸

Francis Pieper contends that when 2 Timothy 3:16 speaks of the inspiration of "all Scripture," this includes everything and every word.⁸⁹ This "all Scripture," of course, is limited to what we consider today as canonical Scriptures.⁹⁰

The Synodical Conservatives insist that the concept of inspiration of Scripture is "an article of faith."⁹¹ The Brief Statement denies that it is merely a theological deduction but declares that it is a teaching

⁸⁶Martin H. Franzmann, Scripture and Interpretation (Springfield, Ill.: Concordia Seminary Print Shop, February 1961), pp. 10-11.

⁸⁷Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," p. 265.

⁸⁸August L. Graebner, Outline of Doctrinal Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), p. 4. Ottomar Fuerbringer expressed a similar view in Erwin Lueker, "Doctrinal Emphases in the Missouri Synod," CTM 43 (April 1972);204. This view is also shared by L. Fuerbringer, Th. Engelder, and P. E. Kretzmann, eds., The Concordia Cyclopedia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), pp. 77-78 and A Short Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), p. 41.

⁸⁹Piper, Christian Dogmatics, I, p. 218.

⁹⁰"Statement on Scripture," Lutheran Witness, February 24, 1959, p. 8.

⁹¹CTCR, The Inspiration of Scripture, p. 16.

clearly and directly taught by Scriptures.⁹² This position is supported by the Conservatives with such Biblical passages as 2 Peter 1:2 which speaks of holy men of God writing under the influence of the Holy Spirit; Matthew 10:19; Luke 12:12; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 13 where the subject matter of Scripture is said to have been inspired and Hebrews 3:7 where the Holy Ghost is described as speaking through Scriptures.⁹³ C. F. W. Walther added other Biblical passages in defense of the doctrine of inspiration, such as Mark 12:36; Acts 1:16, 28:25. He further stated that he did not base his doctrine of inspiration on the Lutheran Confessions but on the Word of God itself.⁹⁴ Dr. Martin Scharlemann quotes John 14:26 and 16:13 in support of Biblical inspiration.⁹⁵

Inspiration refers not only to declarations concerning Christ but includes the historical framework of the Gospel.⁹⁶ All the data of history, geography, geology, astronomy, psychology, pedagogy, biology, and

⁹²Piepkorn, "The Position of the Church and Her Symbols," p. 739. Cf. E. W. Koehler, A Summary of Christian Doctrine, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), p. 9; John T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), p. 108 and Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, p. 305.

⁹³Paul Edward Kretzmann, The Foundation Must Stand! The Inspiration of the Bible and Related Questions (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1936), p. 97.

⁹⁴Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," p. 266.

⁹⁵Martin Scharlemann, Just What Did Jesus Say? Paradigm: Matthew 20:1-16, The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, Biblical Series #1 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Print Shop, 1976), p. 12.

⁹⁶"Statement on Scripture Adopted by the Joint Committee of the Synodical Conference," p. 137.

so forth found in Scripture are all inspired.⁹⁷ Even those matters in Scripture which the writers knew apart from revelation are inspired.⁹⁸

The human side of the inspired Scripture lies in the fact that the language used was the language of men; the natural characteristics and temperaments, linguistic knowledge and style of writing of the writers were retained.⁹⁹ The human writers' particularities such as their culture, education, native capacities, their interests, human limitations, were retained. The freedom with which the writers were allowed by the Holy Spirit to select the materials, quote sources, arrange accounts, and interpret events - all these were under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁰

Even though men were employed in the writing of inspired Scriptures, they were not lifeless machines.¹⁰¹ It should not be understood that because some dogmatists called the writers penmen, amanuenses, that this was an endorsement of the theory of mechanical dictation.¹⁰² The Conservatives reject the mechanical dictation theory.¹⁰³

⁹⁷Carl S. Meyer, "The Historical Background of 'A Brief Statement,'" CTM 32 (July 1961):422-23.

⁹⁸CTCR, The Inspiration of Scripture, p. 5.

⁹⁹Paul Edward Kretzmann, "The Inspiration of the New Testament," CTM 2 (September 1931):655.

¹⁰⁰CTCR, The Inspiration of Scripture, p. 8.

¹⁰¹Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, I, pp. 229-30.

¹⁰²"A Statement on Scripture Adopted by the Joint Committee of the Synodical Conference," p. 137.

¹⁰³William Arndt, "What The Missouri Synod Stands For," The Lutheran Quarterly 57 (July 1927):392-93 and Carl Eberhand, "Geography of the Bible in Relation to Inspiration," CTM 15 (November 1944):736-37.

In a limited sense the Conservatives may be said to be in agreement with the historical critics' theory regarding the production of Scripture. They concede that the Biblical writers under inspiration used oral and written sources in writing God's revelation. They even used secular documents, sayings of heathen poets (Titus 1:12), studied existing materials, collated and wrote what the Holy Spirit inspired them to write. They even had freedom to express their feelings and make remarks about personal matters. But all these were under the impulse and guidance of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁴

When the Conservatives contend for an inspired and inerrant Scripture, they refer to the original autographs.¹⁰⁵ The inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture do not cover the copies and versions.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the variants and all accidents in the transmission process are not included in the doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy.¹⁰⁷

The Conservatives repudiate the notion that the believing community had a part in the production of Scripture and the creation of its theological intentions. The Scripture itself has ample testimonies of the evangelists that they were witnesses of the events in the life

¹⁰⁴Albrecht, "Holy Scripture The Word of God," pp. 2-4, 25. Cf. CTCR, The Inspiration of Scripture, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰⁵Kretzmann, The Foundations Must Stand!, p. 95; William Arndt, "The Chief Principles of New Testament Textual Criticism," CTM 5 (August 1934):578 and Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, I, p. 237.

¹⁰⁶Arndt, "What the Missouri Synod Stands For," p. 392 and Kretzmann, The Foundations Must Stand!, p. 105.

¹⁰⁷"A Statement on Scripture Adopted by the Joint Committee of the Synodical Conference," p. 137.

of Jesus (Acts 1:22, 2:23, 3:15, 5:32, 10:39, 22:15; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 Peter 1:16-18; John 21:24).

The Synodical stance on Biblical inspiration was once also shared by the American Lutheran Church in the Common Confession, Part I of 1949. This document declares that

the Holy Spirit by divine inspiration supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word, therefore we acknowledge the Holy Scriptures in their entirety as the inspired Word of God. . . . We therefore recognize the Holy Scriptures as God's inerrant Word.¹⁰⁸

The Synodical fathers were unanimous in their belief concerning the doctrine of verbal and plenary inspiration.¹⁰⁹ In emphasizing the total inspiration of Scripture C. F. W. Walther declared:

every word, every word-usage, the repetition of any word, every abbreviation, the style of the writers had its origin in the Spirit of God who inspired everything . . .¹¹⁰

He also asserted that everything the Holy Spirit inspired was given with a purpose.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸Richard C. Wolf, Comp., Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 411. Emphasis mine.

¹⁰⁹William Dallman, W. H. T. Dau, and Theodore Engelder, ed., Walther and the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 14. Cf. Theodore Laetsch, ed., The Abiding Word, Vol. II (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947); Theodore Engelder, The Scripture Cannot Be Broken (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944); A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism and Mueller, Christian Dogmatics. George Stoeckhardt, one of the honored exegetes of the Synod, affirmed belief in verbal inspiration. "Was Lehrt St. Paulus 2 Tim. 3, 15-17. von der inspiration?" Jahrgang 38, Lehre und Wehre 10 (October 1892):289-294.

¹¹⁰Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," p. 266.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 268. The doctrine of verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scripture was also shared by Theodore Graebner. Herman Otten, ed., A Christian Handbook on Vital Issues (New Haven, Mo.: Leader Publishing Company, 1973), p. 656. Next to C. F. W. Walther, the greatest proponent of verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible was his student Francis

The Conservatives hold that the Holy Spirit in the process of inspiration provided the proper words to express the concepts and doctrines God desired to communicate to men.¹¹² With this view of inspiration, they naturally insist that there is a qualitative difference between Scripture and all other human documents.¹¹³ Therefore, the Scripture cannot be treated like any other document especially when applying the so-called laws of history.¹¹⁴ The Conservatives reject the Moderates' equation of divine inspiration of Scripture with the divine efficacy of Scripture. The former, they argue, is associated with the writing of Scripture while the latter explains the effective work of the Holy Spirit through Scripture.¹¹⁵

Inerrancy of Scripture

The Conservatives maintain that the teaching concerning the inerrancy of Scripture is a matter of faith. Although it is not empirically verifiable, it is testified to by Scripture.¹¹⁶

Luther affirmed the inerrancy of Scripture.¹¹⁷ Luther said, "I and my neighbor and, in short, all men may err and deceive, but the Word

Pieper. Cf. Rehwaldt, "The Other Understanding of the Inspiration Texts," p. 356.

¹¹²CTGR, The Inspiration of Scripture, p. 15.

¹¹³Idem, A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Biblical Studies, (St. Louis: n.p., 1966), pp. 5, 8, 10.

¹¹⁴Idem, Revision of the Study Document on Revelation, Inspiration, and Inerrancy (St. Louis: n.p., n.d.), p. 3.

¹¹⁵Idem, The Inspiration of Scripture, p. 15.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 10

¹¹⁷LW, 12, 242.

of God cannot err."¹¹⁸ In interpreting John 10:35, Luther emphasized the inerrancy of Scripture.¹¹⁹ He accepted the inerrancy of the canonical books when he wrote:

I have learned to ascribe the honor of infallibility only to those books that are accepted as canonical. I am profoundly convinced that none of these writers has erred.¹²⁰

The Lutheran Confessions are filled with ample testimonies to the inerrancy of Scripture. It calls the Scripture "the pure, unerring and infallible Word of God" (German).¹²¹ The Lutheran Symbols nowhere restrict Biblical inerrancy to matters concerned only with men's salvation. That they treat the subject of salvation more than anything else is understandable in the light of the subject of the polemics. However, this was never used to relativize the facticity of non-gospel statements.

The Synodical fathers insisted on the inerrancy of Scripture on the basis that it is God's Word.¹²² C. F. W. Walther in his 1847 Reformation Day sermon declared that the Lutheran Church stands or falls on

¹¹⁸Concordia Triglotta (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), Large Catechism, par. 57, p. 747.

¹¹⁹LW, 13, 71.

¹²⁰Martin Luther, "Defense Against the Ill-tempered Judgment of Eck," WA, 2, 618. Translation from John Warwick Montgomery, Crisis in Lutheran Theology, Vol. I (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1967), p. 68.

¹²¹Concordia Triglotta, Preface to the Christian Book of Concord, p. 14 (German).

¹²²C. F. W. Walter, "Was lehren die neuen orthodox sein wollenden Theologen von der Inspiration?" Lehre und Wehre 17 (February 1871):35 and 17 (May 1871):135; and Frederick Bente, "Die Stellung der lutherischen Symbole zur Schrift - ein Beweis dafür, dass unser Bekenntniss die wortliche Inspiration vertritt," Lehre und Wehre 42 (April 1896):109.

the doctrine of inerrancy.¹²³ He insisted that every word in the Bible must be accepted as inerrant or the entire Bible would be unreliable.¹²⁴

The inerrancy of Scripture is, of course, predicated only to the original or the autograph texts and not to copies or translations.¹²⁵ Ottomar Fuerbringer not only defended the inerrancy of the original but also the complete reliability of the transmitted text.¹²⁶

C. F. W. Walther used the analogy of the incarnation to buttress his view of the inerrancy of Scripture. He argued that the Word of God was written in human language yet was preserved from error in the same manner that Christ became truly human and yet without sin.¹²⁷ The Conservative LC-MS theologians today use the same reasoning to defend the inerrancy of the Bible.¹²⁸

Walther argued that if one were to accept the inerrancy of Scripture not a priori but on the basis that it agrees with his human reason, then Scripture is no longer the judge but human reason. He would then assent to the inerrancy of Scripture not because it is Scripture, but

¹²³Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," p. 267.

¹²⁴Ibid. Walther writes that whoever "finds lacunae, inaccuracies, contradictions, and errors in the Bible slander the Word of God."

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 267. Cf. Pieper, Christian Dogmatics I, pp. 277-78.

¹²⁶Ottomar Fuerbringer, "Der Rationalismus und die Bibel," Der Lutheraner, September 20, 1845, p. 2. Cf. "Statement on Scripture," The Lutheran Witness 78 (February 24, 1959):8.

¹²⁷Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," p. 268.

¹²⁸Reumann in Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 81.

because it agrees with his reason or sentiment.¹²⁹ He contended that to believe Scripture contains even one error is to reject that it is God's Word and to place human reason as the foundation for faith.¹³⁰ When Scripture ceases to be the norm for Christian faith, then man would be in the business of sifting truth from error in Scripture.¹³¹ This would open the floodgate for all kinds of skeptical questions, so argued Professor Frederick Bente.¹³²

The Conservatives use the doctrine of inspiration as the basis for affirming the inerrancy of Scripture.¹³³ In turn the assertion of the Scripture's authority and the principle of sola Scriptura are based on the teaching that the Bible is inerrant.¹³⁴ There is therefore a circular "complementariness" in the teachings concerning Scripture's being inspired, inerrant, authoritative, and the Word of God.

Following the synodical forefathers, Jacob A. Preus attributes Biblical inerrancy solely to the original or autograph texts.¹³⁵

¹²⁹C. F. W. Walther, "The False Arguments for the Modern Theory of Open Questions," trans. William Arndt, CTM 10 (April 1939):255.

¹³⁰Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," p. 268 and R. Preus, "Walther and the Scriptures," pp. 674, 689.

¹³¹R. Preus, "Walther and the Scriptures," pp. 690-91 and Dallmann, Dau and Engelder, eds., Walther and the Church, p. 14.

¹³²Frederick Bente, "Die Inspirationlehre in der lutherischen Kirche Americas," Lehre und Wehre 48 (May 1902):129-138.

¹³³Franzmann, "Revelation - Scripture - Inspiration," p. 61 and Robert Preus, "Notes on the Inerrancy of Scripture," CTM 38 (June 1967): 365.

¹³⁴R. Preus, "Notes on the Inerrancy of Scripture," p. 374.

¹³⁵Jacob A. Preus, The Enerrancy [sic] of Scripture (California: California and Nevada District, 1961), p. 16.

On the basis of the belief that the Holy Spirit is the primary author of Scripture, the CTCR upholds the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture¹³⁶ and declares that there is a qualitative difference between Scripture and all other human documents.¹³⁷

The plenary inerrancy of Scripture includes everything found in Scripture. This is the theological stance of the Conservatives. Walther writes, perhaps a bit superflously, that

the holy canonical Scriptures in their original text are the infallible truth and free from every error. . . . There is no lie, no deceit, no error, even the slightest either in content or in words, but every single word handed down in the Scriptures is most true, whether it pertains to doctrine, ethics, history, chronology, topography, or onomastics; and no ignorance, lack of understanding, forgetfulness, or lapse of memory, can or should be attributed to the amanuenses of the Holy Spirit in their writing of the Holy Scriptures.¹³⁸

In agreement with Walther, F. Pieper states that there are no historical errors in Scripture.¹³⁹ In support of this affirmation he quoted John 10:35¹⁴⁰ which Luther also used in defense of Scriptural inerrancy.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches To Biblical Interpretation, p. 13.

¹³⁷Ibid., pp. 6-7, Cf. FC, SD, Summary, 9 and Ap. XXIV, 94-95.

¹³⁸R. Preus, "Walther and the Scripture," p. 686.

¹³⁹Pieper, Christian Dogmatics I, p. 366.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 280. Cf. C. F. W. Walther, "Walther's Foreword for Volume 14 of 'Lehre und Wehre', 1868," trans. Alex Wm. C. Guebert, CTM 17 (July 1946):497.

¹⁴¹LW, 13, 71.

Walther contended that even those matter which we consider insignificant are inerrant; the lack of seeming proper order has its reason and wisdom of God and that the interpretation Christ gave with regards to the Old Testament are correct.¹⁴² Therefore, there is really no true contradiction in Scripture.¹⁴³ He further stated that "everything that Holy Writ says is . . . to be believed and accepted reverently."¹⁴⁴

The synodical explanation to Luther's Small Catechism clearly enunciates the doctrine of inerrancy.¹⁴⁵ This catechism is used by the congregations of the LC-MS. The CTCR in continued support of this doctrine appealed to the affirmation of the Brief Statement.¹⁴⁶

The Conservatives do admit that there are inexactitudes in verbal quotations, scientifically imprecise language and differences in chronology within Scripture. However, these do not affect the doctrine of inerrancy.¹⁴⁷ In a good number of these seeming differences and contradictions there can be reasonable explanations. The unscientific language must be seen from the perspective of man and not from a

¹⁴²Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," p. 270 and Idem, "The Historical Background of 'A Brief Statement,'" p. 426.

¹⁴³C. F. W. Walther, "Was soll ein Christ thun, wenn, er findet, dass zwei Lehren, die sich zu widersprechen scheinen, beiderseits klar und deutlich in der Schrift gelehrt werden?" Lehre und Wehre 26 (September 1880):257-70.

¹⁴⁴Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," p. 271.

¹⁴⁵A Short Explanation To Luther's Small Catechism, p. 41.

¹⁴⁶Proceedings of the Forty-Ninth Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), p. 38.

¹⁴⁷J. Preus, The Enerrancy[sic] of Scripture, pp. 14-15.

scientific or divine view.¹⁴⁸ Also, the writers may have used pre-scientific historiography and literary forms which are not common among us but these too have been inspired and there is no intention of falsifying history.¹⁴⁹ While the Biblical writers did indeed use figurative language, differences of emphases, and popular phrases;¹⁵⁰ fraud and forgery, pseudonymity, myth, etiological tale, midrash, legend or saga according to their popular understanding are absent from Scripture.¹⁵¹

The Conservatives concede that there are "seeming discrepancies, unscientific statements, problems, unanswered questions and even apparent contradictions"¹⁵² in the Bible. However, human judgment must remain suspended and the Scripture must be accepted as right even if it seems to assert seemingly contradictory fact or teaching.¹⁵³

Walther declared that the church which teaches the infallible Word of God and teaches what Scripture teaches is itself infallible.¹⁵⁴ His strict adherence to this doctrine of inerrancy made him recommend expulsion or separation for persons or churches who deny a single teaching of Scripture "even though it should consist in nothing more than denying

¹⁴⁸"A Statement on Scripture Adopted by the Joint Committee of the Synodical Conference," p. 139.

¹⁴⁹J. Preus, The Enerrancy [sic] of Scripture, p. 20.

¹⁵⁰R. Preus, "Notes on the Inerrancy of Scripture," pp. 368-72.

¹⁵¹Ibid., pp. 370, 373.

¹⁵²J. Preus, The Enerrancy [sic] of Scripture, p. 16.

¹⁵³CTCR, The Inspiration of Scripture, p. 18.

¹⁵⁴Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," p. 269.

that Balaam's ass spoke."¹⁵⁵ In support of this position he paraphrased what Scripture itself said: "Ye shall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it. . ."¹⁵⁶

This doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture was in the past shared by ALC as evident in Article III of the United Testimony. This jointly approved document states:

We bear witness that the Bible is our only authentic and infallible source of God's revelation to us and all men, and that it is the only inerrant and completely adequate source and norm of Christian doctrine and life. We hold that the Bible, as a whole, and in all its parts, is the Word of God under all circumstances regardless of man's attitude toward it.¹⁵⁷

The salvific purpose of Scripture, the Conservatives assert, "in no way conflicts with the fact that Scripture, in order to bring about this purpose, tells us a history unerringly and presents facts authoritatively."¹⁵⁸ For if Scripture used false, ancient world views in such genre as myth and legend, then such literary types could not possibly be said to have been limited to non-essential matters in Scripture but in likelihood could have included the proclamation of sin and grace, judgment and promise. This can be the only logical deduction if one affirms that the Holy Spirit inspired everything in Scripture. In view of this the Conservatives insist that the Scripture is inspired and inerrant

¹⁵⁵ Walther, "Walther's Foreword for Volume XIV of 'Lehre und Wehre,'" pp. 496-97.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Reuben C. Baerwald, "A Response to Some Critical Questions," GTM 40 (May 1969):303.

¹⁵⁸ ACDC, p. 55.

"not only in such statements as speak directly of Christ but also to such as may seem very remote (e.g., in the field of history, geography, and nature),"¹⁵⁹

The Moderates who insist that inerrancy refers only to the redemptive message of Scripture, in reality, make no distinction between the Bible and other Christian literature for the latter too could have inerrant statements about salvation although they may be filled with errors in reference to history, geography and scientific matters. Seeing the subtlety of such a view which the Moderates uphold, Professor Martin Franzmann wrote:

Inerrancy in historical or geographical matters . . . is a matter of great importance: for the Christ came, as the Revealer of the Father's grace and truth, in the flesh, in time and space, 'under Pontius Pilate'. . . . Inerrancy concerning the census of Augustus matters because God used that census to fulfill His promise concerning great David's greater Son. It matters Christologically.¹⁶⁰

He, moreover, contends that Christ confirmed the inerrancy of Scripture through His example of His use of it. He did not doubt the Old Testament but accepted and quoted it as factual. Peter himself denied the use of myth in the proclamation of the gospel and emphasized the fact that they were witnesses (2 Peter 1:16-18).¹⁶¹

Authority of Scripture

For Luther the Scripture is the sole authority for Christian faith and life. No other canon is to be invoked in these matters for Scripture

¹⁵⁹"Statement on Scripture," Lutheran Witness 78 (February 24, 1959):8.

¹⁶⁰Franzmann, Scripture and Interpretation, p. 7.

¹⁶¹Ibid., pp. 5-6.

is the sufficient criterion.¹⁶² The Formula of Concord states that Luther strongly stressed that "the Word of God alone should be and remain the only standard and rule of doctrine, to which the writings of man should be regarded as equal . . ."¹⁶³ Luther himself wrote: "In theology we must merely hear and believe and be convinced in our heart that God is truthful, no matter how absurd that which God says in his Word may seem to reason."¹⁶⁴ He reasoned that he would rather be deceived by God (if that were possible) than by men. His reason is that God can make amends but men can lead one to hell.¹⁶⁵ Of the difficulties and seeming discrepancies in Scriptures, Luther was willing to accept what the Scriptures say rather than make any negative judgment on Scriptures.¹⁶⁶ He was certain that there are no contradictions in Scripture.¹⁶⁷ He, however, maintained that when one finds two seeming contradictory statements in Scripture, both are to be held as true "for the Holy Spirit does not contradict Himself."¹⁶⁸ But in historical matters when secular writers disagree with Scripture, the witness of Scripture must be upheld.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶² A. Skevington Wood, Luther's Principles of Biblical Interpretation (London: The Tyndale Press, 1960), p. 22.

¹⁶³ Concordia Triglotta, FC, Thorough Declaration, Comprehensive Summary, 9.

¹⁶⁴ WA, 2nd ed., V, 456. Cf. WA XVIII, 840.

¹⁶⁵ LW, III, p. 305.

¹⁶⁶ Pieper, Christian Dogmatics I, pp. 281-82.

¹⁶⁷ Plass, What Luther Says, I, pp. 72-3.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁶⁹ Pieper, Christian Dogmatics I, p. 243.

The Lutheran Confessions make it clear that only the Word of God shall establish articles of faith.¹⁷⁰ This theological stance is repeated in various statements throughout the Lutheran Symbols: "We base our position on the Word of God as the eternal truth" (FC, SD, Summary, 13); "The Word of God is and should remain the sole rule and norm of all doctrine." (FC, SD, Summary, 9); "The Holy Scripture remains the only judge, rule, and norm according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong" (FC, Ep. Summary, 7); "The prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged" (FC, Ep, Summary, 1; FC, SD, Summary, 3). In further support for this doctrinal position the Lutheran Symbols use such formulas as "Scripture teaches (AC, XXIV, 28; Ap. XXIII, 11, FC, SD, I, 46; FC, SD, III, 30) and "it is written" (AC. XXIV, 26. XXVIII, 51; Ap. IV, 263; SA, III, viii, 1-2; III, xiii, 3; FC, SD, III, 20, 57; VI, 12; VIII, 5; X. 8, 11; XI, 7)

The Confessors firm affirmation of the authority of Scripture is well expressed when they wrote: "Wherever the Scriptures . . . give us clear, certain testimony, we shall (German sollen wir, i.e., we must) simply believe it and not argue" (FC, SD, VIII, 53). The Confessors pledged themselves to the Scriptures as the only true norm (FC, SD, Rule and Norm, 3).¹⁷¹ The Lutheran Confessors therefore justifiably could speak

¹⁷⁰ Concordia Triglotta, The Smalcald Articles, Part II, Art. II, 15.

¹⁷¹ For further examples from the Lutheran Confessions, cf. CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, p. 16.

of Scripture as the "eternal truth" (FC, SD, Rule and Norm, 13) and the "pure, infallible, and unalterable Word of God" (BC, The Preface, p. 8).

In affirming the authority of Scripture, the Reformers quoted it against the false teachings of the church fathers (Ap. XXIV, 94-95). The Confessors declared that even a regularly elected bishop should not be obeyed if he teach or command something contrary to Scripture (AC XXVIII 28). And in support of their doctrines they confidently proclaimed that "nothing [in their teaching] varies from the Scriptures" (AC, XXII, 1). They were convinced that their doctrines, being based on Scripture are to last forever (FC, SD, Rule and Norm, 10). They assert this because they believed that "everything in the Word of God is written down for us. . ." (FC, SD, XI, 12). Hence they accepted the word of Scripture even though in some points of doctrine it was unappealing to reason (BC, SD, VII, 45). Not only did the Reformers turn to the Scripture to support their doctrinal beliefs but they also used the Scripture in condemning the doctrines of their opponents (Ap. 9, XXIV, 94; AC XXII, 2; XXIII, 3; XXVIII, 43, Ap. II, 40; IV, 314; XVIII, 10; LC V, 45; FC, Ep. VII, 15; SD VII, 50; SD II, 87). They argued that it is rash to teach something not supported by the Scripture. (Ap. XII, 138). It was not, however, only the Lutheran Reformers who freely quoted Scripture either in defense of their teachings or in condemnation of their opponents' theology. The Roman Catholic theologians did the same. Both parties could do so because they all recognized the authority of Scripture.¹⁷² The only difference is

¹⁷²Holsten Fagerberg, A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions, 1529-1537, trans. Gene Lund (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), p. 15.

that the Roman theologians accepted tradition on par with the authority of Scripture.

The Lutheran Reformers stressed the fact that they accept no other authority in matters of doctrine save that which is in Scripture. They wrote:

Other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scriptures. Every single one of them should be received in no other way and no further than as witnesses to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved in post-apostolic times.¹⁷³

Thus, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession declares that the appropriate hermeneutical principle is to derive the meaning of the Biblical teaching from the texts themselves (BC, Ap. IV, 224). Neither the teachings of the church fathers, nor that of an angel should be accepted as authoritative doctrine (BC, SA, Part II, Art. II, 15). No corroborating evidence is needed to authenticate what Scripture states. It is its own authority because it is the Word of God. Lutheran dogmaticians call this teaching autopistos. The Bible is self-authenticating - anapodeiktos.¹⁷⁴ The Lutheran Symbols further declare that

other symbols and other writings are not judges like Holy Scriptures, but merely witnesses and expositions of the faith, setting forth how at various times the Holy Scriptures were understood in the church of God . . . (BC, FC, Ep. Rule and Norm, 8).

The Synodical fathers have hardly anything to add to the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions and of Luther concerning the authority of Scripture. C. F. W. Walther, F. Pieper, and F. Bente held to the

¹⁷³BC, FC, Ep. Rule and Norm. 2, pp. 464-65.

¹⁷⁴R. Preus, "Notes on the Inerrancy of Scripture," pp. 374-75.

Scripture as the final authority for theology.¹⁷⁵ This theological view is shared by A. L. Graebner.¹⁷⁶ F. Pieper wrote:

No extra Biblical material, philological or historical, may determine the exegesis that holds particularly with regard to historical circumstances. . . . All historical background necessary for the correct understanding of Scripture is given in Scripture itself.¹⁷⁷

Dr. Martin Franzmann approvingly quoted Selnecker who said:

"When we read Scripture, we must believe; when we read the writings of others, we are free to pass judgment upon them."¹⁷⁸

Ludwig Fuerbringer insisted that the complete harmony of Scripture must be accepted a priori on the basis of its divine origin. For this reason there is no inconsistency, contradiction and error in it. It is perfectly authoritative.¹⁷⁹ The perfect harmony of Scripture lies on the fact that the Holy Ghost is conceived as the author of the whole Scripture and that He can neither err nor contradict Himself. Therefore, one is assured that passages in either Old or New Testament when treating of the same subject cannot but agree.¹⁸⁰ If the perfect harmony of Scripture is not affirmed a priori, then it cannot be the source and

¹⁷⁵CTCR, Report on Dissent From A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles and Other Doctrinal Resolutions of LCMS (St. Louis: n.p., September 1974), pp. 18-19.

¹⁷⁶A. L. Graebner, Outlines of Doctrinal Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), p. 8-9.

¹⁷⁷Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, I, p. 101.

¹⁷⁸Martin Franzmann, "Seven Theses on Reformation Hermeneutics," CTM 40 (April 1969):245.

¹⁷⁹Fuerbringer, Theological Hermeneutics, an Outline for the Classroom, p. 14.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., p. 15.

rule of all doctrine.¹⁸¹ The late and well-known exegete William Arndt states the same conviction.¹⁸²

In agreement with the Synodical church fathers Dr. Ralph Bohlmann argues that extracanonical materials cannot determine the exegesis of Scripture in opposition to the Biblical witness.¹⁸³ Such literature can only be used ministerially "and not to pass judgment on the veracity of biblical accounts."¹⁸⁴

When there are seeming contradictions in Scripture, Ludwig Fuerbringer urged that they be accepted and that human reason should not be used to harmonize them by judging a portion of Scripture.¹⁸⁵ One is to hold human judgment in abeyance when faced with exegetical difficulties.¹⁸⁶ One is not obligated to always harmonize Scripture with human reason.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Arndt, "The Interpretation of Difficult Bible Passages," p. 183.

¹⁸³ Ralph Bohlmann, "Confessional Biblical Interpretation: Some Basic Principles," in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 197.

¹⁸⁴ David Lumpp, "Confessional Subscription in a Critical Age," Concordia Student Journal 3 (Winter, 1979-1980):12.

¹⁸⁵ Fuerbringer, Theological Hermeneutics, an Outline for the Classroom, p. 20.

¹⁸⁶ Robert Preus, "Walther and the Scriptures," p. 687. Cf. Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, I, p. 242 and Eugene F. Klug, "A Review Article: The End of the Historical-Critical Method," The Springfielder 38 (March 1975):299.

¹⁸⁷ CTCR, Revision of the Study Document on Revelation, Inspiration, and Inerrancy (St. Louis: n.p., n.d.), p. 4.

Luther is convinced that everything in Scripture is important. One word of God, for him, is just as important as another for the Holy Spirit speaks no useless syllable or word.¹⁸⁸

Like Luther, the doctrine of the total authority of Scripture in all matters is so well entrenched in the minds of the Synodical church fathers like Walther. He was convinced that the scientific matters mentioned in Scripture are inerrant so much so that he could say,

Though science may consider the results of its research as absolutely certain truths, we do not regard science, but Scripture as infallible. If the results of scientific research contradict the clear Scriptures, we are a priori certain that they are nothing but positive error, even though we are not able to prove them erroneous except by an appeal to the Scriptures.¹⁸⁹

Luther even said that the word order as presented in Scripture should be adhered to unless it contradicts an article of faith.¹⁹⁰

Gospel and Scripture

The authority, and for that matter also the inspiration and inerrancy, of Scripture is not limited to the Gospel. Such a viewpoint is unwarranted by Scripture according to the Conservatives. Everything in Scripture is significant and has a purpose even if that intention does not lead to the salvation of man. 2 Timothy 3:16 makes it clear that "All Scripture is profitable . . ." (emphasis mine). Luther asserts that everything in Scripture has to do with Christ. A similar thought

¹⁸⁸ Otto Hof, "Luther's Exegetical Principle of the Analogy of Faith," CTM 38 (April 1968):253-54 and Plass, What Luther Says, I, pp. 63, 65.

¹⁸⁹ R. Preus, "Walther and the Scriptures," p. 684.

¹⁹⁰ LW, 40, 157.

was expressed by St. Paul when he wrote: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).¹⁹¹ Therefore, every question about the Scripture is a gospel question because the church preserved the Scripture for the sake of the Gospel. The Gospel helps us understand the Scripture. However, the precise form and expression of this Gospel can only come from the Scripture for otherwise it becomes another gospel and cannot serve as the key to open the Bible for us. This is why the Scripture is called the norm for the sake of the Gospel.¹⁹²

The CTCR calls the Gospel the summary taken from the source which is the Scripture.¹⁹³ A non-authoritative and errant source casts doubt on the authority and inerrancy of the summary, that is, the Gospel. For this reason Lutherans appeal to the Scripture not to prove the Gospel but to show that the Gospel which they proclaim comes from the Bible. This is how the Lutheran Confessors used the Scripture.¹⁹⁴ There is no Gospel apart from Scripture. One cannot have the Gospel without the Scripture and vice-versa. There is no free floating, esoteric gospel. The Christian Gospel is the Gospel from the Scripture. A Gospel divorced from Scripture is a form of Enthusiasm.¹⁹⁵ The Lutheran Confessors used

¹⁹¹Engelder, "Holy Scripture or Christ?," pp. 493-94.

¹⁹²CTCR, Gospel and Scripture, p. 14.

¹⁹³Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁹⁴Cf. Ap. IV.

¹⁹⁵Ralph Bohlmann and Robert Bertram, "The Holy Scriptures and The Gospel, Cassette Tape 73-20, Part I (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, n.d.).

Scriptures to define what they meant by the Gospel or justification.

They wrote: "According to the usage of Scripture the word 'justify' means in this article 'absolve,' that is, pronounce free from sin." (BC, FC, Ep. art. III, 7). So Herbert J. A. Bouman, himself a Moderate, writes:

If the Gospel was to be purified and preserved unabridged, it had to be oriented exclusively to the prophetic and apostolic writings, the Word of God, the 'clear Scripture of the Holy Spirit.'¹⁹⁶

Like Luther, the Conservatives hold to a "domino" theory. In support of this "domino" theory, they approvingly quote Luther who said,

In Philosophy a very small error in the beginning is very serious in the end. So also in theology, a very little error, overturns the whole doctrine. . . . Doctrine is like a mathematical point. It cannot be divided, that is, you cannot take away from it or add to it. . . . Therefore, doctrine must be one continual round golden ring in which there is no break; if even the least break occurs, the circle is no longer perfect (WA, 40, II, 46ff.)¹⁹⁷

He applied the same method of argument against Erasmus when he contended that a false anthropology threatens the Gospel.¹⁹⁸ This circular argument does not mean, however, that one needs first to have faith in the Scripture before faith in Christ. Rather, faith in Christ leads to faith in the whole Scripture.¹⁹⁹ However, one cannot divorce Christ from Scripture. One cannot have an unreserved faith in the Gospel with a qualified faith in the Scripture for only the Scripture has the first written and inerrant witness to the Gospel.

¹⁹⁶ Herbert J. A. Bouman, "Some Thoughts on the Theological Pre-suppositions for a Lutheran Approach to the Scriptures," Aspects of Biblical Hermeneutics: CTM Occasional Papers, No. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 15.

¹⁹⁷ ACDE, p. 57.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ CTCR, The Inspiration of Scripture, pp. 16-17.

Hermeneutical Principles

Since the entire Holy Scripture is divinely inspired, it implies, the Conservatives assert, that there is total harmony in all articles of faith found in it. This hermeneutical principle is known as the analogy of faith. By this principle is also meant that all the articles of faith are clearly expounded in Scripture and that no exposition of any part of Scripture must contradict any of the articles of faith.²⁰⁰ This analogy of faith was used by the Reformers for interpreting Scripture.²⁰¹ The sum total of all articles of faith expounded in the clear passages of Scripture constitutes the 'analogy' or the 'rule of faith.' This is how Luther and the later Lutheran theologians understood the principle "analogy of faith."²⁰² Professor Martin Flor's study on the concept of analogia fidei sustains this explanation of what is meant by analogy of faith.²⁰³

Francis Pieper gave an elaborate explanation of the meaning of the principle of analogy of faith. First, he said, this refers to the clear Scripture itself. Second, these clear passages provide a clear exposition of individual doctrines found in Scripture. Third, a summary of these Scriptural doctrines constitute the analogy or rule of faith.

²⁰⁰Fuerbringer, Theological Hermeneutics, an Outline for the Classroom, p. 19.

²⁰¹Concordia Triglotta, Ap. XXVII, 60.

²⁰²Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, I, p. 361.

²⁰³Flor, "The Free Conferences of 1903-1906 and the Concept of Analogia Fidei," pp. 223, 225.

Fourth, no doctrine which contradicts this rule of faith is to be considered biblical. And lastly,

Though the article of justification is the central article of Christian doctrine, the other articles of faith dare not be construed from the article of justification, but only from those Scripture passages which deal with the individual doctrines.²⁰⁴

From the above quotation one can see that the manner in which the Moderates use Gospel-reductionism is rejected by Pieper. Fuerbringer contended that even the sensus literae of Scripture should be abandoned when it contradicts the analogy of faith.²⁰⁵ This principle of the analogy of faith is said to have been followed in the biblical interpretation found in the Lutheran Confessions.²⁰⁶

The principle of the analogy of faith is closely related to the hermeneutical axiom Scripture interprets Scripture. This means that the certain and clear passages of Scripture are to determine the meaning of a text. In rejecting Gospel-reductionism the document "Statement on Scripture" adopted at the 1958 Synodical Conference Convention categorically states that no "theological system or dogmatical summary of Bible

²⁰⁴ Francis Pieper, "Gebrauch und Missbrauch der Analogie des Glaubens," Lehre und Wehre 50 (January 1904):27. (Translation by Martin W. Flor in "The Free Conferences of 1903-1906 and the Concept of Analogia Fidei," CTM 40 (April 1969):224-25. Cf. John F. Johnson, "Analogia Fidei as Hermeneutical Principle," The Springfielder 36 (March 1973):253.

²⁰⁵ Fuerbringer, Theological Hermeneutics, an Outline for the Classroom, p. 20.

²⁰⁶ C. F. W. Walther, "Why Should Our Pastors, Teachers and Professors Subscribe Unconditionally to the Symbolical Writings of Our Church," CTM 18 (April 1947):242, 246.

doctrine is to determine the interpretation of Scripture."²⁰⁷ Not only does Scripture interpret Scripture, but that "Scripture alone is to interpret Scripture."²⁰⁸

Professor Martin Franzmann argues that the term "analogy of faith" for Luther means the whole of Scripture. This argument is supported by the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article 13, which explains regulam as that 'scripturas certas et claras.'²⁰⁹ Therefore an exposition of a word or an entire passage of the Bible must agree with the context.²¹⁰ This is part of what is meant by the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. But when one speaks of the context of Scripture, Apology IV and other portions of the Lutheran Symbols are not simply referring to the spatial or immediate geographical context, but more important, to a theological context - the Christological interpretation of the whole of Scripture. One sees the application of this principle in the interpretation of various Biblical passages in Apology IV, 152-281 of the Book of Concord.

The Lutheran Confessions are filled with examples of Scripture interpreting Scripture (BC, Ap. XII, par. 44, p. 187; IV, pars. 256-57,

²⁰⁷Statements On Scripture (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Print Shop, 1969), p. 485.

²⁰⁸Ibid. Emphasis mine.

²⁰⁹Franzmann, "Essays in Hermeneutics," pp. 744-45.

²¹⁰Fuerbringer, Theological Hermeneutics, an Outline for the Classroom, p. 14. Cf. Meyer, "Walther's Theology of the Word," p. 276 and Ralph Bohlmann, Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), pp. 34, 35.

p. 144; pars. 272-273, p. 148; FC, SD II, pars. 9-10, pp. 521-22; par. 26, p. 526; VIII, par. 70, pp. 604-05). This principle means that no statement of Scripture must contradict the general sense of Scripture. And so when the fathers attempted to explain any portion of Scripture, they used other passages of Scripture to bring light to the text they were studying. This was Luther's reason in defense of the principle Scripture interprets Scripture.²¹¹

In affirming the above principle, one must necessarily affirm that the New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament is correct, otherwise, the hermeneutical principle of the unity of Scripture, the analogy of faith, the singular authorship of Scripture by the Holy Spirit, and so forth, must of necessity be denied.

Scripture interprets Scripture also implies that the Biblical text can have only one meaning and not a layer of accumulated meanings; that it does not contradict itself and that it can therefore serve as the judge, rule and norm for Christian doctrines and practices.

It was axiomatic for Luther and the Confessors to interpret the text of Scripture according to its literal sense unless Scripture itself clearly implies otherwise.²¹² Luther himself writes,

. . . Let this be our conviction: that no 'implication' or 'figure' may be allowed to exist in any passage of Scripture unless such be required by some obvious feature of the words and the absurdity of their plain sense, as offending against an article of faith. Everywhere we should stick to just the simple natural meaning of the words,

²¹¹Hof, "Luther's Exegetical Principle of the Analogy of Faith," p. 243.

²¹²Bohlmann, "Confessional Biblical Interpretation: Some Basic Principles," p. 195. Cf. Fuerbringer, Theological Hermeneutics, an Outline for the Classroom, pp. 10, 12.

as yielded by the rules of grammar and the habits of speech that God has created among men.²¹³

The sensus literalis unus est principle does not mean that the exegete should simply dispense with the etymology of the word. This task is important. But this should be used to help understand the usus loquendi.²¹⁴ A word may gain a new usus loquendi simply because a concept has

never been stated in any previous writing and the best way to describe it is to use a familiar word or term with an idea closer to the new concept.²¹⁵ Therefore

we must grant that there is often a sensus plenior in Scripture pericopes in the sense of I Peter 1:10-12. That is to say, the writer of Scripture is not in every respect a child of his time, conditioned by his own cultural milieu, but he often writes for a later age. . . . Sensus litteralis Scripturae unicus does not imply that the sacred writer understands the full divine implication of all his words.²¹⁶

Apology IV, 224 of the Book of Concord in applying this principle spoke of deriving "the meaning (not meanings) from the texts themselves" (emphasis mine). The Biblical texts are to be understood literally unless Scripture itself through parallel passages and the analogy or rule of faith demands otherwise.²¹⁷

²¹³Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1957), p. 191. Cf. LN, 40, 157.

²¹⁴Fuerbringer, Theological Hermeneutics, an Outline for the Classroom, p. 9.

²¹⁵Ibid., p. 11.

²¹⁶R. Preus, "Notes on the Inerrancy of Scripture," p. 373.

²¹⁷Victor E. Mennicke, "Bible Interpretation," The Abiding Word, Vol. II (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 56.

Although the Lutheran Confessors rightly saw the res of Scripture to be Christ, it did not use this Christocentric thrust over and above the principle of sola Scriptura. The Scripture being equated with the Word of God remained the sole judge, rule and norm. In reenforcing this theological position they gave the example of Abraham's faith in God's Word. He obeyed God's Word to sacrifice Isaac even though such an action was contrary "not only to reason and to divine and natural law but also to the eminent article of faith concerning the promised seed, Christ!"²¹⁸ Here one sees that the normative character of Scripture is due to the fact that it is God's Word whether that word be Law or Gospel contrary to the Moderates' stance which sees the normative character of the Scripture solely in the Gospel.²¹⁹

The Conservatives' Exegeses of Scriptures

It is without question that Luther accepted the literal account of the creation, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the historicity of Adam and Eve, and other matters which are rejected by historical

²¹⁸BC, FC, SD, VII, 46. Rejecting Gospel-reductionism, the Conservatives affirmed sola Scriptura. Cf. "A Statement on Scripture Adopted by the Joint Committee of The Synodical Conference," p. 138.

²¹⁹David W. Lotz, "An Appraisal of the Theological Crisis in the Missouri Synod," in For the Sake of the Gospel: A Historical Reader Concerning the People and Events Which Have Created Semtex, ed. C. R. Knight (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary in Exile, Student Coordinating Committee, 1974), pp. 21-22.

critics. Luther rejected the argument that Moses spoke allegorically or figuratively.²²⁰

The Lutheran Confessions nowhere questioned the facticity of the Biblical witness to the creation, the historicity of the persons of Adam and Eve, and the account of the Old Testament Fall into sin.²²¹ The Lutheran Symbols are replete with statements concerning the historicity of Adam and Eve and of the account of the Fall.²²² This conviction included the affirmation of the devil's method in tempting Adam and Eve.²²³ The Lutheran Confessions accepted the authorship attributed by Scriptures to the book. So it used such expressions as "Daniel says" (BC, Ap. XXIII, 25); "Jonah says" (BC, Ap. IV, 330); "Jeremiah also says," (BC, AC, XXV, 8); "David attests to this" (BC, Ap. XII, 150); "as King Solomon teaches" (BC, LC, Commandments, 252), and "in the words of Ezekiel" (BC, Ap. XXII, 17). The persons mentioned are considered not only as historical personalities but also the inspired writers of the book attributed to them.²²⁴ The Conservatives emphasized the fact that Paul in Romans 5:12-14 believed the historicity of Adam who brought sin

²²⁰ LW, I, pp. 5, 30. Cf. Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, I, p. 243.

²²¹ Concordia Triglotta, FC, Thorough Declaration, I, 26-29. Cf. BC, FC, SD, I, 9, V, 23.

²²² BC, AC, II, 1; Ap. II, 2; FC, Ep, I, 2, 4; II, 1; FC, SD, I, 11, 27-28.

²²³ BC, FC, SD, I, 7, 42; SA, Part III, Art. VIII, 5.

²²⁴ Arthur F. Graudin, "The Lutheran Confessions and the Old Testament," Concordia Journal 4 (July 1978):164.

into the world in the same manner that he accepted the historicity of Jesus who brought righteousness.²²⁵

The Synodical exegetes of the past, following Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, affirmed the historicity of the various accounts and events in the Old Testament. George Stoeckhardt acknowledged the veracity of the creation story, the fall of Adam and Eve, the occurrence of the Flood, the Crossing of the Red Sea and the various Messianic promises given to the patriarchs.²²⁶ Ludwig Ernest Fuerbringer, though unknowingly, had anticipated the very position the Moderates today hold regarding the Book of Jonah. He emphasized that the Book of Jonah

is not to be regarded as fiction, or as a didactic parable, or an allegory, or a vision, or an old and richly embellished legend, or a myth (the fish motif), or a dream of the prophet. Over against all these and similar misinterpretations we must accept it and the miracles it records as a true story.²²⁷

He likewise confessed that Jonah is a historical person and is the author of the book attributed to him.²²⁸ Professor Fuerbringer also accepted the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the historicity of the person and events related in the Book of Job and the unity of the whole Book of Isaiah.²²⁹

²²⁵CTCR, Report on Dissent From A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles and Other Doctrinal Resolutions of LCMS (St. Louis, n. p., September 1974), p. 21.

²²⁶George Stoeckhardt, The Biblical History of the Old Testament, trans. Arthur E. Beck (Swanville, Minn.: n.p., 1969), passim.

²²⁷Ludwig Fuerbringer, Introduction to the Old Testament (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1925), p. 98.

²²⁸Ibid., p. 97.

²²⁹Ibid., pp. 19, 54, 74-76 passim.

Present-day Conservatives more or less repeat the same theological position.²³⁰ They also assert that Christ's testimonies concerning the Old Testament authorships and accounts should be affirmed as correct.²³¹ The CTCR declares that even though the four gospels are confessions written as history, this by no means is an argument against the facticity of the historical accounts presented in these confessions. Such a reasoning is neither rational nor compatible with the Lutheran Symbols' attitude toward the Word of God.²³²

The Conservatives' theological position towards Scripture is nothing less than a reaffirmation of the position contained in the Brief Statement adopted by the Synodical Convention in 1932. Against the constant attack from several Moderate sectors, this document had been continually sustained by the Synodical conventions of 1941, 1947, and 1956 "as correctly presenting the doctrine of the Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions."²³³ The substance of the Brief Statement was again upheld in the 1959 Synodical Convention.²³⁴ In countering the Moderates'

²³⁰Cf. Rudolph Gehle, "Outline for a History of the Old Testament Canon," CTM 17 (November 1946):803; David P. Scaer, "The Problems of Inerrancy and Historicity in Connection with Genesis 1-3," Concordia Theological Quarterly 41 (January 1977):23 and "A Statement on Scripture Adopted by the Joint Committee of the Synodical Conference," pp. 138-39.

²³¹CTCR, The Inspiration of Scripture, p. 9.

²³²Idem, Gospel and Scripture, p. 12.

²³³Reports and Memorials: 45th Regular Convention - The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), pp. 272-77.

²³⁴Arthur Repp, "The Binding Nature of Synodical Resolutions for a Pastor or Professor of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod," CTM 42 (March 1971):157-58.

questioning concerning the authority of Scripture in geographic, cosmological, scientific and historical matters, the Conservatives replied: "What the Moderate Caucus seems to be rejecting . . . is precisely the position of the Brief Statement of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod."²³⁵ The Conservatives are justified in asserting the theological stance of the Brief Statement for their views with regard to Scripture.

The Brief Statement was indeed rescinded in the 1962 Synodical Convention but only on the basis of its unconstitutionality and not for its doctrinal contents. The orthodoxy of its statements concerning Scripture was not questioned. What was questioned was the legality of the document as a confessional symbol. The 1962 Synodical Convention therefore rescinded not only the Brief Statement but all other previous documents such as the Thirteen Theses on Election and Conversion and the 1950 and 1956 Common Confessions Part I and Part II respectively. The Common Confession, a document agreed upon by both LC-MS and ALC has the same doctrinal position as the Brief Statement. Part of the 1962 Synodical resolution which abrogated the Brief Statement reads as follows:

Whereas, Without prejudice to the doctrinal content of any [all the confessional documents mentioned above] of these statements, the Synod in convention assembled in 1962 has declared Resolution 9 of Committee 3 of the 1959 synodical convention to be unconstitutional. . . . Whereas, Synodically adopted doctrinal statements, such as those referred to in the introduction of this resolution, express the conviction of fathers and brethren with whom all members of the Synod are united in their obedience to the Scriptures and the Confessions; therefore be it Resolved, That the Synod beseech all its members by the mercies of God to honor and uphold the doctrinal content of these synodically adopted statements.²³⁶

²³⁵ ACDC, p. 54.

²³⁶ Proceedings of the Forty-Fifth Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Cleveland, Ohio, 1962 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), pp. 105-06.

The Synod secretary's notation on Dr. Behnken's remarks make the point further clear. He wrote:

Dr. Behnken then asked for the privilege of making a statement. He hoped that the Synod would realize that it had acted here only on a constitutional question and that this action did not indicate that the Synod is not in accord with the Brief Statement, the Statement on Scripture, and the Common Confession.²³⁷

Christ and the Scripture

The Conservatives affirm the traditional Lutheran teaching that all Scripture bears witness to Christ.²³⁸ In support of this position they often quote John 5:39 where Christ said, "You search the Scriptures for they are they which testify of me."

The above-mentioned theological point of view is simply a repetition of Luther's understanding of the whole Scripture. He declared: "It is beyond a doubt that the entire Scripture points to Christ alone."²³⁹ He further asserted that not only is Christ the center of Scriptures but that all stories in Holy Scripture have to do with Christ.²⁴⁰ He saw the promise of the Gospel right after the Fall. Hence, he considers Genesis 3:15 as a Protoevangel.²⁴¹ In fact he said that Adam believed in Christ.²⁴² Luther saw many passages in the Old Testament as

²³⁷Ibid., pp. 54-55.

²³⁸CTCR, Report on Dissent From A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles and Other Doctrinal Resolutions of LCMS, p. 20.

²³⁹Plass, What Luther Says, I, p. 70.

²⁴⁰Engelder, "Holy Scripture or Christ?," p. 494.

²⁴¹LM, 45, 201, 203.

²⁴²Carter, "Luther As Exegete," p. 524.

prophesying concerning the Messiah. Such passages are, besides Genesis 3:15, Genesis 22:18 which spoke of the promised blessing on Abraham's seed; Genesis 4:1 where Eve believed she had received the promised son from God; Genesis 49:10 the Messianic prophecy regarding Judah; Deuteronomy 18:15, 18 where the promised prophet like unto Moses was seen as predictive of the coming Christ. He also saw christological promises in Exodus 33:18-19; 34:5-6; Isaiah 9:6; 51:4-6; 60:19-20 and in Daniel 9:27; and 7:13-14. In these latter passages he saw the Christological doctrine concerning the two natures of Christ.²⁴³ Luther therefore without reservation can say that Abraham and the patriarchs were justified by faith in Christ.²⁴⁴ He believed in the virgin birth of Jesus and considered it an article of faith.²⁴⁵ He also argued that Matthew and Luke's interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 referring to the virgin birth is to be believed more than the whole world and even more than a different interpretation given by an angel.²⁴⁶

In many cases, the Lutheran Confessions merely repeat Luther's Christological viewpoints of the Scripture. Genesis 3:15, for example, is seen as the first Messianic prophecy. The Confessors declared:

The descendants of the holy patriarchs, like the patriarchs themselves . . . also revived their courage and comforted themselves with the proclamation²⁴⁷ of the woman's seed, who would bruise the serpent's head . . .

²⁴³Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 234.

²⁴⁴LW 26, 239-40, 244; Cf. LW 2, 261.

²⁴⁵WA, 11:319, 320; Cf. WA, 6:510 and WA, 40, III:656

²⁴⁶LW 45, 206-08.

²⁴⁷BC, FC, SD, V, 23.

They also applied the principle that the Old Testament must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament. For this reason they accepted without doubt St. Paul's interpretation of Genesis 15:6 in Galatians 4:16 as Messianic.²⁴⁸ Many passages in the Book of Isaiah were understood by the Confessors as Messianic. These are Isaiah 11:2; 53:5, 6, 10, 11; and 61:1.²⁴⁹ Psalms 68 and 93 were also considered Messianic.²⁵⁰ The Apology had no problem seeing the whole Old Testament testifying to Christ. It says,

The promise is repeated continually throughout Scripture; first it was given to Adam, later to the patriarchs, then illumined by the prophets, and finally proclaimed and revealed by Christ among the Jews, and spread by the apostles throughout the world.²⁵¹

It is for this reason that the Formula of Concord can say that the distinction of Law and Gospel in the Word of God is inclusive of the entire Scripture including the writings of the Holy Prophets so that they can be rightly explained and understood.²⁵²

The teachings of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions with regard to Scripture are echoed by the theologians of Missouri Synod. The Statement on Scripture adopted at the 1959 Synodical Convention clearly states:

All Scripture is written because of Christ and has a connection with the revelation of God in Christ, some passages directly, some more remotely. Every word of Scripture therefore is an organic part of the Scripture's witness to Christ.²⁵³

²⁴⁸BC, FC, SD, III, 33.

²⁴⁹BC, FC, SD, VIII, 72-73; Ap. IV, 101; SA, Part II, Art. 1, 1-3, 5; Ap. XXIV, 55, 23.

²⁵⁰BC, Ap. IV, 139 and FC, SD, VIII, 27.

²⁵¹BC, Ap. XII, 53.

²⁵²BC, FC, SD, V, I.

²⁵³"Statement on Scripture," Lutheran Witness 78 (February 24, 1959):

When the Conservatives assert that the total focal point of Scripture is Christ, they mean to include the geographical, historical, and scientific data even though these pose seemingly insurmountable problems in relating these matters to the Scriptural witness to Christ.²⁵⁴ In conformity with Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, F. Pieper explained Genesis 3:15 as the Protoevangelium.²⁵⁵ Together with George Stoeckhardt they affirmed the Pauline interpretation of Galatians 3:16 where the promised seed to Abraham is understood as a reference to Christ.²⁵⁶ The Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 is also interpreted by Pieper to refer to Christ.²⁵⁷ Professor Raymond Surburg contends that Psalms 2, 8, 16, 40, 45, 69, 110 and 118 have traditionally been accepted as Messianic in the Lutheran Church.²⁵⁸

The late Professor Martin H. Franzmann defends the Pauline interpretation in Galatians 3:16 of Genesis 15:6. He said that the other

²⁵⁴Walter R. Roehrs, "Essays on the Inspiration of Scripture: Inspiration and Authority," CTM 25 (October 1954):750.

²⁵⁵Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, I, p. 193.

²⁵⁶Ibid., p. 221

²⁵⁷Ibid., p. 300.

²⁵⁸Raymond F. Surburg, "Form Criticism and Its Implications for the Interpretation of the Old Testament," A Project in Biblical Hermeneutics, ed. Richard Jungkuntz (St. Louis: CTCR, 1969), p. 113. Professor Ludwig Ernest Fuerbringer listed the following Old Testament passages as Messianic: Genesis 3:15, 12:1-3, 49:8-12; Numbers 24:15-24; Deuteronomy 18:15-19; 2 Samuel 7:12-16, 23:1-7; Job 19:25-27; Proverbs 8:22-31; Joel 2:28-32; Hos. 1:10-2:1, 2:19-20; Amos 9:11, 12, Micah 5:1-3; Jeremiah 23:5-6, 33:14-16; Daniel 9:24-27; Ezekiel 34:11-16, 23:24; Daniel 7:13-14; Haggai 2:6-9; Zechariah 6:12-13, 9:9-10, 11:12-13; Mal. 3:1-6. Fuerbringer, Exegesis of Messianic Prophecies, Table of Contents.

references in Genesis to the same subject (Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 17:7; 22:18; 24:7) used a singular collective when speaking of Abraham's descendants "and that, too, in a highly Christological context."²⁵⁹ Concerning the virgin birth of Jesus, the Brief Statement explicitly upholds the doctrine.²⁶⁰

The Conservatives' Views on Women's Ordination

The Missouri Synod prohibits the ordination of women in the sense of licensing them to function in the public ministry of preaching and administering the sacraments.²⁶¹ The Pauline injunctions found in 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 have been used by the theologians of the Synod against women's holding the office of public ministry.²⁶² This does not mean, however, that women cannot hold other offices within the church such as in a teaching position. Ordination itself is an adiaphoron. However, ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament is not. Moreover, such a function has been and is reserved for men.²⁶³

²⁵⁹Martin H. Franzmann, "Essays on the Inspiration of Scripture: The New Testament View of Inspiration," CTM 25 (October 1954):745.

²⁶⁰"Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod," p. 403.

²⁶¹CTCR, Woman Suffrage In The Church (St. Louis: n.p., n.d.), p. 6.

²⁶²John T. Mueller, "St. Paul and Woman's Status," CTM 9 (January 1938):16; P. E. Kretzmann, "The Position of the Christian Woman, Especially as Worker in the Church," CTM 1 (May 1930):352 and CTCR, Woman Suffrage In The Church, p. 6.

²⁶³CTCR, The Ministry In Its Relation To The Christian Church (St. Louis: n.p., 1973), p. 10.

Another reason given against women being ordained into the public ministry of Word and Sacrament is based on the Scriptural teaching concerning the order of creation.²⁶⁴

Although a Moderate, Richard John Neuhaus agrees that the Moderates' exegesis of Galatians 3:27-28 is not tenable.²⁶⁵ In reviewing Stephen Clark's book An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences, Neuhaus concurs that the traditional teaching concerning the women's role in the church is based on Scriptural and theological considerations. In doing so, he debunks one of the presuppositions of historical criticism. He writes:

It is therefore somewhat presumptuous for us to attribute the belief of teachers over the centuries to 'cultural conditioning' and hence not authoritative; as though our attitudes are not culturally conditioned, or are conditioned by a superior culture. Not only is it presumptuous, such reductionism trivializes and finally makes impossible any notion of distinctive Christian truth claims.²⁶⁶

Neuhaus, moreover, noted Clark's observation "that in 1951 all but one of all those teaching New Testament in Swedish universities" declared in a statement that the ordination of women was contrary to the New Testament. Twenty-five years later no New Testament professor in a Swedish university endorses that statement.²⁶⁷ Neuhaus then says: "The only explanation is that the climate of opinion has changed and exegetes have conformed to the climate."²⁶⁸ He also has some critical judgment

²⁶⁴CTCR, Woman Suffrage in the Church, p. 6.

²⁶⁵Richard John Neuhaus, "A Consideration of the Question of the Ordination of Women," The Cresset 44 (March 1981):25.

²⁶⁶Ibid., p. 26

²⁶⁷Ibid.

²⁶⁸Ibid., p. 26.

concerning Christian Churches, especially Lutheran churches in the U. S., which have ordained women. He writes:

I think it is true that the churches that have decided to ordain women to the priesthood did so in a way that violated any plausible understanding of the development of Christian doctrine. As some Lutheran leaders in the ALC and LCA candidly admit, it was for them chiefly a matter of 'an idea whose time had come' . . . and of changing a few minor phrases in bylaws and the such. And for the AEIC it was merely a question of going along with the Lutheran majority in North America.²⁶⁹

Conclusions

We have shown that Luther, and the Lutheran Confessions, and the Synodical fathers' stance on the various controverted theological issues differ a great deal from the Moderate theologians. The chasm between both parties' approaches toward Scripture can be laid in the Moderates' use of historical criticism and Gospel-reductionism. In this chapter one inevitably notices the Conservatives' rejection of historical criticism and Gospel-reductionism.

Contrary to the Moderates' allegation, the Conservative position agrees with Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. Moreover, ample proofs have been presented to show that the Synodical fathers were faithful to the Lutheran Confessions. Even a number of Moderates have conceded that this is so. The same can be said of the Synodical fathers' understanding of Scripture and that of Luther.

The Lutheran Confessions clearly reject the presuppositions and exegetical conclusions of the historical-critical method by affirming the plenary inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the entire Scripture.

²⁶⁹Ibid., p. 29.

Even though the Moderate theologians continue to employ most of the traditional theological terminologies of the Lutheran Confessions and the Synod, they have given these new meanings. This technique makes their theology subtle and thus more dangerous especially to the unwary lay people.

The major theological differences in the two factions' views and interpretations of Scripture are particularly evident in the areas of inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the Bible. This is where historical criticism hits hardest the Lutheran Church's understanding of Scripture.

CHAPTER V

A CRITICISM OF THE MODERATES' APPROACH TOWARD SCRIPTURES

Historical Criticism Is Not A Neutral Method

The historical-critical method has been asserted by the Moderates to be a neutral method.¹ It is in fact argued that it can be employed either by a Christian or even by one who is hostile to Christianity,² But the arguments for its neutrality are negated by the proponents of the technique when they insist on extracting from the methodology its original presuppositions and imposing their Lutheran presuppositions upon it. Contrary to what they assert, and perhaps unconsciously, the Moderates actually admit the partiality of historical criticism when they declared:

Our ultimate evaluation of the results obtained by this critical methodology arises not from the methodology itself but from our presuppositions, which are those of faith in God through Christ rather than those of pure naturalism, skepticism, or any other world view.³

¹Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. Faithful To Our Calling, Faithful To Our Lord (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, January 1973), p. 41. (Hereafter cited as FCFL).

²Lutheran Council in the United States of America. Studies: The Function of Doctrine and Theology in Light of the Unity of the Church (New York: n.p., 1978), p. 79. (Hereafter cited as LCUSA; FODT)

³Report of The Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1976), p. 72. (Hereafter cited as ACDC).

For this reason, the Conservatives say

the claim that a method needs any modification of presuppositions or the addition of controls to make it a viable option for Christian exegetes indicates that such a method is not neutral per se.⁴

Hans-Joachim Kraus, professor of Old Testament at the University of Hamburg, makes it emphatically clear that the practitioners of the historical-critical method have erroneously believed that they have found an objective method of exegesis. The truth of the matter is that they have superimposed upon the method the assumptions resulting from the philosophy of the enlightenment, romanticism and idealism.⁵

It is without basis when one Moderate defined "the historical-critical method [as] nothing other than historical inquiry."⁶ Gerhard Ebeling refutes this reasoning by saying that

historical criticism is more than lively historical interest. Even the early and medieval churches concerned themselves more or less with history and the study of its sources. . . . It was not what we know today as the critical historical method. For the latter is not concerned with the greatest possible refinement of the philological methods, but with subjecting the tradition to critical examination on the basis of new principles of thought. . . . It is . . . by its very nature bound up with criticism of content.⁷

Arguing against the supposed neutrality of the technique, Martin Franzmann says that the method passes a

⁴Ibid., p. 80.

⁵Manfred Roensch, "A Critical Investigation of the So-Called Historical-Critical Method in the Interpretation of Holy Scripture," trans. by Martin Naumann, The Springfielder 28 (Spring 1964):33-34.

⁶Walter E. Bauer, "Some Observations On History, Historicity, and the Historical-Critical Method," The Cresset 40 (September/October 1977): 24.

⁷Gerhard Ebeling, Word and Faith, trans. by James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 22.

value judgment on the historical substance of revelation. . . . The historical method assigns to the interpreter the capacity and the authority to distinguish between "the facts which matter and the facts which don't." According to the historical-critical method those facts which, in the interpreter's judgment, do not count, may be marked by him as non-factual embellishments upon the facts or as a merely symbolical-mythical enunciation of a theological truth.⁸

The non-neutrality of the historical-critical method is exposed by its propensity to highlight the seeming diversities and contradictions in the Bible. Its assumptions when acknowledged create a mind-set which often discerns the Scripture as a composite document of incoherent accounts. "The method not only encourages the search for diversity in the Scripture, but frequently employs historicistic assumptions to claim that diversity in fact means disagreement and contradiction."⁹ These diversities and so-called contradictions are then utilized to construct various theories such as that the Biblical accounts were transmitted in oral form for a long period of time and that in the course of the transmission they were edited, altered, put into literary type by different writers and collated by redactors to serve the needs of the cultic communities of many generations. Thus the methodology is grounded on a series of hypotheses.

The method does not approach the Biblical document as a truly coherent and historically reliable book in all its parts. It downgrades the importance of the historical details and the context of the Scriptural

⁸Martin H. Franzmann, "The Historical-Critical Method," Concordia Journal 6 (May 1980):101. The same judgement has been expressed by Professor Richard Klann, "Criticism of the Bible," Affirm: Occasional Papers (Milwaukee: Walther Memorial Lutheran Church, Spring, 1973), p. 1.

⁹John Reumann, ed., Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 206.

narratives. This is made plain in Paul G. Bretscher's assertion that the living word of God is obscured

when the historical setting is glorified as though it were in itself the word of God, equal with that word of proclamation which intersects men in that history.¹⁰

While the theological import is more important than the historical data, it is illogical to affirm that the method provides license to the interpreter to reject the facticity of the historical matters. For the method to be genuinely regarded as neutral it must either accept both the history and theology found in Scriptures or deny both for the theology is set forth in the framework of Biblical history. If an exegete is to be a truly historical critic, he cannot affirm the theology of Scripture on the basis of its indispensable relevance to the Christian faith. It can therefore be said that the Moderates' use of the historical-critical method with their Lutheran presuppositions strips the method of its neutrality.

Both a method and the interpreter have presuppositions. This is true with historical criticism. Edgar Krentz admits that the technique involves sitting in judgment over historical sources. These sources are to be treated "like witnesses in a court of law: they must be interrogated and their answers evaluated."¹¹ It is in this process of evaluation that the method and the interpreter's presuppositions make impossible the

¹⁰ Paul G. Bretscher, "An Inquiry into Article II," Currents in Theology and Mission 1 (October 1974):41.

¹¹ Edgar Krentz, The Historical-Critical Method (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 42. (Hereafter cited as HCM).

method's impartiality. Reumann claims that Adolf Schlatter, Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann and others have exposed the non-enutrality of the historical-critical method.¹²

Historical Criticism: Dangerous and Inadequate

The editor for many years of Concordia Theological Monthly, Herbert T. Mayer, admitted that the Moderates' exegetical method in Biblical studies carries with it dangerous tendencies.¹³ But even earlier than Mayer's observation, the Department of Exegetical Theology of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, detecting the dangers posed by historical criticism issued in 1963 a warning "against the abuse of the historical study of the Scriptures."¹⁴ In addition, the department provided assumptions which it believed would give the necessary safeguards to make the exegetical enterprise genuinely Lutheran.¹⁵

"The Christian who uses historical methods must live in two worlds that clash," is a judgment that Krentz himself declared.¹⁶ He showed that this was the case with Karl Barth who relegated historical interpretation to theological or dialectical exegesis and with Rudolf Bultmann who took the route of making biblical history irrelevant to his theology.¹⁷

¹²Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 304.

¹³Herbert T. Mayer, "Editorial," Concordia Theological Monthly, 36 (February 1965):88. (Hereafter cited as CTM).

¹⁴Martin H. Franzmann, "The Hermeneutical Dilemma: Dualism in the Interpretation of Holy Scripture," CTM 36 (September 1965):527.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 527-28.

¹⁶Krentz, HCM, p. 68

¹⁷Ibid.

The method, when consistently used, compels the Christian to suspend his faith convictions for he cannot use the historical-critical method while bound to a Confessional symbol. The method cannot accommodate a norm or control which predetermines the results of historical criticism.¹⁸ This assessment is supported by Professor Franzmann.¹⁹ Reiterating a similar argument; the Conservatives say

To change or to substitute other principles/presuppositions for those inherent in the HCM in effect destroys the method. To use the method with presuppositions other than those implied in the HCM itself calls the whole process into question.²⁰

Moreover, the presuppositions the Moderates suggest provides no scheme on how these restrain the methodology from taking a radical and liberal course. Kurt Marquart therefore declares that the Moderates' proposed presuppositions "restrain historical criticism about as much as a net restrains water."²¹

To a certain extent historical criticism directs the Christian faith beyond and outside the Scriptures. There is a tendency to search for the verbum absconditus dei and thus also for the Deus absconditus Himself. The method lends itself to a theology of glory. This is exemplified in redaction criticism's attempt to get behind the text to capture the authentic ipsissima vox Dei. This effort to secure the "real"

¹⁸ Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 56.

¹⁹ Franzmann, "The Historical-Critical Method," p. 101.

²⁰ ACDC, p. 89.

²¹ Kurt Marquart, "The Swing of the Pendulum: An Attempt to Understand the St. Louis 'Affirmations and Discussions,'" in Affirm: Occasional Papers, Spring 1973, p. 16.

intention of the Biblical text outside of Scripture is similar to the temptation the devil offered Adam and Eve. It is, furthermore, a form of synergism and unbelief. Edward H. Schroeder's condemnation of the medieval method of exegesis in which a fourfold meaning is extracted out of the Biblical text to excise a spiritual meaning can also be said of historical criticism. Schroeder writes:

The desire somehow to get back through the historical, tangible words and events to a spirit behind them constitute a vote of no-confidence in God's own revelatory ability. It is an act of hybris wherein we presume to penetrate the God-man communication barrier in order to grasp God, thus implying that He cannot get through to us without our help. In Luther's terms this is theologia gloriae, the sinful and inordinate lust to view the deus nudus. It is a hermeneutical form of original sin. The 'mysteries' of God are not hidden behind the words, but they are taken out of hiding simply by what the words literally say of Christ's person and work.²²

In the exegetical task, however, it is legitimate to study prehistory to illuminate the final text.²³ But, to doubt the testimonies of Scripture on the basis of the attestation of extra-canonical literature is an inappropriate method of dealing with God's Word. To seek the meaning of the text not in the text itself but in some other sources outside of Scriptures is a Schwärmerei tendency for it is an attempt to hear God not from His Word but from other voices.²⁴

One of the greatest dangers posed by historical criticism to the understanding of Scripture is its insistence that the Bible has not only

²²Edward Schroeder, "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutics?," in Lively Function of the Gospel, ed. Robert Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), pp. 88-89.

²³Brevard S. Childs, The Book of Exodus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), p. xv.

²⁴Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 195.

multiple but even provisory meanings. This has been the basis of the theology of the liberation which reinterprets Scripture even to the point of inferring a justification for violent, political revolutions.²⁵ Moreover, this assumption that diversified meanings have crept into the text in the course of its historical development from the oral to the literary stage makes it impossible for the Christian to make the Biblical text the judge, rule, and norm of present-day doctrines and practices because he cannot be certain which meaning can be validly applied to present-day problems. On the other hand the method can be used to focus solely on the original and past meaning thus giving

the interpretation of Scripture an archaeological flavor, with the restriction of meaning to the historical sense potentially leading to irrelevance and to an impoverishment of meaning.²⁶

When a Moderate like Norman Habel comes to the conclusion with reference to the use of the historical-critical methodology that the Gospel promise made to Abraham does not include "the Christ event or the future Messianic individual . . . [for] the Messiah was not yet revealed as an individual or an explicit hope,"²⁷ this certainly is a different gospel. This is not the Gospel which the Scripture, and specifically St. Paul, preached. For Professor Habel to teach that "Abraham

²⁵Cf. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, eds., Mission Trends No. 4: Liberation Theologies (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), p. 9.

²⁶LCUSA, FODT, p. 91.

²⁷Norman Habel, "The Gospel Promise to Abraham," CTM 40 (June, July-August 1969):350.

is saved by grace through faith."²⁸ which does not include Christ or the hope for a Messiah is contrary to the teaching of the Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Both the Scripture and the Confessions make it clear that saving faith is created by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel.²⁹ Professor Habel's assertion clearly contradicts what Paul taught in Galatians 3:16 and what Christ Himself declared when He said; "Search the Scriptures [that is, the Old Testament] for they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

Professor Frederick W. Danker, following one of the assumptions of the historical-critical method, concludes that "it is impossible to recover . . . the very words of Jesus spoken on a given historical situation."³⁰ This allegation makes unreliable the Biblical report of Jesus' promises.

It is argued by Moderates that "Jesus met people where they were and so accommodated himself at times to the limitations of their knowledge."³¹ While this is true, it is not for us to judge beyond what Scripture explicitly says or implies, just at what times and situations

²⁸Ibid., p. 353.

²⁹The Book of Concord, trans. and ed. by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), Large Catechism, 3rd Article, pars. 37-40, pp. 415-16; Small Catechism, 3rd Article of the Creed, par. 6, p. 345 and Large Catechism, 3rd Article, par. 65, p. 419. (Hereafter cited as BC).

³⁰Frederick W. Danker, Jesus and the New Age According to Luke (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1972), p. xviii. Cf. Wilmar Sihite, The Verb Makarizien and Cognates in the New Testament, "A study in Christian Identity, Th.D. dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1974, p. 232.

³¹ACDC, p. 85.

he did or did not accommodate himself to the limitations of men. To do so is to proliferate human speculations.

The use of historical criticism produces a schizophrenic theology. A good example of this is what a historical-critical commentator said concerning the parable of the sower in Luke 8:14-15. He said that since Luke's interpretation was not factual, it should not determine the sermon. However, since it is written in Luke, it must be preached and accepted as God's Word.³²

Apparently before he had accepted historical criticism, Herbert T. Mayer said that preachers shied away from preaching Old Testament texts because of the

complicated and devastating studies of the so-called higher critics. Preachers asked themselves whether they could say that Exodus 12, for example, represented the mind of Moses or that of J, E, D, or even P. "Can I really say to my people, 'Thus says the Lord,' when the most competent scholars do not agree on who spoke these words or when or why they were spoken?"³³

The problem has become even more complicated as historical critics have expanded the authorship of the Pentateuch to more than just one JEDP hypothesis.

The split-level Biblical hermeneutics of the Moderates is well-described by L. Gilkey. He wrote:

Suddenly a vast panoply of divine deeds and events recorded in Scripture are no longer regarded as having actually happened. . . . All these 'acts' vanish from the plane of historical reality and enter the never-never land of 'religious interpretation' by the Hebrew people. . . . The difference between this view of the Bible as a parable illustrative of Hebrew religious faith and the view of the

³²Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 321.

³³Herbert T. Mayer, "The Old Testament in the Pulpit," CTM 35 (October 1964): 604.

Bible as a direct narrative of God's actual deeds and words is so vast. . . . What has happened is that, as modern men perusing the Scriptures, we have rejected as invalid all the innumerable cases of God's acting and speaking; but as neo-orthodox men looking for a word from the Bible, we have induced from all these cases the theological generalization that God is he who acts and speaks. This general truth about God we then assert while denying all the particular cases on the basis of which the generalization was first made. Consequently, biblical theology is left with a set of theological abstractions, more abstract than the dogmas of scholasticism, for these are concepts with no known concreteness.³⁴

The methodology of historical criticism cannot guarantee assured results and hence causes a dilemma for the Christian faith. In admitting this, Krentz writes: "Historical criticism produces only probable results. It relativizes everything. But faith needs certainty."³⁵ Another historical critic says:

despite all our efforts to carry out this examination with as objective, thorough, and sophisticated means as are at our disposal, we must have no illusions about the fact that we are working in a domain of hypotheses and conjectures.³⁶

In attempting to use redaction criticism on such a modern document as the three-year lectionary to describe "the authors' motivations as these can be seen in the selection and arrangement of the materials,"³⁷ a historical critic admits "a certain amount of guesswork in the procedure."³⁸ If such can be the case with a modern document, think of how much guesswork is involved in treating an ancient document many generations

³⁴Langdon B. Gilkey, "Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language," CTM 33 (March 1962):145-52.

³⁵Krentz, HCM, p. 67.

³⁶Douglas Knight, Recovering the Traditions of Israel, SBL Dissertation Series 9 (Missoula, Montana: Scholar Press, 1973), p. 30.

³⁷Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 145.

³⁸Ibid.

and culturally removed from present-day exegetes. It is therefore deplorable that such a method which could only yield conjectures should be sanctioned as the exclusive method for Biblical exegesis among the Moderates.

Krentz continues to argue that the "utility of historical criticism can no longer be questioned."³⁹ However, he also declares that some of the most committed champions of the method such as Ferdinand Hahn, Peter Stuhlmacher and Martin Hengel have raised questions about the adequacy of the method.⁴⁰ Hence, due to some serious misgivings about the historical-critical method, "new methods of interpretation are being tried, that is, structuralism and psychological interpretation."⁴¹

Historical Criticism Opens Scripture
To Various Speculations

Employing the historical-critical method, Walter Wegner has reached the conclusion that the account of creation found in Genesis is not historical. In the process he has come up with several speculations concerning the meaning of the "seven-day period." One theory is that it had been used as a scheme to highlight for the Israelites the religious significance of the Sabbath. Another theory is that it was used to oppose the Babylonian account of the creation which was written on seven tablets. Still another opinion is that the number seven may have been used as a sacred number and a symbol for completeness.⁴² Another

³⁹Krentz, HCM, p. 87.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 4.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 87.

⁴²Walter Wegner, "Creation and Salvation: A Study of Genesis 1 and 2," CTM 37 (September 1966): 529.

Moderate theorizes that the creation account is a liturgical form and that "the systematic reduction of chaos to order is purposely set within the limits of a workman's week."⁴³ It is therefore opined that the content and structure must have been the work of one who is both a priest and a teacher.⁴⁴

Historical criticism's refusal to accept the text for what it says leads to such speculations. For this reason the Conservative Party in ACDC gives this caution:

We do not consider it the province of a public teacher of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to determine and to trace the independent history of what some may consider to be precanonical units of tradition.⁴⁵

When the Moderates stressed, in accord with historical criticism, that the Biblical accounts or sayings were fitted into new and varied historical settings in their historical development, one may well ask whether such a process has reached the culminating point. Is the form and context of the texts as we find them in Scripture the final redactional stage? Should not exegetes today go on with the redactional task of putting texts in various contexts and even changing the written texts to suit the current Sitzen im Leben? These are questions with which historical criticism has not seriously come to grips. But it should for there are not only Biblical critics appealing for such a task but have actually done and continue to perform a redactional work on Scripture. Therefore a Moderate maintains that "it will not do simply to repeat formulations

⁴³Albert Glock, "The Study and Interpretation of the Old Testament," CTM 38 (February 1967):95.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵ACDC, p. 89.

of the Reformation or even of the Bible, for to do so in new situations alters their meaning."⁴⁶

Clarence Jordan's The Cotton Patch Version of Paul's Epistles⁴⁷ and Carl F. Burke's God is for Real⁴⁸ are present-day attempts to fit the wordings and situations of Scriptures to current Sitzen im Leben. Liberation theologies' interpretations of some portions of the Bible and the Feminists movement's desire to revise or remove the masculine image of God in the Bible are other examples of this modern age's redaction of the Scripture. If allowed to continue, what are the criteria, limits and end of this redactional process?

No doubt the Moderates would heartily agree with Professor John Knox when he wrote:

Scholars of the Old Testament and of the New have placed beyond any doubt that the books of the Bible sprang out of the experience of the religious community, Hebrew-Jewish and Christian; that the Bible did not create the church but was in effect an expression - the supreme literary expression - of the church's life.⁴⁹

The advocates of historical criticism also assert that "the prophetic books include material which did not stem from the prophets themselves, or even from their times."⁵⁰ It is further claimed that

⁴⁶Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 41.

⁴⁷Clarence Jordan, The Cotton Patch Version of Paul's Epistles (New York: Association Press, 1968).

⁴⁸Carl F. Burke, God Is For Real, (New York: Association Press, 1966).

⁴⁹John Knox, Criticism and Faith (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), p. 26.

⁵⁰Gene Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 18.

traditions about the life and work of the prophet were added by those who knew him. Later speeches and other compositions were attributed to the prophet and included [in the prophet's works].⁵¹

The genre "Gospel," Norman Perrin contends, is a unique creation of the Christian Church and therefore "does not portray the history of the ministry of Jesus . . . but the history of Christian experience in any and every age."⁵² The Gospel of Mark, for example, is said to be

a strange mixture of history, legend, and myth . . . [a] fact which redaction criticism makes unmistakably clear . . . that the locus of revelation is not the ministry of the historical Jesus but the reality of Christian experience.⁵³

These speculations pose many problems for the Christian faith. If the Scriptures are the products of the Christian communities, then it is a misnomer to call them the prophetic and apostolic writings. A Lutheran theologian will have a real predicament in subscribing to the Lutheran Confessions because these Symbols declare the Reformers understanding of Scripture when they said: "We pledge ourselves to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments as the pure and clear fountain of Israel . . ."⁵⁴ They also wrote: "We are certain of our Christian confession and faith on the basis of the divine, prophetic, and apostolic Scriptures."⁵⁵ And again, ". . . Our agreement is based on the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures."⁵⁶

⁵¹Ibid., p. 71.

⁵²Norman Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 75.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴BC, Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Rule and Norm, 3. (Hereafter cited as FC, SD).

⁵⁵Preface to the Book of Concord, pp. 12-13.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 13.

Moderates who espouse historical criticism's speculations concerning the historical development and production of Scriptures contradict themselves when they, in the ACDC document, declared: "The Scriptures are the written word of God. The internal testimony of the Bible assures us that God is speaking to us in the words originally given to His prophets and apostles."⁵⁷

Disputing the form critics' assumption, Dr. Scharlemann remarked, "It is a sociological heresy to hold that a community can produce anything of consequence unless it has within it a person or person of creative genius."⁵⁸ Professor James W. Voelz argued that it is more reasonable to believe that a community preserved a story than to hold that it invented such a story due to its spiritual needs and desires.⁵⁹

It is highly improbable that the Christian communities after the Easter event would attempt to convince the secular world of their time with non-factual supernatural stories especially when the Christians were in the minority and persecuted. To embellish the sayings and deeds of Jesus with non-historical elements would not only have been dangerous for the Christians but would have discredited the Christian faith for there were many hearers and witnesses to the sayings and deeds of Jesus

⁵⁷ACDC, p. 38. Cf. Everett Kalin's statement in the Board of Control, Exodus From Concordia: A Report of the 1974 Walkout (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1977), pp. 13-14. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁸Martin H. Scharlemann, "The Parables of the Leaven and of the Mustard Seed: A Suggested Methodological Method," in Reumann, ed. Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 336.

⁵⁹Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 39.

who were not and never became Christians. These could have easily shown the deceptions the Christian communities were doing to their generation.

If the Scriptures were indeed the product of the Christian communities' understanding of God's revelation as the historical critics hypothesized, then the heretical views of these Christian communities as found in variant readings of their Biblical version could possibly be an authentic word of God. For instance, the variant reading on Matthew 1:16 in the Sinaitic Syriac version says that Joseph begot Jesus. If this Christian community's understanding were right, then it is possible to believe that the account about the virgin birth could have been the community's invention.⁶⁰ Contending against the form critics, Martin Franzmann says:

Form critics attribute to the 'community' a creative power which is really incredible; while the Gospels themselves and the Book of Acts with one voice proclaim that Jesus the Christ created the church, the form critics seem to conclude that the church somehow created the Christ. The net result of their study is the conclusion that the Gospels, which incorporate the tradition of the Christian community, tell us a great deal about the faith of the early Christian community, but very little about Jesus of Nazareth.⁶¹

Historical criticism tries to distinguish the facts from the spurious in the Scriptures. R. P. C. Hanson says that this process is highly speculative. He said that the inescapable and logical conclusion might as well be

⁶⁰ Elmer Moeller, "The Meaning of Confessional Subscription," The Springfielder 38 (December 1974):201.

⁶¹ Martin Franzmann, The Word of the Lord Grows: A First Historical Introduction to the New Testament (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), p. 217.

that all the facts . . . be fancy because, while it is agreed that some of them are almost certainly facts, nobody can produce any satisfactory reason why his selection should be regarded as facts and not fancy, rather than that one, or that one, or that one. It is not merely that every critic plays the game differently from the others, but that every critic makes his own rules.⁶²

Martin Franzmann's evaluation of one of historical criticism's assumptions makes logical sense. He said that the presupposition that the Scripture is so historically and culturally conditioned; that many of its concepts have been borrowed makes the Bible the product of the human environment -- the "product of human spirit and not the product of the Spirit."⁶³

Commenting on the historical critics' speculations concerning the genre of Genesis 1-3 and the various symbolical meanings of the terms in the accounts, David Scaer says that there is nothing in the accounts to suggest that the stories are not historical. Moreover, if the terms "day" and "serpent" are regarded as symbols then "there is no reason for not considering 'God' a symbolical term."⁶⁴

Human Reason and Historical Criticism

A Moderate, Albert E. Glock, admits that the New Testament does not use the critical method in its interpretation of the Old Testament.⁶⁵

⁶²J. N. D. Anderson, Christianity: The Witness of History (London: Tyndale Press, 1969), p. 33.

⁶³Martin Franzmann, "The Hermeneutical Dilemma: Dualism in the Interpretation of Holy Scripture," CTM 36 (September 1965):527.

⁶⁴David Scaer, "The Problems of Inerrancy and Historicity in Connection with Genesis 1-3," Concordia Theological Quarterly 41 (January 1977):23.

⁶⁵Glock, "The Study and Interpretation of the Old Testament," p. 104.

The Moderates also assert that "inasmuch as Lutheranism does not operate with an official exegesis, responsible brothers and sisters in the faith may differ with regard to the form and meaning of certain texts . . ." ⁶⁶
 This is the freedom they are asking for. They said they believe in

an open Bible unfettered by any human rules. With Luther we 'acknowledge no fixed rules for the interpretation of the word of God' - whether historical-grammatical, grammatical-historical, or any other - 'since the Word of God, which teaches freedom in all other matters, must not be bound.' ⁶⁷

In pursuit of this freedom with regards to exegetical methodologies, they say, for example, of the interpretation of Genesis 2-3 that "the message remains the same whether we consider the text . . . a literal historical account or some other kind of literature." ⁶⁸

If the above-mentioned assertions are indeed the truth, then why did the former faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis teach and use exclusively the historical-critical method? And why is it the only method they teach and use today? Moreover, if the hermeneutical methodology is not crucial to their theological stance, why was the method changed from the historical-grammatical to the historical-critical method? One can only conclude that the concession to the historical-critical method was due to the Zeitgeist which since the Enlightenment has made the judgment of human reason the norm for the verification of truth - even of divine truth. Human reason has considered the historical-critical method the scientific method.

⁶⁶ ACDC, p. 42.

⁶⁷ "Editorial," CTM 44 (September 1973):244.

⁶⁸ FCFL, p. 17.

Historical criticism's dependence on human reason can be seen by how it places a greater value on the quantitative wealth of information provided by extra-canonical literature over the meager data supplied by Scripture. While the wealth of information given by non-Biblical materials may truly aid the interpreter to understand better the Biblical texts, this should not be given greater value and priority over Scripture. God's Word should not be judged by anything nor by anyone. It is the judge of everything and of everyone in matters in which it speaks of. Certainly God extends His special providence over this document more than to any other writing. Scripture itself testified to this.

By the very nature of its principles, historical criticism treats the Biblical text in the same manner as it does all other human and historical documents. The Scripture must therefore be critically judged by human reason. Krentz concedes that historical critics have a tendency to a magisterial use of reason. He attributes this to their method which "is still dominated by Troeltsch's principles [of] systematic criticism, analogy, and universal correlation."⁶⁹

The principle of correlation (or mutual interdependence) implies that all historical phenomena are so interrelated that a change in one phenomenon necessitates a change in the causes leading to it and in the effects it has. Historical explanation rests on this chain of cause and effect. . . . [This] principle rules out miracle and salvation history.⁷⁰

This means that human reason with the use of historical criticism must needs excise some portions of Scripture as unhistorical and when this

⁶⁹Krentz, HCM, p. 85. Cf. pp. 56-57.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 55.

process is applied consistently, it cannot but result in a Scripture expurgated of all miracles and salvation history. What then becomes of Scripture? It is diminished into a book of fables filled with good moral teachings.

The Lutheran Confessions rebuke the magisterial use of reason by reproving those who "accept only what agrees with human reason and regard the rest as mythology."⁷¹ To refute such a charge, the Moderates insist that they use historical criticism with presuppositions. They therefore declare:

We are not merely historical critics, but we are first of all baptized Christians and ordained pastors, committed to the Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. These presuppositions and commitments including our ordination vows, make us decisively different.⁷²

The decisive difference lies in the fact that they unchain the Christian faith from the historicity of the Biblical accounts but seek to affirm the doctrinal affirmations of the Bible and the Confessions by means of Gospel reductionism. The Moderates' use of reason as the magistrate of the contents of the Christian faith via the method of historical criticism has drawn a complaint from the Conservatives who claim that the former have not shown how their use of the historical-critical method differs with those who do not affirm any Lutheran presupposition.⁷³

Rationalism dominates historical criticism. Dr. Scharlemann says that the method has a concept of truth which is not biblical. It accepts

⁷¹BC, Ap. VII, 27.

⁷²Faculty of Concordia Seminary, Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the 'Report of the Synodical President' (St. Louis: n.p., n.d.), p. 13.

⁷³ACDC, p. 88.

as truth only those matters which are verifiable objectively by scientific method.⁷⁴ It is an axiom of the method that it only treats of those elements which can be rationally explained and interpreted,⁷⁵ because "historical criticism has emancipated itself from any serious consideration of God's action in history and from the tradition of the church."⁷⁶

The use of historical criticism and the presence of supernatural events related in Scripture pose problems for the Lutheran practitioners of the method who at the same time seek to defend the Biblical teachings. To solve this problem the users of the method try to explain the miraculous within the dimension of space and time, that is, to make them historically and naturally possible events. This way it becomes reasonable. A case in point is the explanation of some of the Crossing of the Red (which they call Reed) Sea. The division of the water is also explained as a possible, natural occurrence. Accounts which are not amenable to rational explanation are simply dismissed as non-factual or composed in a non-historical genre the central message of which is the only significant thrust of the story. Dr. Richard Klann has aptly observed that when criticism makes rational coherence its foundational policy so that a lacuna of information or the presence of a 'meaning gap' is outrightly judged as incoherent, then the exegete "can do more or less what he wants to do with a text, even though he may claim to be textgebunden -- bound to the text."⁷⁷

⁷⁴Martin Scharlemann, Radical Orthodoxy (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1972), Cassette Tape 72-29.

⁷⁵Krentz, HCM, p. 34.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 87.

⁷⁷Klann, "Criticism of the Bible," p. 1.

Historical criticism's stress on human rationality makes it view history and reality in a purely secular fashion. It really has no room for faith except faith in what is humanly reasonable. It obliterates any faith in the Gospel for it cannot accept how one man's righteous life, sufferings, death and resurrection can ever be vicarious for all men of all times or how there can be any beneficial reality to the sacraments. Furthermore, "historical inquiry . . . [is] anti-transcendental and non-eschatological."⁷⁸ The methodology grounded on human reason makes history the criterion for understanding the Bible rather than employing the Bible for understanding history.⁷⁹ The best that a historical critic can do is formulate a hypothetical construct from the Biblical data. The constructed theory, however, should not become the authenticating authority over Scripture, otherwise faith in Scripture will rest on the confirmation of human reason and that would mean faith in human reason rather than on Scripture.

Historical Criticism and the Clarity of Scripture

One of the cardinal assumptions of historical criticism is that the Scriptural texts in the process of transmission and their being used in various Sitzen im Leben, especially in their oral form, cannot today have a simple, single meaning derived from what the texts say.⁸⁰ In fact,

⁷⁸Martin H. Franzmann, "The Quest for the Historical Jesus," Concordia Journal 6 (May 1980):102.

⁷⁹Krentz, HCM, p. 30.

⁸⁰Martin H. Scharlemann. Just What Did Jesus Say? Paradigm: Matthew 20:1-16 The Parable in the Vineyard, Biblical Study Series #1 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Print Shop, 1976), p. 12.

it is said of the sayings of Jesus that "at times Jesus' original meaning may no longer be recoverable."⁸¹ The same can be said of the prophecy of Isaiah.⁸² Editors, literary critics say, could have updated the work of their forefathers and promoted new points of view.⁸³ At times etiological sagas were used to explain "existing phenomena by reference to an event in the past."⁸⁴ These theories only muddle the perspicuity of Scripture. The CTCR says that the method with its above-mentioned speculations is a rejection of the basic principle of Biblical interpretation - the principle that a text has but one meaning.⁸⁵

When a text is thought to have a tradition history that made its meaning vary from one situation to another, then it becomes highly questionable procedure simply to quote a Bible passage as though its entire content were a "Thus saith the Lord."⁸⁶

The Commission further argues that the assumptions of historical criticism contain the danger that exegetes can "make passages of Scripture mean whatever they want them to mean."⁸⁷ And when the clarity of Scripture is lost, then its normative character is forfeited.

The assumption that in their historical course the multiplicity of the Sitzen im Leben has created multiple meanings for the Biblical texts, makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to extract the unus sensus literalis est sive historicus. It becomes impossible to

⁸¹LCUSA, FODT, p. 89.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 89-90.

⁸³Norman Habel, Literary Criticism of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 7.

⁸⁴Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 16.

⁸⁵Commission on Theology and Church Relations, Gospel and Scripture (St. Louis: n.p., November 1972), p. 13. (Hereafter cited as CTCR)

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.; Cf. BC, Ap, XII, 106.

pinpoint the inspired and authoritative word of God and to distinguish the divine revelations from the human interpretations and interpolations. Yet this must be done in the light of the Moderates' affirmation that

the true, normative meaning of a text is its literal, grammatical-historical sense; i.e., what the original author intended to say to the original hearers . . . [this] commitment to the literal grammatical-historical sense of the text requires the use of historical methods of interpretation.⁸⁸

The root of the problem to this excellent intention lies in historical criticism's theories which make it impossible to trace the original author(s) and hearers. And even when we have concluded who the original author was, historical criticism cannot give us the assurance that his account is divine revelation. It could simply be his interpretation of divine revelation. And the interpretation could have been composed in a non-historical genre - a legend, a myth, or an etiological saga which could have been edited by a creative genius or by a community and redacted within an entirely different context(s).

The meaning of the Biblical texts is further obscured by historical criticism's premise that the texts as we have them in the canon provides us with only a secondary understanding of what the text really says.⁸⁹ The original sense is postulated to be behind the text of Scripture.⁹⁰ This presumption is clearly disputed by the Scripture itself. St. John says: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you . . .

⁸⁸ ICUSA, FODT, p. 78.

⁸⁹ Otto Kaiser and Werner Georg Kümmel, Exegetical Method, A Student's Handbook, trans. E. V. N. Goetchius (New York: Seabury Press, 1967) p. 32.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

and these things write we unto you" (1 John 1:3-4). St. Paul, too, says, "So then, our brothers, stand firm and hold on to those truths which we taught you, both in our preaching and in our letter" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). And again he writes: "We do not speak in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit. . . ." (1 Corinthians 2:13, TEV). The Old Testament, too, claims that what is in the text comes from God through the prophets. Jesus, the disciples, and the writers of the New Testament never implied that the Old Testament has accumulated layers of various meanings and interpretations. When men in Jesus' time expressed what they thought an Old Testament text meant, Jesus and the writers of the New Testament made it plain if they were right or wrong. Where they were wrong, it has not been unusual for Jesus to say: "It has been said of old . . . but I say unto you . . ."

The presupposition that new meanings and interpretations were given to the words of God as they were used in different life settings makes the theological task of distinguishing between orthodoxy and heresy very difficult. One can defend a heresy by simply imploring the assumption that a particular writer reinterpreted the text to meet the needs of the community in a new situation. Therefore it can be said that the Jews should not be faulted for seeking a political Messiah. Their experience of political oppression is a Sitz im Leben which calls for a revolutionary savior, therefore they reinterpreted the Old Testament or they were constrained to do so by their needs. This relativizes the meaning of Scripture, obscures and destroys its role to be the sole judge, rule and norm of Christian faith and practice. Hence, the declaration that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8) cannot possibly

be true. And one sees that in a number of contextualized theologies the hermenutical praxis has been to provide new meanings and interpretations to the person, deeds, and sayings of Christ. He is no longer just the historical Jesus, or even the Christ after the Easter event, but a new Christ for a new age.

The attempt of historical critics to go behind the text and peel away the assumed accumulated layers of fantasy and myth in order to reach the kernel of fact - the unus literalis sive historica has only resulted in coming up with something really less than what the Scripture says and therefore different from what the Scripture reports.⁹¹

Form and redaction criticisms assume that many sayings and narratives in Scriptures were originally independent units including additions by the church used in specific situations and later brought together by a redactor. These presuppositions will necessitate the denial of the contexts in which the sayings and narratives have been placed by the Biblical writers. It would require a new redactional process to place them in their original contexts and acquire the genuine import of the texts. Oscar Cullmann, a relatively conservative practitioner of the historical-critical method, in fact does this in the Lukan account of Jesus in Gethsemane where He urged His disciples to sell their mantle.⁹² He does the same with Peter's confession in Matthew 16:17-19. He argues that this should be transferred from Jesus' public ministry near Caesarea

⁹¹F. Samuel Janzow, "The Layman and the Notion of Bible Myth," Concordia Journal 4 (January 1978):25.

⁹²Oscar Cullmann, The State In The New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), pp. 31-32.

Philippi as Matthew, Mark 8:27-30 and Luke 22:31-34 have placed it, to the event in the Upper Room where Peter in the account of Luke was reprimanded by Jesus and where it was predicted that he would deny Jesus.⁹³ The premises of form and redaction criticisms relative to the texts and their biblical contexts diminish the importance and meaning of the latter. The process licenses an exegete to lift a text out of the biblical context and place it within a new context thus conferring on it a new interpretation. This precisely is what Paul G. Bretscher suggests with the words, "This is my beloved Son" spoken during the baptism of Jesus by a voice from heaven. Bretscher says:

The very possibility of lifting the sentence 'This is my beloved Son' out of its context, and of examining it as a thing in itself apart from what any other New Testament text may suggest or imply concerning the meaning -- that possibility is the gift of critical study.⁹⁴

The principle Scripture interprets Scripture cannot but be abandoned by one who accepts historical criticism's assumption that a text has multiple meanings and can even be given new meanings in a new context. This also means that the New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament cannot always be judged as correct. This is why some Moderates reject some of the New Testament interpretations of some Old Testament texts.

The assumption of the presence of layers of interpretations in the Scripture could lead to the theory that the New Testament is simply the apostolic and post-apostolic churches' understanding of the Old Testament and of Christ. In fact, the christology of liberal theologians is

⁹³Idem, Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr, trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), pp. 177-82.

⁹⁴Paul G. Bretscher, The Baptism of Jesus, Critically Considered Biblical Studies Series #5 (St. Louis: n.p., May 1973), p. 9.

exactly this. But if this is the case, then the New Testament could only have deuterocanonical status or even better, simply a human commentary of the Old Testament.

Historical criticism with its varied presuppositions dims the clarity of Scripture.

Historical Criticism and Sola Scriptura

It is a challenge to the Reformation's principle of sola Scriptura when historical criticism attempts to go beyond and behind the Biblical texts to extra-canonical literature to determine the facticity of what Scripture says. This means that the Scripture is not recognized as the sole norm for Christian faith and the principium cognoscendi. A Moderate, Ralph Gehrke, does this in explaining the use of the serpent in the account of the Fall in Genesis. He said the writer of the Genesis account borrowed the idea from the ancient world's magic.⁹⁵ The words of Scripture are not accepted as authoritative. This, however, does not mean that extrabiblical materials may not be used in exegesis "but it does mean that such data do not determine the meaning of the Scriptures in opposition to the biblical data themselves."⁹⁶

The rejection by historical critics of the finality of the context of a Scriptural text results in an undermining of the principle of sola Scriptura.⁹⁷

⁹⁵Ralph Gehrke, "Genesis Three in the Light of Key Hermeneutical Considerations," CTM 36 (September 1965):555.

⁹⁶Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 197.

⁹⁷J. Coert Rylaarsdam, Foreword in Tradition History and the Old Testament by Walter Rast (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), pp. vi-vii.

Repeatedly the historical critics insist on evaluating the credibility of Scripture⁹⁸ and treating it like any other historical document. It is asserted that the historian's starting point for discovering the truth is to doubt the integrity of the witness,⁹⁹ for it is the "historian [who] confers authority upon a witness."¹⁰⁰ To employ this procedure with Scripture is to make the historical critic and his methodology the authority for the Christian faith and life. The Bible is no longer regarded as self-authenticating. "The method tends to freedom from authority,"¹⁰¹ save perhaps the authority of human reason. Luther says such a procedure is devilish arrogance for the practitioners

boldly set themselves on the judgment seat, summon God to the bar to give an account of his Word, and why it is useful and necessary to do and say these things. . . . Isn't it horrible to hear this? This is where one comes out when one tries to treat God's Word according to men's fancy.¹⁰²

There is an anti-biblical bias among many historical critics. There is, for instance, a tendency among them to highlight the differences and seeming contradictions in Scripture and thereby leave the impression that they are obsessed in proving the errancy of the Bible. Assumed contradictions are not allowed to stand as they are. They are bent on providing an answer even if the solution is theoretical and makes value judgment on some portions of Scripture. The historical critics make a deliberate attempt to be the authority rather than listen to the Scripture. In fact, the Moderates state that

⁹⁸Krentz, HCM, pp. 42, 52.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 4, 70.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰²LW, 37, p. 128.

even if it were the text's intention to relate history, the interpreter must not expect the biblical authors to operate with the same criteria of what is history or accuracy as we do.¹⁰³

Such a methodology then does not allow the Scripture to speak for itself.

And this is the distinct claim of historical critics:

critically written narrative is not a mere retelling of what the sources say, but a narrative based on what the sources say after their adequacy, veracity, and intelligibility are questioned.¹⁰⁴

The Moderates' limitation of Scriptural inerrancy and significance to matters related to the gospel is a subversion of Biblical authority on other matters on which it speaks. The historical, geographical and scientific details are often considered non-essential and in many cases erroneous. And even the Gospel, especially in the Old Testament, is believed to have been conveyed via the media of false and heathen world views.¹⁰⁵

C. F. Walther's judgment on this matter is very appropriate. He said that anyone who denies the historical detail that Christ died under Pontius Pilate as stated in Scripture is in truth a non-believer for he rejects the Word of God.¹⁰⁶

The authority of Scripture resides in all its parts and not just to a certain portion of it - not even to the Gospel alone for the Law is dynamic and authoritative because the Holy Spirit works through the Law to bring repentance and Christian edification.

¹⁰³CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation (St. Louis: n.p., 1973), p. 14.

¹⁰⁴Krentz, HGM, p. 34.

¹⁰⁵ACDC, p. 56.

¹⁰⁶C. F. W. Walther, "The False Arguments for the Modern Theory of Open Questions," CTM 10 (May 1939):353.

The Moderates have redefined Scriptural authority. The CTCR recognizes this when it says:

When discussing the Bible's authority, the mediating view circumvents the problem of the Bible's historical accuracy by shifting the emphasis to the power of the Word. It is emphasized that the inspiration of the written Word pertains to the effective power of the Scriptures to bring men and women to salvation through the Gospel, and has nothing to do with the accuracy of the statements.¹⁰⁷

The mediating theologians have really conflated the meanings of both Scriptural authority and inspiration. The same can be said of their definition of inerrancy.¹⁰⁸

The sole authority of Scripture is denied by Ditmanson by his appeal to tradition and personal experience.¹⁰⁹ In his argument there is an explicit Enthusiasts' predisposition when he appeals to personal experience as a possible conveyor of grace.¹¹⁰ His stress on the importance of the role of tradition has made him reach this conclusion: "It seems clear that the principle of sola scriptura has never actually worked."¹¹¹

The literature and culture contemporaneous with the Scripture have, to a certain extent, been given a normative property. The rejection and reinterpretation of Paul's attitude toward the role of women in the church's ministry are made on the basis of the culture. Paul's

¹⁰⁷CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, p. 17.

¹⁰⁸Supra, p. 89.

¹⁰⁹Harold H. Ditmanson, "Perspectives on the Hermeneutics Debate," in Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, pp. 97-98, 100-101.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 98.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 104.

injunction is said to be the product of his time and culture which subordinated women to men.¹¹² The Biblical mandate is thus considered a cultural and solely a Pauline or human directive.

The Moderates' acceptance of historical criticism's presuppositions and exegetical conclusions together with their emphasis on Gospel-reductionism have made them supplant the principle sola Scriptura with solus Christus.¹¹³ Thus Walter J. Bartling refers to the Gospel as a norm.¹¹⁴ They have even gone to the extent of calling the "Gospel [is] the source and goal of all true doctrine."¹¹⁵ This stance curtails the authoritative nature of the non-Gospel (in the narrow sense of the term Gospel) elements in Scripture. The Conservatives' concern for the historical portions of Scripture, Ralph Bohlmann argues, is a concern for the solus Christus principle for if Scripture is unreliable in some matters, it may well be unreliable in its witness to Christ.¹¹⁶

When the normative nature of Scripture is not predicated to all its parts but limited to the narrow sense of the Gospel as the Moderates do, then the sense of a Biblical canon is lost. The church might as well

¹¹²Christ Seminary - SEMINEX Faculty, "For the Ordination of Women," Currents in Theology and Mission 6 (June 1979);134.

¹¹³Cf. Herbert T. Mayer, "Editorial," CTM 36 (September 1965);499 and Thomas W. Strieter, "Luther's View of Scripture," The Cresset 35 (May 1972);92-93.

¹¹⁴Walter Bartling, "Hermeneutics and Pauline Parenthesis," in A Project in Biblical Hermeneutics, ed. Richard Jungkuntz (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969), p. 75.

¹¹⁵"The Church's One Foundation," Missouri In Perspective, August 22, 1974, p. 1, par. 19. Emphasis mine.

¹¹⁶Ralph Bohlmann, "Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confession," Aspects of Biblical Hermeneutics: Confessional Principles & Practical Applications. Concordia Theological Monthly, Occasional

use any literature, ancient or modern, from whatever geographical areas of the world so long as it proclaims the gospel and doctrines related to it such as the Creation and the Fall. Propositional truths for the Christian Church then need not be drawn from Scripture alone. But the fact that the Church rejected non-canonical writings shows the importance the Church gave to non-Gospel elements which are in the canonical writings. The Church considered them as God's words and profitable for us though modern scholars may not see their significance.

The Bible teaches that God has given man dominion and stewardship over His creation. This is not an article of faith in the sense that it is necessary for salvation. To knowingly reject this teaching and advocate an unwarranted exploitation of the earth's resources to the detriment of future generations is a sin. To refute such an attitude we need to appeal not only to human reason but above all to God's Word (and not necessarily to the narrow sense of the Gospel alone) and show how such an act is a sin. Here we appeal to the Law in all its functions before we can proclaim the Gospel. It is therefore necessary to maintain the normative nature of the whole of Scripture for it protects the importance of the Gospel in all areas of human endeavor.

Indeed, it is true that faith in Christ comes first before a person may even have knowledge and faith in Scripture. Nevertheless, a person, especially a public teacher of the church, cannot have simple faith in Christ with a qualified faith in the Word which in its entirety preaches Christ. That man not only weakens his faith but also the faith

of those to whom he preaches Christ. But this, to a certain extent, is what Professor Bouman affirms when he said: "It is not loyalty to a Book that is decisive for authentic Lutheranism, but faith in and submission to a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ . . ." ¹¹⁷ But such a statement is illogical! For how can a person be judged as having faith in Christ and submissive to Him if he does not accept what Christ has said and done as reported in the Scripture? The Scriptural function as the authority to establish and regulate the statement, confession, and proclamation of the Christian faith (fides quae creditur) to safeguard the personal faith in the Savior (fides qua creditur) is rendered meaningless. The Moderates' stance has the propensity to make the Gospel esoteric by diminishing the importance of the formal principle (Scriptures). Moreover, the elevation of the Gospel to a norm within Scripture ¹¹⁸ is unwarranted by the Confessions ¹¹⁹ and "lowers the Scriptures in the authority scale The Gospel becomes norma normans and the Scriptures norma normata." ¹²⁰

The rejection of the historicity of many details in Scripture endangers the authoritative proclamation of the Scripture concerning the Gospel.

If the witness on the stand in any process of law in the courtroom can be demonstrated to be a false witness, in other areas, if, for example, he has the reputation of being a habitual liar, then the

¹¹⁷Herbert J. A. Bouman, "Some Thoughts on Authentic Lutheranism," CTM 42 (May 1971):287.

¹¹⁸David P. Scaer, "A Response to David Lotz," The Springfielder 38 (December 1974):227.

¹¹⁹Robert Preus, "Biblical Authority in the Lutheran Confessions," Concordia Journal 4 (January 1978):20.

¹²⁰Scaer, "A Response to David Lotz," p. 227.

jury is invited to believe that the testimony that he is giving in this particular case is also false.¹²¹

The power of the Gospel to make people believe in Christ and the authority of Scripture are complementary. God gave us a reliable Gospel in a reliable Scripture. The Lutheran Confessions say that those who "depart from the Holy Scripture . . . diminish the glory of Christ's passion" (AC, XXIV, 24) and that "those who reject Christ . . . maliciously twist the Scriptures to fit human opinions" (Ap, IV, 260). It is not only he who rejects Christ that distorts Scriptures but also he who departs from Scriptures robs Christ of His glory. The Joint Committee of the Synodical Conference's insistence on the plenary inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture maintains the rightful interdependence of Scripture and Gospel. It says:

For since God is the Lord of history and has revealed Himself by acts in history, and has in the Person of His Son actually entered into man's history, the historical framework in which the Gospel message is set becomes an essential part of the inspired Word just as much as the spiritual truths revealed in it.¹²²

The Holy Spirit and Scripture

Biblical inspiration is not denied by the Moderates. However, they have a different definition and theory of the Holy Spirit's process of inspiration. They define it as the effective salvific power of the Scripture.¹²³ The conjectures regarding the oral transmission of the

¹²¹Gleason Archer, Jr., Transcription From Tape, A Reaction to Walter Wegner's article, "Creation and Salvation, a Study of Genesis 1 and 2", Trinity Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois: n.d., p. 2 (mimeographed)

¹²²"Statement on Scripture Adopted by the Joint Committee of the Synodical Conference," CTM 30 (February 1959):137.

¹²³FCFL, Discussion Eight, pp. 35-36.

Biblical accounts, the responsibility of the cultic communities in various generations and situations, the embellishments done by the editors, the redaction of independent accounts, and so forth, are all considered part of the responsible work of the Holy Spirit in the act of inspiring men of many ages. There is a proclivity in the Moderates' theory to give less credit to the Holy Spirit and more to men in the production of the Holy Scriptures. So, while they speak of inspiration, they cannot accept the teaching of verbal and plenary inspiration.

There is no complete consensus among the Moderates concerning what constitutes Biblical inspiration. Some believe that inspiration is confined to the subject matter (Realinspiration) or the didactic truth proclaimed in the text. A deduction can be drawn from the Moderates' use of historical criticism is that inspiration for them was not what God revealed but the human interpretations of that divine revelation as is evident in the layers of meaning of the Biblical text. Others suggest that only the Gospel was inspired and that the historical, geographical, geological, astronomical, biological, and so forth, data in the Bible were not inspired.¹²⁴ Others theorized that inspiration was limited to the oral utterances of the prophets and apostles and not to their writings. One Moderate, Professor Everett Kalin contends that inspiration by the Holy Spirit continues in the Christian community as it continues to bear witness to Christ.¹²⁵ John Frey also says that the inspiration continues

¹²⁴ Traugott H. Rehwaldt, "The Other Understanding of the Inspiration Texts," CTM 43 (June 1972):362.

¹²⁵ Everett Kalin, "The Inspired Community: A Glance at Canon History," CTM 42 (September 1971):547-49. He therefore further argues that it is not the Holy Scripture alone which is inspired. *Ibid.*, pp. 542-43.

"to all Christians of all generations . . ." ¹²⁶ It is also asserted by the mediating theologians that

the people who were inspired include precanonical 'writers, editors, and bearers of the tradition' [and that] the Holy Spirit is continuously active in the Church through the means of grace, i.e., the Word of God and the Sacraments. ¹²⁷

The Moderates rely heavily on the historical-critical method for explicating Scripture. Their contention on the neutrality of the method which made them assert that it can even be used by a non-believer is contrary to the Lutheran Confessions. The Confessors wrote: ". . . Scripture denies to the intellect, heart, and will of the natural man every capacity, aptitude, skill, and ability to think anything good or right in spiritual matters." (FC, SD, II, 12). Therefore they maintain that only those who have the Holy Spirit "have been given the power to interpret the Scriptures and to know Christ, which is impossible without the Holy Spirit" (LC, IV, 49).

Historical criticism, at best, can only ascertain the historicity of a phenomenon reported in the Bible which has an analogy with human experience or can be scientifically verified. It cannot provide saving truths. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. For this reason the Reformers assert that it is only the Holy Spirit who "opens the intellect and the heart to understand the Scriptures and to heed the Word . . ." ¹²⁸

¹²⁶ John D. Frey, Is the Bible Inerrant? (Prairie Village, Kan.: n.p. n.d.), p. 32. Cf. FCFL, pp. 35-37.

¹²⁷ Faculty of Concordia Seminary, Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the 'Report of the Synodical President', p. 14.

¹²⁸ FC, SD, II, 26.

Therefore the Moderates' insistence that the use of the historical-critical method is the exclusive means of properly understanding Scripture is a championing of synergism and a diminishing reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit. It is fitting to listen to what the Formula of Concord says:

Although man's reason or natural intellect still has a dim spark of the knowledge that there is a God, as well as of the teaching of the law (Rom. 1:19-21, 28, 32), nevertheless it is so ignorant, blind, and perverse that when even the most gifted and the most educated people on earth read or hear the Gospel of the Son of God and the promise of eternal salvation, they cannot by their own powers perceive it as the truth. On the contrary, the more zealously and diligently they want to comprehend these spiritual things with their reason, the less they understand or believe, and until the Holy Spirit enlightens and teaches them they consider it all mere foolishness and fables. (FC, SD, II, 19).

The theory propounded by historical critics that some of the sayings of Jesus recorded in Scriptures do not come from the lips of Jesus but were compositions of the Biblical writers contradicts Jesus and Scriptures' testimony. In the Gospel of John Jesus says: "He [the Holy Spirit] will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26 RSV. Compare John 2:22).

It is argued by Moderates that Biblical writers were not interested in historical and scientific details but in the proclamation of the Gospel. It needs to be asked whether the Holy Spirit, too, in the process of inspiration condescended to this disinterest. The Scriptures nowhere say nor imply that this is the case. In fact, historical, geographical and scientific details are presented as factual even though they are seen from the side of human perspective. Furthermore, it is asserted that errors, contradictions, discrepancies, varying theologies, and so forth are present in the Bible. If that be the case, the only

logical conclusion which can be made is that the Holy Spirit allowed, and even inspired (since the Moderates affirm Biblical inspiration) these errors and contradictions.

The Holy Spirit indeed accommodated Himself in His work of inspiration to the human writers of Scriptures by using their language, style, and so forth, but this does not necessarily mean that He accommodated Himself to the errors of men. There is no greater accommodation of God to humanity than the incarnation yet Christ was spared not only from sinning but even from original sin. Certainly the Holy Spirit is not less powerful to be able to perform a similar miracle in the act of inspiration--preserving the Biblical writers from erring in writing the Scriptures.

The Christian church has called the Bible divine, sacred, holy Scripture specifically because it is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Christian theologian therefore should not approach and treat the Bible like a human document. To do so is to deny the work of the Holy Spirit - an unpardonable sin of unbelief. It is, moreover, "incompatible with the confessional view which regards Holy Scripture as being uniquely from God."¹²⁹

It is solely through the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit works to convict and convince people. It is erroneous for one Moderate to dispute the assertion that there is "a qualitative difference between Scripture and every other form of human expressions."¹³⁰ This, in a sense, is a

¹²⁹ Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 193.

¹³⁰ Walter Keller, et al, "A Review Essay of 'A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles,' (Part II), The Cresset 36 (October 1973): 26.

denial of the Holy Spirit's function to work penitence and faith through the Law and Gospel. It is for this reason that no other form of literature no matter how sacred it may be held by men can have the authority and power of the Scriptures.

The assumption that the cultural and religious circumstances influenced the Biblical writers' understanding of divine revelation rather than by the Holy Spirit's inspiration is an argument which can be employed against the historical critics. What is historical could well be an understanding of divine revelation based on our present Sitz im Leben. Later generations could well judge our sense of historicity to be antiquated and fallacious. In fact this is already the judgment of some concerning Luther's belief in the divine authorship of Scripture.¹³¹

The tendency of the Moderates, in accord with historical criticism, to view the Old Testament on its own terms in order, they argue, to maintain its integrity and to get at the genuine historical meaning of the texts is not only a denial of the unity of Scripture but also a rejection of the Holy Spirit's inspiration of the New Testament. Disagreeing with this historical-critical methodology of examining the Old Testament, a Moderate says:

It is . . . from the Lutheran perspective a distortion of Scripture to interpret the Old Testament in isolation from and without constant reference to the New Testament ('as we discern the shadow in the Old Testament, so in the New we should look for what it represents' (Ap. XXIV, 37)). At the very least an exegesis of the Old

¹³¹Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 133.

Testament as if there were no New Testament is one-sided and incomplete and therefore sectarian.)¹³²

Scripture: Divine Revelation and Word of God

The Moderates, in espousing historical criticism, do not see an apt analogy between the doctrine of inspiration and the incarnation. The Scriptures, indeed, are truly human, historical documents. But by virtue of the Holy Spirit's inspiration they are literally divine revelations in the same manner that Jesus by means of the incarnation is truly human but remained truly divine.

There is no room for a concept of divine revelation in historical criticism. However, the mediating historical critics in order to maintain the Christian doctrine of divine revelation of Scripture, distinguish revelation from Scriptures. Divine revelation is what they call the "event" while Scriptures are the witnesses to that divine event or phenomenon. The event is God's act; the latter is man's work.¹³³

At other times some Moderates explain revelation to be the meaningful insight drawn from the interaction of the human mind with the Biblical text. Divine revelation is then seen to take place when man is able to excise a relevant meaning for his life as he is confronted by the Biblical text. Professor Hummel sees in this a "semi-Pelagian view of revelation."¹³⁴

¹³²Herbert Bouman, "Some Thoughts on the Theological Presuppositions for a Lutheran Approach to the Scriptures," Aspects of Biblical Hermeneutics, pp. 18-19.

¹³³LCUSA, FODT, p. 11. Cf. Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, p. 76.

¹³⁴Horace D. Hummel, Critical Study and the Exodus Pericope, Biblical Study Series #3 (St. Louis: n. p., May 1973), p. 20.

A Moderate, Ralph Gehrke, holds that divine revelation did not really begin with God's action in Israelites' history. He claims that Israel had already many ideas and concepts about its history and that God used these as vehicles to convey the essential facts of salvation. Divine revelation was God's action of illuminating the existing knowledge of Israel.¹³⁵

The further distinction made between divine revelation and Scriptures which are designated as witnesses to God's revelation, springs from the supposition that "God's revelation cannot be contained in anything limited to space and time such as human language."¹³⁶ Such logic is tinged with the Reformed principle that the finite is incapable of the infinite.

In construing the Scriptures as witnesses to God's revelation and not divine revelation itself, the Moderates are then able to justify their use of the historical-critical method. The justification is based on the inference that, although divine revelation is perfect, the witnesses can be inaccurate. The Holy Spirit's role in the witnesses' writings through inspiration is denied by their redefinition of inspiration and by the influence of historical criticism which make them create the version that inspiration took place in the long history, development, and

¹³⁵Gehrke, "Genesis Three in the Light of Key Hermeneutical Considerations," pp. 542-43.

¹³⁶Robert Preus, "Current Theological Problems Which Confront Our Church," in A Conference of the College of Presidents and the Seminary Faculties: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, November 27-29, 1961 (St. Louis: n.p., 1961):27.

production of the Scriptures according to the presuppositions of historical criticism.¹³⁷ This view of revelation poses the predicament that the Biblical reports of the Fall of man into sin and God's saving acts could have been purely anthropological understandings or even etiological narration rather than God's authentic disclosures. This endangers the authority of Scripture and the significance of the Gospel. The adoption of such a conviction is essentially the appropriation of Ludwig Feuerbach's religious philosophy that all theology is anthropology.¹³⁸

The Moderates' exegetical methodology is an attempt to divorce the human from the divine in Scriptures. But, as Dr. Franzmann pointed out, no one then can with certainty say: "Here the Word of God ends, and the word of man begins."¹³⁹ Or, as Norman Nagel says: "No more than we can divide the Person of Christ or the sacramental host can we divide the Scriptures and say, 'This is of God' and 'This is of man.'"¹⁴⁰ Historical criticism as used by the Moderates strives to separate the human and the divine within the Biblical text itself. The Formula of Concord, however, insists on making a clear distinction between Holy Scripture and all other writings.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches To Biblical Interpretation, p. 4.

¹³⁸Cf. Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, tr. George Eliot (New York: Harper and Bros, 1957), pp. 281-84.

¹³⁹Martin Franzmann, "Revelation, Scripture - Inspiration," A Symposium of Essays and Addresses given at the Counselor's Conference, Valparaiso, Indiana, September 7-14, 1960 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), p. 61.

¹⁴⁰Norman Nagel, "The Authority of Scripture," CTM 27 (September 1956):704.

¹⁴¹Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 320.

On the basis of the above tendency to separate the human and the divine in the Bible, there is a definite inclination to make value judgments between what they see as two parts of Scripture. This disposition is contrary to the church fathers' attitude toward Holy Writ. For them

it was not a collection of disparate segments some of divine origin and others of merely human fabrication. . . . Their general view was that Scripture . . . contained nothing that was superfluous.¹⁴²

The thesis Paul G. Bretscher emphatically endorses which predicates the term "Word of God" to the Gospel only and not to the entire Scripture is a simple application of Gospel reductionism to all of Scriptures. The rest of Scriptures then becomes subject to the judgment of human reason via historical investigation. The result of such scrutiny has shown the unreliability of the Bible in many non-Gospel matters.

Recognizing the danger posed by this methodology, Ralph Gehrke writes:

It should be added that once you try to perform surgery and remove any mildly discordant parts and themes, you run into more trouble and find yourself tampering with an essential part of the story.¹⁴³

One has either to treat the entire Scriptures the Word of God or none of it. When St. Paul spoke of the revelation made to the Jews by God, he calls them "the words of God" (ta logia tou theou Rom. 3:2). Franzmann has condemned this non-equation of the designation "Word of God" with Scriptures as a kind of a significat replacing "the forthright est of earlier days."¹⁴⁴ To contend that the Scripture is not the Word of

¹⁴²J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 61.

¹⁴³Gehrke, "Genesis Three in the Light of Key Hermeneutical Considerations," p. 543.

¹⁴⁴Martin H. Franzmann, "The Nature of the Unity We Seek," CTM 28 (November 1957):803.

God but contains the Word of God is to make it no more unique than the writings of Luther which also contain God's Word.

Moderates admit that the traditional understanding of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod concerning Scripture is "that God is the Author of every word of Scripture; that Scripture is qualitatively different from every form of human expression."¹⁴⁵ However, they declare that "any tradition, even one 375 years old, may be examined and revised without disloyalty either to the Scripture or the Lutheran Confessions."¹⁴⁶ This tradition, however, is not uniquely Missouri Synod and is much older than just 375 years old. It has been the faith of the Christian Church for many centuries before the Enlightenment. Therefore the counsel of Dr. Ralph Bohlmann is worth bearing in mind when he said:

The testimony of the fathers . . . suggests that we listen carefully and respectfully and humbly to the past interpretations of Scripture. It suggests that we think at least twice before advocating radically different interpretations from the traditional ones. It implies that the interpretations of Scripture which men under the Spirit have held to be true for hundreds of years may well be true today. In this process of appreciative, yet critical listening the testimony of the fathers can serve as a hermeneutical guide.¹⁴⁷

The Moderates' Use of the
Historical-Critical Method Not Logical

The historical-critical method and its presuppositions are inseparable. Form and redaction criticisms, for example, cannot accept that the contexts of all Biblical pericopes are correct. This is in accord

¹⁴⁵Keller, et al, "A Review Essay of 'A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles,'" (Part II), p. 26.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Bohlmann, "Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions," p. 39.

with the methods' presuppositions regarding the historical development of the Biblical texts. In acknowledgement of this thesis the Moderates try to justify their use of the historical-critical method by imposing some Lutheran presuppositions. It is, therefore, not strange to hear them speak of the Bible as God's Word, inspired, inerrant, and authoritative. However, these terms have been given existential and functional meanings.¹⁴⁸ In doing so one not only has difficulty in delineating the differences among these terms but also made them powerless in restraining the liberal trend of the historical-critical method. In 1960 the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, faculty defined inerrancy in the document A Statement on the Form and Function of the Holy Scriptures to mean that the Scripture expresses and accomplishes what God wants it to accomplish.¹⁴⁹ Arthur Carl Piepkorn in evaluating this definition said that this is not the meaning of the term "inerrancy" as used by the Lutheran theologians of Missouri Synod - Walther, Pieper, and Arndt.¹⁵⁰ The attempt to use historical criticism with new presuppositions is not sound. Franzmann says:

A method is not to be applied 'conservatively' or 'radically' - it should simply be applied consistently. Therefore the more

¹⁴⁸Supra, pp. 82-105, passim. A number of Conservatives have complained about this plain equivocation of the terms applied to Scripture; Scaer, "A Response to David Lotz," p. 228; Armand J. Boehme, "The Smokescreen Vocabulary," Concordia Theological Quarterly 41 (April 1977): 25 and ACDC, pp. 108-09.

¹⁴⁹Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, A Statement on the Form and Function of Holy Scriptures, CTM 31 (October 1960):626.

¹⁵⁰Arthur C. Piepkorn, "What Does 'Inerrancy' Mean?," CTM 36 (September 1965):577.

'radical' practitioners of the method can always reproach the more 'conservative' ones with inconsistency.¹⁵¹

In the practice of his craft a historian assumes "that all knowledge (or even all truth) is historically conditioned . . .¹⁵² It is further asserted that "this assumption allows history to be scientific, for historical knowledge is capable of verification of the evidence."¹⁵³ This, of course, means not only the limitation of the possibilities of historical knowledge but also absolutizes an anthropocentric view of history.¹⁵⁴ To avoid this, the Moderates try to give up the positivistic axiom and belief in absolute naturalism which are the fundamental principles of historical criticism. However, the venture fails as is evident in the results of their exegetical works exempting those elements crucial to the Gospel where the Moderates allow faith to triumph over historical criticism.

Following the arguments of historical critics, the Moderates criticize Biblical historiography as antiquated and therefore not in accord with our fashion of understanding history. If so, is it then valid to judge the Scripture on the basis of historical criticism, a method which "produces history in the modern sense, for it consciously and critically investigates biblical documents to write a narrative of the history they reveal?"¹⁵⁵ The criteria of our present understanding of history cannot be used as an impartial judge of the past. A hundred or

¹⁵¹Franzmann, "The Hermeneutical Dilemma: Dualism in the Interpretation of Holy Scripture," pp. 507-08.

¹⁵²Krentz, HCM, p. 56.

¹⁵³Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ACDC, p. 67.

¹⁵⁵Krentz, HCM, p. 35.

more years ago, what were considered scientific fictions are today realities. Many biblical data which were considered non-historical have been proven by archaeology to be facts. Historians, if they are to be truly scientific, need to be cautioned not to be drastic in their judgment of Scriptural details lest a thousand or more years from now they may be labeled as unscientific and unhistorical scholars.

History and theology are inseparably presented by the Biblical writers. The Moderates' attempt to separate the history from theology within Scriptures is contrary to the intent and structure of Scriptures themselves. The method of applying the historical-critical method on historical details does adversely affect the theology, even the Gospel in Scriptures. St. Paul made this explicit in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, 12-14 where he says that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ were "according to the Scriptures." Two things can be historically ascertained - Christ died and was buried. The most important event, however, that He rose from the dead is beyond historical investigation and an occurrence contrary to the basic presupposition of historical criticism. The pro nobis effect of Christ's life and work are indispensable to the Gospel but faith and historical criticism cannot be reconciled for faith, the Scripture says, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

The history reported by Scriptures is important even though we have to believe many of them by faith. In fact Krentz claims that to deny the history reported in Scripture is to "make impossible demands on faith, and separate history from the Bible that stresses its importance.

It would be a form of docetic heresy."¹⁵⁶ Yet the Moderates' application of historical criticism to the Bible with the result that many of the historical data in Scriptures are denied as factual produces precisely the consequence Professor Krentz condemns. In fact, Professor Krentz contradicts himself later when he says that "faith is response to the promise, not acceptance of historical data."¹⁵⁷ This is a simple mode of separating Historie and Geschichte in Scriptures. This is an illegitimate process for God's proclamation of the promise until its fulfillment in the redemptive act of Christ and its final and perfect consummation in the eschaton was and is continually accompanied by God's action in human history. It is irrational to restrict Biblical truism to the Scriptural intent and judge the historical data as erroneous. It would adversely affect the Christians' task of giving an account of the hope that is in them.

It is not justifiable for the FCFL confessors to say that "faith rests in the promise of a faithful God, not in the accuracy of ancient historians."¹⁵⁸ The assertion would be perfectly legitimate if what one finds in Scriptures are purely accounts of ancient historians. But the promise itself and the proofs of God's faithfulness as found in those Scriptural accounts were accomplished by God in history and conveyed to us through those historians whom God inspired to make them faithful historians. Our faith in the promise and in a faithful God would be in jeopardy if the Biblical writers have not been faithful historians. The

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁵⁸FCFL, p. 26.

historical data of Scriptures are an important part of God's message to men in the same manner that the historical details of the Christian creed are a part of our confession. It would be perilous to accept that Jesus was born but not from a virgin; that He suffered and died but not under Pontius Pilate, and that He rose again but not on the third day. To accept the findings of historical criticism and the Moderates' methodology of Gospel-reductionism would require a condensed Scripture and possibly also an abridged form of the creed. This disbelief in the manner God gave His promise parallels the Jewish mistake of believing in the coming Messiah but rejecting Him because it was not according to the way they expected God to act in history.

It is true that the Apology states that ". . . it is not enough to believe that Christ was born, suffered, was raised again, unless we add also this article, which is the purpose of the history: The forgiveness of sins." (Ap, IV, 51). The last phrase, "the forgiveness of sins" was not meant to discredit or even detract from the importance of Biblical history. The Augsburg Confession makes it clear when it defined faith. It says:

'faith' does not signify merely the knowledge of the history, such as in the ungodly and in the devil, but signifies a faith which believes, not merely the history, but also the effect¹⁵⁹ of the history - namely, this article: the forgiveness of sins. . .

The Gospel and its history are both inseparable and relevant for the Christian faith. But the Moderates' stress on the importance almost solely of the Gospel to accommodate the use of historical criticism in non-Gospel related matters diminishes the significance of Biblical history. In the

¹⁵⁹Concordia Triglotta, AC, XX, 23.

end this makes the use of historical criticism irrelevant for the method would solely have an historical intent with no existential meaning for the Christian life. The mediating theologians are therefore caught in a bind by affirming what are necessary for the faith which are denied by the historical-critical method which they espouse. Historical criticism for example, must necessarily deny the functions and the pro nobis concepts of the Law and Gospel for they are beyond historical investigation. As practitioners of historical criticism, the Moderates to be consistent, must need to do the same but then this would mean giving up the Christian faith. Therefore they abandon historical criticism in matters relevant to salvation, in other words, those which can be reduced to the Gospel. It is also for this reason that historical criticism is an inappropriate method to employ in the study of Scriptures. The uniqueness of the Scripture is well expressed by Dr. Scharlemann who said:

The divine action and its meaning or significance is beyond historical criticism's domain. Other men in Jesus' time could have written a life of Christ which is truly historical but only a John and a Matthew could write the life of Christ as a gospel.¹⁶⁰

It is sheer contradiction for the mediating theologians to insist that they use historical criticism differently because they use it with Lutheran presuppositions and then stress that "in view of its historical dimension, the Bible must be studied by the same techniques used to study any other literature."¹⁶¹ The latter canon necessarily requires the surrender of Biblical facts and Confessional presuppositions.

¹⁶⁰ Martin H. Scharlemann, "Some Sobering Reflections on the Use Of The Historical-Critical Method," Affirm: Occasional Papers, Spring 1973, p. 5.

¹⁶¹ CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, pp. 8-9.

The Historical-Critical Method Denies Laity Access
To Biblical Understanding

One leading Moderate, Herbert T. Mayer, had once declared: "It will be a sad day for the church if Biblical interpretation becomes the monopoly of the highly trained exegete."¹⁶² He had also praised the Missouri Synod's stance on propositional theology which sets forth

religious truths in the form of absolute statements . . . either taken directly from Scripture or based on Scripture by processes of deduction which are usually quite plain and obvious.¹⁶³

He had also hoped that the Synod will remain faithful to this type of propositional theology so that the systematicians will be able to continue to say, "'Thus says the Lord,' as the Biblical evidence warrants."¹⁶⁴ Yet Professor Mayer later abandoned this position, joined and supported those who in their use of historical criticism are unable with genuine honesty to say, "Thus says the Lord."

Krentz admits that the use of the historical-critical method in understanding the Bible has made the Bible "a specialist's book and is no longer the treasure of the church."¹⁶⁵ The method "heightens the distance of Scripture from us and often from the dogmatic tradition of the church."¹⁶⁶ Therefore one craftsman of the method concludes that to understand the Scriptures "a command of the commentary . . . becomes

¹⁶²Herbert T. Mayer, Interpreting The Holy Scriptures (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 43.

¹⁶³Idem, "Editorial," CTM 36 (February 1965):68.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵Krentz, HCM, p. 71.

¹⁶⁶Reumann, Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics, p. 41.

almost indispensable."¹⁶⁷ This is contrary to what Luther advocated when he said, "Scripture is intended for all people."¹⁶⁸ It is considered one of the greatest gifts of the Protestant Reformation to the laity - restoring to them the open Bible.¹⁶⁹ To make this a reality, Luther himself translated the Bible into the German language and many others have followed suit since then.

According to historical criticism the Bible is a complex book filled with contradictions, errors, embellished with legends and myths and filled with divergent theologies. This claim makes Luther's and others' task of translating the Scriptures into the languages of the peoples of the world all for naught because the overwhelming majority of the people in the world do not have the competence to be historical critics to discriminate the truths from the errors in Scriptures. The reading of the Bible might as well be limited to the theological scholars as it was done during the Middle Ages. Historical criticism has made the simple understanding of the Scriptures extremely difficult. "The Bible has . . . become a closed book for the laity and for most of the average clergymen."¹⁷⁰ The Moderates' insistence on the use of historical criticism to understand Scripture, to a certain extent, is a

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁶⁸Martin Luther, Samtliche Schriften. herausgegeben von Johann Georg Walch. XXIII Band (St. Louis: Lutherischer Concordia Verlag, 1880-1910), 18:1151.

¹⁶⁹Raymond Surburg, "Form Criticism and Its Implications for the Interpretation of the Old Testament," in A Project in Biblical Hermeneutics, ed. Richard Jungkuntz (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969), pp. 116-17.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 117.

rejection of the teaching concerning the priesthood of all believers. How can an ordinary Christian be a priest when he does not have the competence to understand God's Word for himself?

Historical criticism advocates a new form of gnosticism when it denies the perspicuity of Scripture. It argues that

biblical literature is so completely conditioned by the culture which produced it that apart from a thorough acquaintance with the categories, thought patterns, and literary genres of the period from which it came, this literature cannot be understood at all.¹⁷¹

This special gnosis includes the competence in using the historical-critical method and knowledge of extra-canonical literature contemporaneous with the Bible.

Historical critics, of course, have not reached a point of consensus on their various conjectures as to the meaning of the Biblical texts. It almost becomes a necessity to have an official magisterium of historical critics to make sense out of the complexities they have underscored in Scripture. This complexity is admitted when Krentz says:

The theology and history of post-exilic Judaism cannot be written without the constant use of Josephus, Philo, Qumran, Apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, Mishnah and Talmud.¹⁷²

The complexity of Scripture is further compounded by historical criticism's assumption that the Old Testament, especially the words of the prophets, have been collated carelessly and haphazardly so that it is now a complex literary piece.¹⁷³ It becomes therefore inevitable for the

¹⁷¹CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, p. 10.

¹⁷²Krentz, HCM, p. 48.

¹⁷³Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament, p. 11.

historical critic to assume the responsibility as judge in determining what is and what is not authentic in Scripture. Without his expertise, one of the cardinal policies of the reformation must be denied, that is, "that the Scriptures are open and must be read by every Christian."¹⁷⁴

Gospel-Reductionism Inadequate As A Hermeneutical Method

The German version of Apology IV, 2 has often been quoted and raised to a status of a hermeneutical principle by the Moderates.¹⁷⁵ It is argued that the article on justification by faith should be the "light for determining God's truth and God's will as revealed in the Scriptures."¹⁷⁶ This part however of the Apology even in its German rendition does not claim that the article on justification by faith become the judge of all doctrines and practices in the Christian Church. It was logical that the Lutheran Confessors should have used this Scriptural doctrine to refute the Roman Catholic teaching of good works because this particular article deals with the Biblical doctrine of justification by grace through faith. This is the major difference between the Lutherans and Roman Catholics even to this day. In other matters unrelated to the doctrine of good works, the article on justification by faith was not used by the Confessions as the rule and norm for determining God's truth and God's will. The phrase "It is contrary to the

¹⁷⁴Klann, "Criticism of the Bible," p. 2.

¹⁷⁵Schroeder, "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutics," pp. 90-91. Bouman, "Some Thoughts on Authentic Lutheranism," p. 286 and H. William Jordan, "A Model for the Church in Conflict," Currents in Theology and Mission 4 (February 1977):25.

¹⁷⁶Mayer, "Editorial, CTM 43 (April 1972):196.

Gospel" and other phrases similar to it were the favorite statements the Lutheran Confessors used in Apology IV to refute the doctrine of good works. They were the logical statements to use. The Lutherans could not reasonably say that their opponents' doctrines were contrary to Scripture because the Roman Catholics were quoting Scriptures albeit it was the Law which they had misinterpreted in its functions which they cited. The Confutatio was filled with Biblical quotations! The article on justification by faith was not meant to be a hermeneutical principle. Rather, it was used as a polemical tool against the Roman Catholics' law-oriented doctrines and practices.

Gospel reductionism as a hermeneutical method in understanding Scripture is not in full accord with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Luther said that the Ten Commandments can also be a rule and norm. He said,

Anyone who knows the Ten Commandments perfectly knows the entire Scriptures. In all affairs and circumstances he can counsel, help, comfort, judge, and make decisions in both spiritual and temporal matters. He is qualified to sit in judgment upon all doctrines.¹⁷⁷

The Gospel as a norm within Scripture means that no teaching and practice may be tolerated in the Christian Church which contradicts the central message of the Bible. This does not mean, however, that the Gospel supplants sola Scriptura as the rule and judge of doctrines and practices. It is a misuse of the Gospel when its importance is employed to relativize and even disregard other teachings in Scriptures. The term "chief article" in describing justification by faith was meant to

¹⁷⁷BC, Large Catechism, Long Preface, 17.

emphasize its significance but not to disregard the independent character of other articles of faith.

Many Moderates have used Luther's dictum Was Christum treibet as an argument in support of Gospel reductionism and as a concept to judge non-Gospel matters as insignificant which may even be repudiated. Commenting on Luther's maxim, the Moderate Herbert Bouman says, "It is evident that such judgments have nothing to do with disparaging or repudiating any part of the Biblical content."¹⁷⁸ Francis Pieper says that Luther's saying "If our adversaries urge Scripture, we urge Christ against Scripture" (St. Louis Ed., XIX, 1441) means the

abuse of Scripture perpetrated by the Romanists in urging Scripture passages that speak of the Law and of human works against Christ, that is, against the Gospel and faith. That is Luther's own explanation of his use of the term 'Scripture'. . .¹⁷⁹

Gospel reductionism in a sense rejects the precept that individual doctrines must be based on passages that treat of them, that is, on the sedes doctrinae. Instead, the narrow sense of the Gospel has been used as a substitute for the sedes doctrinae.

The method of Gospel reductionism controverts the entire history of exegesis as was practiced by the Reformers and the Lutheran Church. Moreover, its limiting the Gospel in the narrow sense excludes the concrete expression of the Gospel in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's

¹⁷⁸ Bouman, "Some Thoughts on the Theological Presuppositions for a Lutheran Approach to the Scriptures," p. 16.

¹⁷⁹ Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 293.

Supper since these tangible expressions of the Gospel cannot be used as a norm to evaluate doctrine or practice unless these are directly related to the sacraments.

It is presumptuous to expect the Gospel to be the rule and norm for all questions of Christian faith and practice. The authorship of Biblical books, the question of women's ordination, marriage, divorce, pastoral call, environmental exploitation, the problem of homosexuality, unionism, abortion, mode of baptism, and so forth, would be extremely difficult to judge solely on the basis of the Gospel. The rest of the Scriptures, however, do have statements relative to these matters. To leave these as open questions because they cannot be related to the Gospel is to restrict the authority of Scriptures which speak to these issues. For this reason the Conservatives complain

It is perhaps a pious overstatement from the Moderate Caucus which says: "We must attempt to relate everything in Scripture to the Gospel." This is really very difficult and probably impossible to do, if we are to observe the canons of historical and grammatical exegesis. It is hardly "a commonplace among Biblical interpreters" today, most of whom are not Lutheran and make no attempt to relate everything in Scripture to the Gospel. How, for instance, does one relate the Proverbs of Solomon to the Gospel except to say that they are not Gospel?¹⁸⁰

But the Moderates insist that "doctrinal formulations are to be made in the light of the doctrine: justification by faith."¹⁸¹ In rejecting this proposition the Conservatives declare:

The fact that they the Moderates will not condemn one who teaches contrary to Scripture until they have answered to their own satisfaction how that person's doctrine relates to 'The doctrine of the

¹⁸⁰ ACDC, p. 48.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 40-41.

Gospel' simply undergirds our conclusion, namely that 'Gospel Reductionism' as carried out by the Moderates, is in fact an undermining of the authority of the Biblical text. . . .¹⁸²

Christ's descent into hell is extremely difficult to relate to the Gospel unless perhaps through a verbal and theological circumlocution. The Moderates, in fact, interpret this Biblical teaching to refer simply to Christ's death. Luther, however, states:

We should not . . . trouble ourselves with high and acute thoughts as to how this occurred; for with our reason and our five senses this article can be comprehended as little as the preceding one, how Christ is placed at the right hand of the Almighty power and majesty of God; but we are simply to believe it and adhere to the Word.¹⁸³

The acceptance of historical criticism logically requires the denial of Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. This point of view is not only contrary to Luther and the Lutheran Confessions' stance (See Ap. XII, 53 and FC, SD, V, 1) but also would naturally lead to the non-applicability of Gospel reductionism to Old Testament texts. The Moderates therefore do not reject Messianic prophecies but their adoption of historical criticism makes them predisposed to diminish the number of Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament as manifest in their exegesis of Old Testament texts.

The historicity of the Fall of Adam and Eve like the bronze serpent miracle, the mediating theologians assert, need not be affirmed as factual because they are not relevantly related to the gospel.¹⁸⁴ Walter Keller says that the genuinely Lutheran understanding of original sin is

¹⁸²Ibid., pp. 52-53.

¹⁸³Concordia Triglotta, FC, TD, IX, 13, p. 1051. Emphasis mine.

¹⁸⁴Steven A. Hein, "'A Scrutiny' Scrutinized." The Cresset 36 (January 1973):21.

not the affirmation of the Fall account but the conviction that we are all sinners.¹⁸⁵ Such an argument removes the historical foundation for the doctrine of original sin. In a strict sense, this means there was no original sin and Paul's analogy in Romans 5:12-17 cannot be affirmed as true. The enigma of the Moderates' position is that they are ready to affirm the veracity of the latter part of the analogy because it is a Gospel matter. This is the dilemma in which the Moderates find themselves by both advocating historical criticism and Gospel reductionism - they are prone to accept only a portion of the Scripture as in the case of Romans 5:12-17.

When the mediating theologians deny the historicity of Adam and Eve, to be truly consistent, they must necessarily reject Adam's genealogy as listed in both the Old and New Testaments. This ultimately would mean not only the denial of the historicity of the patriarchs but, more importantly, of Christ Himself for His incarnation is related to the genealogy of Adam.

When Moderates espouse Gospel-reductionism and historical criticism and proclaim that "the Gospels often tell us only what early Christians were saying that Jesus did and taught [and] nothing about what Jesus actually did and taught,"¹⁸⁶ then we cannot really be sure what the Gospel is all about. Jesus' sufferings, death and resurrection could have been an invented story of the early Christian communities. In fact a consistent historical critic cannot accept a literary genre called "Gospel."

¹⁸⁵ Keller, et al, "A Review of 'A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles'," p. 18.

¹⁸⁶ CTCR, A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, p. 15.

Gospel reductionists who espouse historical criticism endanger the trustworthiness of the Gospel by casting doubt on the reliability of the Gospel contexts. For instance when they acknowledged that Jesus Christ is God's Son and savior of the world but deny the virgin birth, they put into question Jesus' conception by the Holy Ghost and therefore also His divinity. They would also deny a facet of the Trinitarian's salvific act which declares that while it is the Father who gave the Son to the world, it is the Holy Ghost who conceived Him in the womb of a virgin.

Gospel reductionism rejects the normative character of other teachings in Scripture which cannot be related to the Gospel. This runs contrary to the practice of the Lutheran Confessors who repeatedly emphasized that their teachings were "taken from the Word of God and solidly and well grounded therein" (FC, SD, Summary 5): "supported with clear and irrefutable testimonies from the Holy Scriptures" (FC, SD, Summary 6) and "base our position on the Word of God as the eternal truth" (FC, SD, Summary 13) and rooted "on the witness of the unalterable truth of the divine Word" (Preface to the Book of Concord, p. 5). For the Lutheran Confessors

the Holy Scripture remains the only judge, rule, and norm according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong.¹⁸⁷

The use of historical criticism with Gospel reductionism by Moderates is an attempt to edit Scriptures to retain only the Gospel and those

¹⁸⁷FC, Ep. Summary, 7. They also said that "the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged" (FC, SD, Summary, 3).

data vital to the narrow sense of the Gospel. This method has made them either diminish or even completely cast aside the third function of the Law which the Lutheran Confessions required to be taught to Christians

so that they will not be thrown back on their own holiness and piety and under the pretext of the Holy Spirit's guidance set up a self-elected service of God without His Word and command.¹⁸⁸

God works through the Law to convict the impenitent and to guide the penitent to God-pleasing works. God does not work through the narrow sense of the Gospel, that is, through the article of justification by faith to direct Christians to what they should do and not do. To deny this function of the Law and to invoke "freedom in the Gospel" as a means through which Christians should gain insight in what they ought to do is to confuse Law and Gospel and the means by which the Holy Spirit works to bring penitence and faith.

In the controversy concerning the Lord's Supper, Luther insisted that the bread remains bread because this teaching "is in perfect agreement with Holy Scriptures" (SA, II, vi, 5). The Apology in rejecting invocation of the saints declares it does so because it is "without proof from Scripture" (Ap. XX, 10). The Flacian error on original sin was judged on the basis of Scripture.¹⁸⁹ Though not knowing the hermeneutical principle known as Gospel reductionism, Luther, as if anticipating the method, rejected it when he spoke of Abraham's circumcision. He wrote:

My friend, God's Word is God's Word! This point does not require much haggling! When one blasphemously gives the lie to God in a single word, or says it is a minor matter if God is blasphemed or

¹⁸⁸FC, SD, VI, 20.

¹⁸⁹Concordia Triglotta, FC, TD, I, 33-34, p. 869.

called a liar, one blasphemes the entire God and makes light of all blasphemy. . . . You see, the circumcision of Abraham (Genesis 17: 10f.) is an old, dead matter and no longer either necessary or useful. But if I were to say that God did not command it in its time, it would do me no good even if I believed the Gospel. So St. James asserts "Whosoever offends in one point is guilty in all respects." He possibly heard the apostles say that all the words of God must be believed or not, although he applies their interpretation to the works of the Law.¹⁹⁰

Edward Schroeder contends that in Scriptures there are matters which are at a "sub-Gospel" level such as concerns about fasting, liturgical practices, images in church buildings, and marriage. What he does not tell us is the fact that these matters are of sub-gospel level because the Scriptures either say so or are silent about them. In other words, they are adiaphora. Moreover, if the Scripture had not been the norm to tell us that these matters are of "sub-gospel" level, we could have been misled to believe that they are necessary to salvation. Therefore, it is imperative to keep the Scripture as the rule and judge of all matters found therein. The Scriptures do not treat the details of the account of the creation, the Fall, the Crossing of the Red Sea, the virgin birth, the role of women in public ministry and other data as sub-gospel matters. When the Moderates treat these as unimportant, they contravene themselves when they declared: "We do not assume that anything in the Bible is unimportant or to be treated lightly . . ."¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ LW, 37, p. 26. Emphasis mine.

¹⁹¹ ACDC, p. 62. It is worth noting what C. F. Walther says in upholding sola Scriptura: "We cannot consider nor treat any doctrine that is clearly taught in God's Word or that contradicts some clear Word of God as an open question, even though it may seem to be or actually is only a subordinate doctrine or one that may lie on the periphery far removed from the heart of the doctrine of salvation." Dr. Walther's Foreword for Volume XIV of Lehre und Wehre, 1868, p. 494.

Gospel reductionism has the tendency to negate part of the whole counsel of God. A compilation of all the ordinances of God, though they can be called divine revelation, God's Word, infallible, inerrant, authoritative, inspired, and canonical, is a distortion of God's Word for it is not the whole Scripture and therefore does not proclaim the whole counsel of God. In the same manner an accumulation of all Gospel statements from the Bible does not constitute the whole Scriptures and therefore cannot be considered the complete Word of God to men. All of Scriptures must be accepted if we are to keep the whole counsel of God.

Sola Scriptura - the whole of Scriptures, safeguards the right understanding of solus Christus. Without the Scriptures' explications of solus Christus, one can misinterpret the benefits of Christ and therefore the Gospel even though he affirms faith in Christ. Erasmus believed that Christ is the center of the Biblical message but he believed Him as the moral example for the Christian life rather than the savior.

One of the problems Moderates face in advocating Gospel reductionism is the fact that they are not all agreed on what Biblical matters are crucial or not to the Gospel. In dissenting from the Synod position on women's ordination into the pastoral office, Professor Schroeder maintains that this issue is not doctrinal and does no violence to the Gospel.¹⁹² Most Moderates, however, say that "the question of the ordination of women does touch the Gospel, and that is why it has become a point of controversy."¹⁹³

¹⁹² Edward Schroeder, "The Orders of Creation - Some Reflections on the History and Place of the Term in Systematic Theology." GTM 43 (March 1972):177.

¹⁹³ ACDC, p. 66.

The hermeneutical principle Scripture interprets Scripture is nullified by gospel reductionism when it confines the hermeneutical rule to a governing theological principle - the Gospel. It also rejects the axiom known as analogy of faith which in reality constitutes the whole of Scriptures according to the Lutheran Confessions. Thus the Apology says:

Besides, examples ought to be interpreted according to the rule, i. e., according to certain and clear passages of Scripture, not contrary to the rule, that is, contrary to the Scriptures.¹⁹⁴

The methodology of Gospel-reductionism is really a confusion of the material and formal principles for the Gospel is used as a rule and norm and also the source of doctrines. This confusion is expressed in what Martin Heineken wrote:

What is the Word of God and what is not the Word of God must be judged by the Word of God itself, i.e., in other words, it must be judged from the center of the message, i.e., from Christ.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Concordia Triglotta, Ap. XXVII, 60, p. 441. Emphasis mine.

¹⁹⁵ R. Preus, "Current Theological Problems Which Confront Our Church," p. 17.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This research has attempted to show that the theological dividing wall between Conservatives and Moderates in the recent controversy within Missouri Synod has been due to the latter's use of the historical-critical method in Biblical interpretation. Contrary to the varied reasons given for the cause of the controversy, the facts show that the conflict between the two parties is of a doctrinal nature stemming specifically from the Moderates' advocacy of historical criticism.

The aspect of historical criticism discussed in this study did not deal primarily with the details of the method's historical development and on how each step in the method is used in explicating a Biblical text. Rather, the inquiry focused on the identifiable presuppositions underlining the method which have proven to be the determinants of the exegetical conclusions of its practitioners. The study would have been empirically easier if the theological craftsmen we have been dealing with had been consistent in their application of the historical-critical methodology. Such, however, is not the case. The imposition of a governing theological principle known as Gospel reductionism in conjunction with historical criticism as the mediating theologians' hermeneutical methodology has generated an inconsistent application of historical criticism in the interpretation of Scripture. Gospel reductionism as a hermeneutical principle has allowed the modified use of historical criticism on

matters which the Moderates assert to be unrelated to the Gospel. Therefore the Scriptural doctrines summarized in the creeds have remained part of their confessional affirmations even though historical criticism's conclusions have denied the historicity of many accounts in the Bible including elements which are clearly linked with the Gospel.

To a certain extent, it must be admitted, this governing theological axiom has tempered the excessive criticisms and speculations regarding the Biblical accounts. But such moderation has been confined to the narrow sense of the Gospel and to matters directly associated with the Gospel. Furthermore, the Moderates' attempt to employ the historical-critical method in conjunction with Gospel reductionism has caused them to shift from the conventional to functional definitions of terms used relative to the nature and attributes of Scripture. This subtle means has won to their side a good number of the Synod's laity, and even clergy, who have not seen the ingenious distinctions made in the definitions of theological terminologies. This investigation, however, has shown that the definitions and the Biblical interpretations of the proponents of historical criticism do not square with the Biblical, Confessional, and Synodical statements and explications concerning Scripture. Such disagreements have not been limited solely to historical and geographical matters but including items affecting the gospel. We have endeavored to prove these in Chapters III and IV.

Historical criticism with its assumptions has proven, for the most part, to have brought more chaos than sense to Biblical interpretation and more uncertainty than faith in the Biblical text among Christians. A method such as this which weakens the personal faith of

individual Christians toward Scripture rather than edifying them is not worth commending.

While it is true that the Gospel is the central message of the Bible, it does not necessarily imply that it can be used as part of a methodology which categorizes other matters reported in God's Word as insignificant. There is nothing in Scriptures which makes the Gospel part of an interpretive methodology and which accommodates a historical inquiry that undermines the principle of sola Scriptura. Historical criticism and Gospel reductionism even in complementary juxtaposition have not established their adequacy as a method for Biblical interpretation.

Historical criticism has been harshly criticized in this research. This does not mean, however, that the method is totally illegitimate. There is a proper place for scientific and historical inquiry. But, they cannot be grounded on the presuppositions developed in the era of the Enlightenment and on present views of history. Such historical investigations are bent on solving every Biblical problem to the extent that conjectures and value judgments are made concerning Scripture. These methods may be valid on other historical documents. Scripture, however, claims a uniqueness when it asserts to narrate a history of God's activities in human history; makes pronouncements of judgment and promise, and clamors for faith which can mean eternal life or death.

It is commonplace today to read conservative theologians advocating and using the historical-critical method and find that their exegetical conclusions are still within the tolerable limits of the doctrinal stance of their churches. They are critical of the liberal Biblical

critics; their speculations are guarded, and they are explicit in declaring that their findings are, at their best, only plausible explanations. However, it must be stated here that the seed of historical criticism has germinated among them and taken roots to the extent that the traditional doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy have in actuality been abandoned.¹ They have set the trend of theological education within their ecclesiastical institution and it is unlikely that the next generation of exegetes will be as conservative as they. The history of a number of Protestant denominations and recently that of Missouri Synod has proven the truth of this thesis.

It is interesting to note that the history of the recent controversy within Missouri Synod has shown the validity of the above hypothesis. The thirty-fourth regular convention of Missouri Synod which approved the publication of the theological periodical Concordia Theological Monthly (CTM) made it explicit that the theology of this journal shall adhere with

what Lehre und Wehre taught and defended for seventy-five years, what the Magazin fuer Ev. Luth. Homiletik presented for more than fifty years, what the Theological Quarterly and the Theological Monthly have proclaimed since 1897 . . .²

¹See also Howard I. Marshall, ed., New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), p. 157-162 and George Eldon Ladd, The New Testament and Criticism (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978).

²"By Way of Introduction," CTM 1 (January 1930):1.

The Concordia Theological Monthly was titled "the theological journal of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod."³ When it started publication in 1930, its theology was in no way different from the previous theological periodicals of the Synod. But theological change did come. In the beginning it was gradual and not quite apparent.⁴ But in the mid-60's the theological change could no longer be hidden. Its editor Herbert T. Mayer had to admit

In very recent years another type of theology has gained prominence in our circles. . . . Men of our church in teaching positions at every institution and in parishes in every District have tasted the fruit of heilsgeschichtliche theology. . . .⁵

In the same year Dr. Oliver Harms in "An Open Letter" published in the CTM wrote: "I should caution the readers to expect to see some presentations in Concordia Theological Monthly which do not say things in the way in which we are accustomed to hear them."⁶ Later the editorial committee of the CTM recommended the deletion of the title: "The Theological Journal of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod" from the publication, apparently because it no longer totally reflected the theological stance of the Synod.⁷ It must be remembered that the staff and most of the contributors to this theological journal were members of the former

³George W. Hoyer, "Editorial: Denver, Theological Comments," CTM 40 (May 1969):259.

⁴The Staff of CTM, "Editorial: A Statement of Editorial Policy," CTM 37 (January 1966):3.

⁵Herbert G. Mayer, "Editorial," CTM 36 (February 1965):68-69.

⁶Oliver R. Harms, "An Open Letter," CTM 36 (June 1965):357.

⁷Hoyer, "Editorial: Denver, Theological Comments," p. 260.

faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Professor Bouman was honest enough to admit that his views of authentic Lutheranism has changed.⁸ The views of Professors von Rohr Sauer and Holland Jones had clearly changed.⁹ Of this theological change Dr. Franzmann wrote:

a shift from an accent on systematics to an accent in exegesis, with the possible danger that the clarity and force of our doctrinal formulations may be replaced by more ambiguous, open-ended

⁸Herbert A. Bouman, "Some Thoughts on Authentic Lutheranism," CTM 42 (May 1971), p. 288.

⁹Alfred von Rohr Sauer, "Verbal Inspiration and the Living Word," The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Student Service Commission (June 1965): 11-13. Sauer wrote: "Scripture in its entirety, in all of its parts, is given by the Spirit of God. This certainly was in Paul's thinking when he said to Felix, 'I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the prophets' (Acts 24:14). . . . The process of Inspiration is termed Verbal Inspiration in order to emphasize the fact that God gave the holy writers the very words which they recorded. . . . and the inerrancy of Scripture is based not only on such a passage as John 10:35: 'The Scripture cannot be broken', but also on the fact that the infallible God gave those Scriptures to man. . . . The writer honestly feels that he has listened to the evidence of error in Scripture which critical scholarship presents and that such evidence has been found wanting. . . . The writer has endeavored to show that there is more harmony than tension in the theme Verbal Inspiration and the Living Word, that the Living Word is not to be separated from, but rather to be identified with the written words of Scripture. Therefore he feels constrained to reject the tensionist view that: 'The Bible is not God's Word but merely contains God's Word. . . . I must consult my reason and find out from it what is genuine and what is not,' and to advocate the harmonist view with its assertion: The Bible is God's Word . . . my reason must keep silence and bow in adoration." Professor Sauer has clearly abandoned this position in his later espousal of historical criticism and in his sharing and supporting the Moderates' theological convictions.

Professor Holland Jones in reviewing Alan Richardson's book Genesis I-XI: Introduction And Commentary (London: SCM Press, 1953) criticized the book for its positive views on the findings of historical criticism. Yet in 1974 Professor Jones joined the SEMINEX scholars who uphold many, if not all, of the views he had previously criticized. See also Holland Jones, "Book Review," CTM 28 (March 1957):228.

formulations that make our doctrinal stand more flexible and negotiable. . . . A shift in accent from that on the divine side of Scripture to that on its human side, which may constitute a threat to the recognition of the divine authority of the Bible. . . . A shift from asserting the Scripture as absolute truth to an accent on the 'conditioned' character of truth as communicated in history through human language, with the concomitant danger that the truth of the Scriptural witness may be relativized. . .¹⁰

Those words have proven to be prophetically true within Missouri Synod. A further study of how, in its history, theological change has come about within the Synod will not only supplement this research but should prove to be a fruitful endeavor in the light of varied theological issues being raised in our fast changing world today.

The verbal polemic arising from the controversy has somewhat abated. But the conflict and division have intensified so that the Moderates have gone farther from the Synodical stance to the point that they are now ready to have an institutional unity with the more liberal Lutheran churches in the U.S.A. The trend to which the Moderates are moving and the repristination theology of Missouri Synod will hardly make it possible to see a reconciliation of theological viewpoints.

We hope that the Moderates' hermeneutical methodology of Gospel reductionism, though inadequate for Biblical hermeneutics, will somehow be able to bring moderation to the liberal trend in other Lutheran churches with which the Moderates are seeking unity. This, however, is something that is extremely difficult to predict. On the contrary, it may likely happen that as these Lutheran churches' ecumenical endeavors broaden to include non-Lutheran denominations, the principle of Gospel reductionism

¹⁰Martin H. Franzmann, "On Change in Theology," CTM 38 (January 1967):6.

may eventually vanish especially because the promoters of this methodology constitute a minority even among Lutheran theologians.

In the light of the investigations of historical criticism, there are today many loud voices from Lutheran circles who question the adequacy of the Biblical exposition found in the Lutheran Confessions. One says that they can be acknowledged to contain a true exposition of the Bible, but not the true exposition.¹¹ Another Lutheran theologian conceding to this theological position argues that our present Lutheran theology cannot be simply identified with that of Scripture or with the Reformation.¹² Even Arthur Carl Piepkorn concluded that "it is extremely difficult to find in the Old Testament any evidence for what the Formula's [Formula of Concord] authors are so confidently affirming."¹³ It is asserted by Walter E. Keller that it is no longer legitimate to appeal "to sixteenth century historical assumptions as a valid reply to twentieth century questions."¹⁴ The LCA theologian Edgar M. Carlson goes to the extent of declaring that the concept of justification by faith may no longer be adequate for our day to express the gospel and therefore we may need to find other Scriptural expressions to supplement the Reformation's

¹¹John Reumann, ed., Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 92.

¹²Ibid., p. 301.

¹³Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "Do the Lutheran Symbolical Books Speak Where the Sacred Scriptures Are Silent?," CTM 43 (January 1972):32.

¹⁴Walter E. Keller, "Necessary and Relevant To What?" The Cresset 36 (February 1973):23.

emphasis on justification.¹⁵ In assenting to this view John Reumann writes:

It is a doctrine in process of development. The Confession Augustana does not define or lock into place what justification is as fully and carefully as has been supposed. Indeed, one might ask whether it even is simply an example of what the gospel is, perhaps, even the example or way to put it for the Reformers in 1530, but not the only way.¹⁶

The examination of the philosophy and principles of historical criticism and their growing adverse influence on the quia subscription to the Lutheran Confessions is a topic which needs to be explored today. It is this writer's opinion that Lutheran historical critics cannot, with integrity, give a quia subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. In fact it is this influence of modern historical-critical scholarship in the Biblical studies which led one leading U.S. Lutheran theologian to assert that the "whole traditional Christology from Nicea and Chalcedon to Article III of the Augsburg Confession is unbiblical and untenable."¹⁷ In the light of these changing attitudes and views towards the Lutheran Confessions by Lutheran theologians, it becomes imperative for Synodical theological institutions to emphasize the study of the Lutheran Confessions and to look back to the history of the Synod to peruse carefully the theological writings of the Synodical fathers specifically in their views of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Symbols. This concern should be attended to as early as possible by Synodical leaders and theologians.

¹⁵Lutheran Council in the United States of America, Studies: The Function of Doctrine and Theology in Light of the Unity of the Church (New York: n.p., 1978), p. 31. (Hereafter cited as LCUSA, FODT)

¹⁶John Reumann, "The Augsburg Confession in Light of Biblical Interpretation," LWF Report (June 1980):16.

¹⁷LCUSA, "LCA Theologian's Paper Prompts LCMS Study Request," News Bureau, July 21, 1981, p. 2.

While this study has attempted to clarify a major issue in the recent Synodical controversy, further studies are needed to answer theological problems facing not only the Synod but also Lutheranism in general.

Missouri Synod through the years has adopted doctrinal resolutions and confessional documents, the most recent of which is A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles. In the light of the rescinding of the Brief Statement and all other previous confessional statements adopted by the Synodical convention, one might well ask what are the status of these documents in the Synod. A number of these documents bear on the Synodical understanding of Scripture. A recent nationwide survey of Lutherans, moreover, shows that 6.6% of the LC-MS clergy and 8.1% of its laity do not hold to the historicity of the Fall and that 40% of all Lutheran clergy and 18.6% of all Lutheran laity hold the same view.¹⁸ The significant number of non-LC-MS clergy and laity who do not believe in the facticity of the Genesis account of the Fall of man is understandable in the light of their churches' official acceptance of historical criticism. But the significant percentage of LC-MS clergy and laity who hold similar views shows the influence of historical criticism in their theological stance and their rejection of the traditional Synodical position on this matter. Should the present and past doctrinal resolutions and confessional documents adopted by the Synod be enforced? What are their real status and functions among the members of the Synod? Is the Book of Concord the end of Lutheran Churches' confession-making process? Do the

¹⁸"Lutherans profiled in extensive research study," Reporter, October 19, 1981, p. 3.

Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions restrict the formulations of any new confessions? In the light of new problems posed by our nuclear age, changing cultures, and scientific advances, is it not reasonable to expand the scope of the Lutheran Confessions? Furthermore, there is an urgent need to restudy the scope and validity of the principle of sola Scriptura in the face of the many moral and ethical problems posed by the scientific advances, situations and needs of our present age.

Is the repristination of Synod's theology the appropriate response to our fast-changing world? Is not the development (not creation) of Scriptural doctrines the answer to our many present theological problems in this nuclear age? If this route is taken then there may be a need for a reformulation of our understanding of Scripture and its authoritative character. Our quia subscription to the Lutheran Confessions is a confession of our theological views and stance concerning the Scriptures. But what all does this quia subscription involve and does not involve? A comprehensive and in-depth research in this field would help resolve some of the urgent theological problems faced by the Lutheran churches of the world.

In the face of the inadequacy of the historical-critical method to interpret Scripture, there is a need to search for a new methodology for Biblical interpretation. Perhaps the hermeneutical principles provided by both Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions can be further developed to provide an adequate and Biblical methodology.

The above concerns show the many areas of study which need to be investigated to complement this present dissertation. It is hoped that this study will stimulate others to take up this challenge.

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