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THE HERMENEUTICS OF JOHANNES CHRISTIAN KONRAD VON HOFMANN
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS INFLUENCE ON GEORG STOECKHARDT

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematics
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by

Richard Baepfer

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Approved by:


Advisor


Reader



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of Sacred Scriptures and revelation, and of the development of the view of Sacred Scriptures and revelation dominant in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod through a study of the hermeneutical principles of Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann with special reference to his influence on Georg Stoeckhardt. These two men have been selected for study not only because of the teacher-student relationship which existed between them but also because both men were giants of conservative confessional Lutheran scholarship and both have exerted an enduring influence, the former on Lutheranism in Germany, the latter on the theology of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

The question of hermeneutics has been chosen as the area of investigation because both men were primarily Bible theologians and skilled exegetes, and because this question obviously leads the investigator into the heart of the problem concerning the nature of Scriptures and of revelation. Of course, the entire context of each theologian's thinking must also be considered. In determining the scope of this investigation the author has sought to draw his conclusions from the literature available and obviously relevant to the question. However, he is conscious that he has not exhausted

the literature; nor has he attempted to do more than to indicate significant directions of thought. A thorough analysis would demand a lengthy examination and comparison of the exegetical writings of the two theologians. This is beyond the scope of a bachelor's thesis and the author has chosen to concentrate largely on the systematic presentations of the two men.

The author has sought to follow the historical-critical method. He has worked through most of the systematic treatises of von Hofmann in an effort to grasp the full implications of his lectures on hermeneutics, the essence of which the author has attempted to reproduce in the course of this presentation. Wherever possible, conclusions have been based on primary source material. In the case of Stoeckhardt it was necessary to work through the unindexed volumes of Lehre und Wehre (volumes 30-56) first to compile an index of Stoeckhardt's contributions, from which to select essays which promised enlightenment on his theology and hermeneutics. Further bibliographical material on Stoeckhardt's essays and sermons was found in the eighteenth volume of the Theological Quarterly. In addition to the primary source material several competent histories of the period of theology under consideration were consulted in an effort to attain a balanced perspective. In the case of both men the investigation has endeavored to let them speak for themselves as truly as possible and has presented the material with a view toward

clarifying the issues involved and presenting questions for additional study.

CHAPTER II

BASIC THEOLOGICAL TENDENCIES OF VON HOFMANN

Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann was born in Nuremberg in 1810. He studied in Erlangen and Berlin, chiefly the latter. In 1832 he became Gymnasiallehrer, 1835 Repetent, 1838 Privatdozent, 1841 Professor in Erlangen, 1842 Professor in Rostock, 1845 Professor in Erlangen again.

While a student at Berlin he found himself attracted to the historian Leopold von Ranke rather than to Schleiermacher, Hegel or Hegstenberg who were lecturing side by side at that time. His dominating interest became the study of history and his first major publication was in this field. Although he sacrificed history for theology, his theology bore the unmistakable marks of his first love, as this investigation will show:

In Berlin von Hofmann came under the influence of prevailing romanticism which conditioned him to giving subjectivity priority over objectivity.¹ Although his theology betrays clear Schleiermachian lines² this influence becomes significant for him first after his student days.³ Very early

¹Paul Wapler, Johannes v. Hofmann (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Werner Scholl, 1914), p. 21.

²Karl Barth, Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert (Zuerich, Switzerland: Zollikon, 1946), p. 554.

³Ibid., p. 553.

he expressed his dissatisfaction with both Schleiermacher's and rationalism's approach to theology and turned to history, there to investigate and search out the grounds for Christendom's objective historical might.⁴ The problem for conservative confessional theology at this time was to relate the Christian faith to the patent results of critical scholarship without giving up the center of faith. So von Hofmann waged a two-front battle: against the rationalists he maintained the reality of revelation; against Hengstenberg and most of the supernaturalists he asserted the development of the Heilsgeschichte.⁵ Thus he laid the foundation for scientific Lutheran restoration theology.⁶

For an independent, scientific theology there are two possible procedures, says von Hofmann, both of which are independent yet nevertheless used as correctives for each other. The first is systematic. It begins with the general Heilserfahrung, "welches den Christen zum Christen macht," and proceeds to unfold and to develop the entire content of the Christian faith from the fact of this experience just as

⁴Wapler, op. cit., p. 30.

⁵Ibid., p. 74.

⁶Horst Stephan, Geschichte der evangelischen Theologie seit dem Deutschen Idealismus (Berlin: Verlag von Alfred Toepelmann, 1938), p. 168.

a scientist or historian can deduce causes from a given condition.⁷ The second method is historical. It develops and unfolds the Heilsgeschichte as it is attested to by the sacred Scriptures.⁸

An elaboration of these ideas is necessary to a fuller understanding of von Hofmann's hermeneutics. Although his theological method is clearly and voluminously elaborated in several volumes, we shall follow the argument of one of von Hofmann's earliest presentations, the stenographic account of his lectures on dogmatics in the summer semester of 1842 in Erlangen.⁹

The theologian begins with his Tatbestand, that relationship between God and man which is peculiarly Christian and which is comprehended in the act of rebirth. This relationship finds its expression in Christian experience.¹⁰ How does the theologian ascertain the content of this experience? He deduces the presuppositions and results from the experience itself.¹¹ The experience of the Christian in rebirth is twofold: the love of God in Christ to him and his love to God.

⁷J. C. K. v. Hofmann, Grundlinien der Theologie Joh. Christ. K. v. Hofmanns in seinen eigenen Darstellung, edited by J. Hausleiter (Leipzig: A. Delchertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1885), p. 2.

⁸Ibid., p. 2.

⁹The account has been critically edited and included in Paul Wapler's biography of von Hofmann as an appendix, p. 379.

¹⁰Wapler, op. cit., p. 383.

¹¹Ibid., p. 386.

From this, for example, can be deduced the fact that in Christ man becomes an object of love for the first time, because when he is born he is not such an object although he is a creature. From this it follows that since man is a creature but not an object of divine love he is guilty of something. In this manner the entire content of theology should be deduced from the experience of the Christian rebirth.¹² Unfortunately, due to the presence of sin and evil the deductions can go astray. Therefore the theologian requires a directive (Leitung), die auszer uns gegeben sein musz.¹³

Thus, according to von Hofmann, the theologian first turns to the Gestaltung which the Heilverhaeltniss has won in the church. This is the kirchliche Handel. The theologian turns to the church, its dogma, its confession and finds here a corrective.¹⁴ But where is wahre Kirche? When the Reformers were told to demonstrate that they were wahre Kirche they pointed to sacred Scriptures.¹⁵

Therefore, the task of dogmatics is to express the content of the Christian experience of rebirth in a threefold

¹²It is in this connection that von Hofmann wrote the famous but often misunderstood sentence that "Ich der Christ mir dem Theologen eigenster Stoff meiner Wissenschaft bin." (J. Chr. K. v. Hofmann, Der Schriftbeweis (Noerdlingen: Druck und Verlag der C. H. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1857), I, 10:

¹³Wapler, op. cit., p. 387.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 388.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 390.

manner on the basis of three different sources (experience, confessions, Scriptures).¹⁶ When these three sources agree the expression is justified. The basis for the truth of the expression lies in itself. "So beschränkt sich also die Theologie innerhalb der Grenzen des Glaubens und begründet sich eben nur wieder auf den Grund und Boden des Glaubens." Philosophy can say: "If my thinking doesn't deceive me, there must be a mediator between God and man, and this I find in Christ." Theology says: "We have in Christ this Mediator between God and man." Philosophy can come only to the point where certainty begins.

Es faengt eine neue Welt da an, wo geglaubt wird, dass Christus sei der Mittler zwischen Gott und Mensch; in dieser Welt neuer Anschauungen musz der Mensch geboren sein, sonst erkennt er sie ebensowenig, als das Kind im Mutterleib die sinnliche wahrnehmbare Welt erkennt.¹⁷

The critical concept at which point von Hofmann has been most severely taken to task by many theologians in his allegedly distended interpretation of Erfahrung and Tatbestand.¹⁸ The criticism of subjectivism was directed against him often while he was still alive. He attempted to answer, but never fully satisfied his critics.¹⁹

¹⁶Ibid., p. 384.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 386.

¹⁸Barth, op. cit., pp. 558-559.

¹⁹See Chapter VII, notes 16, 17 and 18.

The second possible procedure in developing a theology is, according to von Hofmann, the historical method. This distinctive aspect of his theology became the basis for referring to his followers as "Die Heilsgeschichtliche Schule."²⁰ His search for independent objectivity led him to the facts of history. In his first major theological treatise, Weissagung und Erfuellung, he developed his theory of an independent and organic Heilsgeschichte.

Von Hofmann sees the entire Heilsgeschichte in all its essential movements to be prophetic of the final enduring relationship between God and man. Each step in the realization of this goal is fulfillment. Each step contained a kernel of the future. Thus there emerges an organic whole, one stage developing into the next, always in the form of prophecy and fulfillment.²¹

Revelation, therefore, is essentially history. Scriptures are witnesses to this revelation but are also part of the history itself and therefore are revelation in their own right. For God never reveals doctrine primarily but in His revelation, word and event are always together. ²²

²⁰For a discussion of von Hofmann's view of revelation and history and its relevance to contemporary theology see Christian Preus, "The Contemporary Relevance of Von Hofmann's Hermeneutical Principles," Interpretation, IV (July, 1950), 511 ff.

²¹J. C. K. v. Hofmann, Grundlinien der Theologie Joh. Christ., K. v. Hofmanns in seinen eigenen Darstellung, op. cit., pp. 4-11.

²²Ibid., p. 13.

In his theology von Hofmann attempts to correlate the systematic with the historic approach.

CHAPTER III

VON HOFMANN'S VIEW OF THE TASK AND NATURE OF HERMENEUTICS

Von Hofmann rejects the view which sees the task of Biblical hermeneutics as merely the presentation of the principles of general hermeneutics and their application to the Bible. It is the task of logic, not of theology, to determine these principles and their mode of application. An overview of the history of Biblical exegesis betrays the crucial point in hermeneutics, namely the relationship of the exegete to the Scriptures.¹

For example, the Jewish Rabbis viewed the Scriptures as a revelation of God which contained everything that man needed to know. This view led to ridiculous extremes involving the substitution of numbers for letters and the derivation of every possible scrap of information from the text by indiscriminate means.² Jesus and the apostles understood the Scriptures as a witness to the unfolding Heilsgeschichte and interpreted them accordingly.³ The post-apostolic times saw the growth of tradition as an increasingly dominating factor

¹J. C. K. v. Hofmann, "Die Aufgabe der biblischen Hermeneutik," Vermischte Aufsätze von Professor von Hofmann, edited by Heinrich Schmid (Erlangen: Verlag von Andreas Deichert, 1878), p. 114.

²J. Chr. K. v. Hofmann, Biblische Hermeneutik, edited by Wilhelm Volck (Noerdlingen: Verlag der C. H. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1880), p. 7.

³Ibid., p. 10.

in exegesis.⁴ Although the Reformation had once more focused the eyes of the exegete on the true nature of Scriptures and introduced again the Holy Spirit as an active partner in exegesis, von Hofmann asserts that the period of orthodoxy fostered the development of an inadequate inspiration theory and Scriptures became the revelation of doctrine only.⁵

What makes hermeneutics a theological study, therefore, is not the science of hermeneutics itself but the relationship between the exegete and Scriptures. The task of hermeneutics is "das Verhaeltniss des theologischen Auslegers zur heiligen Schrift und die damit sugegebene Besonderheit seines Auslegungsgeschaefts zu zeichen."⁶

The exegete does not approach the Scriptures with a blank mind, for this is impossible; nor with a scientific and systematic knowledge of the way of salvation, for this he wants to derive from the Scriptures. Rather he brings his Christenstand through which he is certain that in Christ he possesses salvation, namely, the forgiveness of sins and ability to love God.⁷ This certainty, given by the witness of the Holy Spirit, is not derived from his imagination but

⁴Ibid., p. 14.

⁵Ibid., p. 19.

⁶von Hofmann, Vermischte Aufsätze, op. cit., p. 115.

⁷Ibid., p. 115.

from the proclamation concerning Christ.⁸ This certainty, the certainty of faith, comprehends the experience of rebirth and the new relationship to God through Christ; the reality of this relationship to Christ is the point of departure for all theology.⁹

This certainty gives the exegete his direction as he proceeds into the Scriptures. He recognizes in Scripture the witness to the same salvation which he himself possesses. He addressed himself to its peculiar content; everything that is the object of natural knowledge -- cosmological, psychological and so forth -- is evaluated only in relationship to the Heilswahrheit. The exegete does not mechanically separate the objects of natural knowledge from the object of faith, nor does he consider them to be on the same level.¹⁰ The knowledge and certainty of his salvation further guides the exegete in relating the particular to the whole.¹¹ Therefore faith in the Savior and not a theory of inspiration is the presupposition for hermeneutics.¹² Von Hofmann is not convinced that Scriptures are decisive in ascribing infallible inspiration to themselves. But even if this witness were

⁸Ibid., p. 116.

⁹von Hofmann, Biblische Hermeneutik, op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁰von Hofmann, Vermischte Aufsätze, op. cit., p. 116.

¹¹Ibid., p. 117.

¹²von Hofmann, Biblische Hermeneutik, op. cit., p. 34.

there, he points out, this cannot be considered a valid pre-supposition for hermeneutics, for

so koennte es einen Glauben, der seines Namens werth waere, nicht wirken; denn lediglich auf ein ausseres Zeugniss hin etwas fuer wahr halten, ist noch kein Glaube. Daher hat man das Zeugniss des h. Geistes geltend gemacht. Aber dieses Zeugniss reicht nicht weiter, als dass es uns des goettlichen Ursprungs der in der Schrift beurkundeten Heilswahrheit vergewissert. . .¹³

¹³Ibid., p. 32.

CHAPTER IV

SCRIPTURES AS THE PRESENT POSSESSION OF CHRISTENDOM

According to von Hofmann the exegesis of Scriptures is determined by the peculiar nature of Scriptures inasmuch as they are the present possession of Christendom. As such they are to be understood from three viewpoints: (1) their miraculous nature; (2) their Israelitic character; (3) their function as the documentary authentication of the Heilswahrheit. The exegesis proceeds in accordance with these three factors.

Scriptures are miraculous in view of their origin.

What does miraculous mean for von Hofmann?

Alles Geschehen und alles geschichtliche Erzeugniz, welches Verwirklichung des wesentlichen Willes Gottes ist, nennen wir wunderbar, weil in Widerstreit stehend mit der natuerlichen Entwicklung des menschlichen Wesens, also alle Heilsgeschichte und deren Erzeugniz.¹

Sacred Scriptures are a part and product of that Heilsgeschichte which contemporary Christianity has as its historical pre-supposition. These writings derive their special character from the fact that they are a work of God designed to be normative for the Christian Church. The theologian proceeds in faith and trust that the Scriptures will actually verify

¹J. Chr. K. v. Hofmann, Biblische Hermeneutik, edited by Wilhelm Volck (Noerdlingen: Verlag der C. H. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1880), p. 35.

themselves as that which they already are to his faith. He studies these Scriptures not merely for personal edification but, led by the Spirit, with his eye open for that distinctive element which makes Scriptures normative for the church.²

The Scriptures are miraculous in view of their content. The miracle of Christianity is essentially Christ Himself³ whose revelation is the essential content of Scriptures. Everything in Scriptures is to be understood and derived from this center. Therefore the question never concerns the possibility of the occurrence of a recorded incident but always concerns the relationship of that incident to Christ. When this relationship cannot be found the incident has no theological value at all.⁴ This becomes the principle of interpretation. The Bible is the record of a Heilsgeschichte whose center and culmination is Christ, and whose goal is the final reunion of God and man. The creation account, therefore, speaks of a beginning, for everything that has a goal must have a beginning. The creation of man, of woman, the fall, the great flood, the story of Abraham, the entire content of Scripture is a miraculous history which reaches its

²Ibid., pp. 36-37.

³Ibid., p. 38.

⁴Ibid., p. 39.

unique fulfillment in Christ. The certainty of the miraculous nature of this history becomes determinative in its interpretation.⁵

The Sacred Scriptures bear a distinctive Israelitic stamp because they are the product of this nation which was called to be the people of sacred history. Old and New Testament are to be understood from a Semitic viewpoint and in Semitic categories of thought, otherwise the original sense is lost.⁶ References to Israel are not primarily cultural or political but are to be understood as referring to the called people of God. Particularism gives way to Heilsgeschichte.⁷

We approach Scripture with a certainty rooted in our faith in Christ. This certainty has nothing to do with the objects of natural knowledge but only with the Heilswahrheit, the object of faith.⁸ Accordingly, the exegete does not search Genesis 1 for information which properly belongs to the sphere of scientific research. He searches for the message which has meaning for faith, relates the elements of the account to the whole structure of sacred history.⁹ If certain

⁵Ibid., p. 58. Cf. Weissagung und Erfuellung for a detailed exposition of the relationship between each succeeding event in the Heilsgeschichte.

⁶Ibid., p. 61.

⁷Ibid., p. 73.

⁸Ibid., p. 75.

⁹Ibid., p. 76.

details are mythical or scientifically unacceptable the exegete is indifferent for these have no Heilsbedeutung. The Bible is something more than an errorless book, he claims. When its authority as the Word of God is made to depend upon its inerrancy in the sphere of nature the work of the Holy Ghost is judged not according to the purpose of Scripture but according to the nature of God.¹⁰ By this he means that Scriptures are to be judged according to their purpose, which is to make men wise unto salvation. Scriptures, he would say, should not be judged on the premise that since God is inerrant He uses only inerrant books or people to accomplish his aim of making men wise unto salvation. This would be a logical construction based on the presupposed nature of God rather than on the expressed purpose of Scriptures.

On the other hand, von Hofmann maintains that it is inaccurate to assert that Scriptures only contain God's Word instead of being God's Word. Nor is a mechanical separation of the religious from the non-religious elements in Scripture possible. The activity of the Holy Spirit was not piecemeal but comprehended the entire man in the act of inspiration.¹¹ The relationship between the objects of natural knowledge and the object of faith is established by the exegete who already

¹⁰Ibid., p. 82.

has experienced the certainty of his salvation, whose certainty is rooted in faith. The Holy Spirit accompanies the exegete in his work. Confronted with a vast differentiation of witnesses to the Heilswahrheit the exegete formulates a canon by which all single utterances can be judged. This is what Luther did when he judged all Scripture by the proposition, "ob er Christum treibe."¹² Only with this presupposition that the purpose of the Scriptures is alone to make us wise unto salvation through Christ can Scriptures be understood as they want to be understood.

¹²Ibid., p. 90.

CHAPTER V

THE HISTORICAL NATURE OF SCRIPTURES

As we have previously noted, von Hofmann's thinking is marked by a strong sensitivity for the historical. Sacred Scriptures are a witness and record of the Heilsgeschichte. In order to understand them fully the exegete must read them as the first readers read them.¹ The basic reason for much incorrect interpretation is that one always tends to think of Scriptures as a collection of Lehrsätze.² Thus the exegetical approach becomes schematic instead of historical.

The exegete must first attempt to recreate the original state of Sacred Scripture. He must investigate the canonicity of the books and understand why these were deemed canonical. Certain portions of Scripture are possibly later additions and these must be examined to determine their canonical validity.³ The text itself must be the object of painstaking study in order to recreate the original text. Reconstruction and emendation should not be rashly constructed but the exegete should always be aware of the possibility of such reconstruction. This task cannot be left to the textual critic

¹J. Chr. K. v. Hofmann, Biblische Hermeneutik, edited by Wilhelm Volck (Noerdlingen: Verlag der C. H. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1880), p. 141.

²Ibid., p. 145.

³Ibid., p. 105.

alone for dogmatic considerations can color the reconstruction of the text.⁴

The concern to recreate the original circumstances and state of the Scriptures means an intimate acquaintance with the original languages and their distinctive characteristics. Specifically, it must be remembered that in the case of the Old Testament, its language is a branch of the Semitic group, that the language itself underwent a development during the thousand year period of its use in the writings of the Old Testament, that other foreign languages exercised an influence upon it.⁵ In the case of the New Testament the distinctive features of the koine and particularly the Hebraic coloration are to be considered.

Since Sacred Scriptures are a collection of separate writings the inquiry into the origin and authorship of the writings is absolutely essential for their correct understanding. Particularly is this true in the case of the Bible which is the record of a Heilsgeschichte. In order to read the writings as the writer intended them to be read it is necessary to think oneself into the stage of the Heilsgeschichte at which the writer was active. The exegete must know exactly what the writer could have presupposed of his readers. Then

⁴Ibid., p. 109.

⁵Ibid., p. 110.

it becomes necessary for the exegete to have an intimate knowledge of the development of the Heilsgeschichte as well as a knowledge of the origin and authorship of the individual works.⁶

The question of origin and authorship is most important for a truly historical interpretation. If the book of Job were written in the time of Solomon its thought would be interpreted in an entirely different light from that of a post-exilic interpretation. To understand the letter to the Corinthians the exegete must first seek to form a correct estimate of the Corinthian congregation. Therefore the exegete approaches each writing of Scripture with a question toward its origin and author. When he has determined this he interprets the text in terms of its historical connection.⁷ But supremely must the exegete be aware of the place of the writing in the total Heilsgeschichte.

⁶Ibid., p. 142.

⁷Ibid., p. 125.

CHAPTER VI

FACTORS OF DIFFERENTIATION WITHIN THE BIBLE

The first major factor of differentiation within Sacred Scriptures is the difference between the Old and New Testaments. Salvation, maintains von Hofmann, is realized in Christ. Christ is the center and goal of the Heilsgeschichte. The exegete recognizes in the Old Testament the same salvation which he knows himself to possess, but sees it from the point of view of fulfillment. The Old Testament is witness to the Heilsgeschichte, specifically to the developing stages of that process which climaxed in Christ. Accordingly he seeks to exegize passages in the Old Testament with a view towards ascertaining and expressing their place in the unfolding and progressing Heilsgeschichte. Since all Heilsgeschichte is determined by its goal, this history must be represented accordingly. Therefore the events must point to Christ but must not be removed from their organic connection with the enfolding Heilsgeschichte. Thus von Hofmann seeks to avoid "die Willkuehr. . . durch welche die Typologie in Verruf gekommen ist."¹

¹J. Chr. K. v. Hofmann, Biblische Hermeneutik, edited by Wilhelm Volck (Noerdlingen: Verlag der C. H. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1880), p. 154.

In handling the Old Testament narrative and prophecy the exegete proceeds with "spiritual understanding and historical interpretation." The word "spiritual" is deliberately used inasmuch as the exegete recognizes the Old Testament as the work of the same Spirit which is active in the Church of Jesus Christ.² But von Hofmann is clearly suspicious of any attempt promiscuously to spiritualize details of the Old Testament. He insists on what he calls a theological interpretation of the history and message recorded in the Old Testament.³ Thus, details of history and prophecy are not to be applied directly to the New Testament but must be viewed only in their organic connection with the developing Heilsgeschichte. The given stage of the Heilsgeschichte then is to be "theologically" interpreted as pointing to its ultimate culmination in Christ.⁴ This may be illustrated by von Hofmann's treatment of Psalm 45. He rejects an interpretation which would find here a detailed description of Christ and His Kingdom. Historically this Psalm refers to Solomon's glory, claims von Hofmann, but Solomon in turn plays a significant role in foreshadowing Christ in the Heilsgeschichte. Therefore the details refer to Solomon but Solomon prefigures

²Ibid., p. 152.

³Ibid., p. 153.

⁴Ibid., pp. 185-188.

Christ.⁵ The essence of revelation is here found in the unfolding history and not in the Scriptures which are primarily witnesses to this history.

The exegesis of the New Testament text demands the same faithfulness to the history there unfolded. In the New Testament the distinctive feature is that the great events on Christ's activity are interpreted as fulfillment. Therefore the exegete must study his text with his eye open for the "anti-typical," for the direct and intimate relationship between the Old and New Testament and for the relationship of the New Testament history and message to the Heilsgeschichte in terms of fulfillment.⁶ The character of their relationships is to be discovered by a careful study of the citation of the Old Testament in the New.⁷

The second major factor of differentiation is that the Scriptures are not a collection of doctrines primarily but the documentary authentication of a history. Therefore Sacred Scriptures contain statements and reports about the past, the present and the future. The exegete must strive to bring to full expression the implications of this factor in Scriptures. The significant factor to be aware of in this

⁵Ibid., p. 171.

⁶Ibid., pp. 188-189.

⁷Ibid., pp. 210 ff.

connection is the particular stage of the Heilsgeschichte which is being reported. It must be remembered that these three elements are present in all sections of Sacred Scripture. Even the New Testament looks forward to completion, to the return of Christ which will bring an end and final consummation to the Heilsgeschichte, when all creation will find its unity in Christ. Careful exegesis requires a sensitivity for these nuances in the Scriptural accounts.⁸

⁸von Hofmann, Vermischte Aufsätze, op. cit., pp. 121-122.

CHAPTER VII

STOECKHARDT'S UNDERSTANDING OF VON HOFMANN

Georg Stoeckhardt received part of his theological education at Erlangen while von Hofmann was lecturing there but the bulk of his formal studies were pursued elsewhere. Nevertheless, it is clear that he was a close student of von Hofmann. He lectured as Repetent at Erlangen for several semesters and was being considered as von Hofmann's successor.¹ He used von Hofmann's works in his private study² and identified himself with the exegetical techniques employed by von Hofmann.³ In his exegetical works von Hofmann is cited perhaps more than any other commentator.⁴ Nevertheless, Stoeckhardt was extremely critical of what he called Schleiermachiian tendencies in von Hofmann's thought⁵ and considered it a tragic sign of the times that so many confes-

¹Ludwig Fuerbringer, 80 Eventful Years (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), p. 104.

²Otto Willkomm, D. th. Georg Stoeckhardt (Zwickau, Sachsen: Verlag und Druck von Johannes Herrmann, 1914), p. 32.

³Georg Stoeckhardt, Commentar ueber dem Brief Pauli an die Roemer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1907), p. iii.

⁴Cf. for example, the register of names in Georg Stoeckhardt, Commentary on St. Pauls Letter to the Ephesians, translated by Martin S. Sommer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), pp. 267-268.

⁵Georg Stoeckhardt, "Frank's Theologie," Lehre und Wehre, XLII (1896), 65.

sional theologians were following him, for Stoeckhardt was sure that this system was destroying "den Grund der Kirche, das Schriftprinzip."⁶

Von Hofmann had always been a controversial figure, under fire from both wings of theology. His thoughts are not easy to follow. The critical point at which much adverse criticism was directed was his alleged subjectivism. Thus Stoeckhardt was by no means alone in his polemics. The question to be considered now is whether Stoeckhardt understood von Hofmann as von Hofmann wanted to be understood. This investigation did not discover any direct analyses of von Hofmann's writings in the large literary deposit Stoeckhardt left behind. But we do possess several analyses of writings of men whom Stoeckhardt considers to be reproducing the theses of von Hofmann. We shall cite several examples.

Dr. W. Volck, professor at the University of Dorpat, is judged to be representing the Hofmann school when he describes the character of Scripture as follows: The Scriptures are primarily witnesses to God's revelation, not primarily revelation (though they are God's Word, to be sure). Therefore, "die Frage nach der Schrift ist datum immer erst die Zweite; die erste ist und bleibt Christus." Faith comes through preaching. Before there was a Bible there were already

⁶Georg Stoeckhardt, "Was sagt die Schrift von sich selbst?" Lehre und Wehre, XXXII (1886), 164.

believers.⁷ Volck in this article is attempting to correct the perspective of what to him was a dangerous Biblicism. He is emphasizing the dynamic nature of revelation and the central place of faith.

Stoeckhardt replies to this in the following manner; This is von Hofmann's theory. The Scriptures have assumed only secondary significance and the "Hauptsache" has become Christ, "Christ im Unterschied, losgelöst von der Schrift." The oral word here chiefly witnesses to Christ; this witness is derived from itself and corrects itself. If it is possible to have faith only through the oral Word and not the written Word, Scripture is no longer unconditionally necessary for faith. Scripture is no longer norm of faith but now the oral Word is. Thus oral tradition becomes the principle of faith. This is genuine papism.⁸

At this point one may ask the questions: Has Stoeckhardt met the issue? Does von Hofmann actually maintain that oral witness has itself as source and norm? Does von Hofmann separate Christ from Scriptures in the manner indicated by Stoeckhardt? Are not the two parties operating from different platforms of thought and consequently speaking past each other? In this same article Stoeckhardt writes:

⁷Ibid., p. 346.

⁸Ibid., p. 347.

Nach der modernen Theorie und Praxis hat die Lehre und Predigt in sich selbst ihre Norm und Correctiv, und die die da zuhoeren und lernen, werden angewiesen, was sie hoeren, an ihren eigenen Herzen, ihrem Gefuehl zu erproben. Die Schrift ist zunaechst als Probirstein bei Seite gesetzt.⁹

That von Hofmann would not want to be understood this way we shall show below.

In another article in Lehre und Wehre Stoeckhardt cites an article written by a representative of the von Hofmann school, a certain Dr. Grau, who writes:

So habe Ich denn die Erfahrung gemacht, dass mein Glaube an die heilige Schrift als das Wort Gottes, je mehr er Heilsgewissheit und Zuversicht auf den Inhalt des Wortes Gottes, naemlich auf Jesum Christum, meinen Heiland, geworden ist, desto muthiger und unbefangener an der Entwicklung der Kritik mitbetheiligen kann.¹⁰

To this Stoeckhardt replied: True faith consists in this that "ein Christ sich in allen Stuecken Gott und seinem Wort untergibt. Wer mit seinem Herzen und Gewissen im Wort Gottes, im Wort der Schrift gefangen ist, der ist recht frei und seines Glaubens froh und gewiss."¹¹ Who criticizes and masters the Scriptures is basically godless.¹²

In analyzing Frank's theology Stoeckhardt refers to von Hofmann as the originator of the Erlangen school, who

⁹Ibid., p. 350.

¹⁰ Grau, quoted by Georg Stoeckhardt, "Zur Inspirationslehre und zum ersten Capitel der Bibel," Lehre und Wehre, XXXIX (1893), p. 325.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 327.

together with Thomasius developed their whole theology out of the Christian ego.¹³ This is basically Schwaermertum,¹⁴ and the fact that Frank still has some truth in his system does not come from his system but rather from his inconsistency.¹⁵

Examples could be multiplied. The general theme of Stoeckhardt's criticism is consistently that von Hofmann is setting aside Scripture as the source and norm of theology, elevating himself above Scripture and developing his theology out of himself. Does this represent a correct estimate of von Hofmann's thinking? Would von Hofmann have agreed to this view of his theology? We have already referred to von Hofmann's description of Scripture as "massgebend fuer die Kirche." In his earliest theological work, Weissagung und Erfuellung, von Hofmann writes that certainty does not rest upon the witness of the Holy Spirit but upon the "Tatsache unserer Taufe" to which the Holy Spirit gives his comforting "Ja!" The certainty of the congregation rests upon Scriptures, not the testimony of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

¹³Georg Stoeckhardt, "Frank's Theologie," Lehre und Wehre, XLII (1896), 65.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁶J. C. K. v. Hofmann, Weissagung und Erfuellung (Noerdlingen: Beck'schen, 1841), p. 51.

He writes in a letter to Luthardt:

Wenn meine Dogmatik Darlegung des Inhalts meines durch die Schrift gewirkten Glaubens ist, so ist sie nicht ausser, vor und neben der Schrift entstanden, aber auch nicht eine Zusammenstellung von Einzelnen dass die Schrift mir bietet.¹⁷

And again we have an interesting passage from a letter to Franz Delitzsch.¹⁸

Nicht aus meinem inwendigen Leben und Bewusstsein unternehme ich das goettliche Heilswerk herauszufalten, sondern den Tatbestand der in Christo vermittelten Gemeinschaft Gottes und der Menschheit, welches damit, dass er in mir gesetzt worden, mein christlichen Leben gewirkt. . . hat, entfalte ich zur Foelle des in ihm beschlossenen Reichthums. Dass aber der innerlich gewordenen Wort in mir wurzle, kann man wohl nicht sagen. Von meinem christlichen Leben gilt dies, aber der Tatbestand, welcher mich in sich eingeschlossen hat, ist des Wortes einheitliches Inhalt. In dem Wort, das mir verkuendigt worden, ist der vom Himmel hernieden und gen Himmel auf Gefahrene zu mir gekommen und mein eigen geworden, so dass ich ihn nun aus Erfahrung als den Mittler kenne, in dem ich Frieden mit Gott habe. Ihn sage ich ausls den Mittler und damit den einheitlichen Inhalt des Worts, nicht aber mich, mein christliches Leben, mein christlichen Bewusstsein. Es thut also gar nichts zur Sache, dass die Peripherie des mich einschliessenden Thatbestandes viel weiter ist, als mein von ihm umspanntes inwendigen Leben. Der Punkt, in den ich einsetze, ist Christus selbst, der mich zum Christen gemacht hat, und diesen Punkt ist zugleich auch der Kreis, der mich umschlieszt und alle Welt, sichtbare und unsichtbare, gegenwaertige und zukuenftige.

¹⁷Wapler, op. cit., p. 219.

¹⁸von Hofmann, quoted in a letter included in Briefwechsel zwischen Delitzsch und von Hofmann, edited by F. Delitzsch (Leipzig: A Deichert Verlag, 1910), pp. 55 and 56.

CHAPTER VIII

DISTINCTIVE TENDENCIES IN STOECKHARDT'S THEOLOGY

The theological relationship between these two Christian thinkers becomes easier to define as we analyze certain of the basic tendencies and presuppositions in Stoeckhardt's thinking. Without question Stoeckhardt is intensely determined to maintain the objective nature of revelation. For him the Word of God is in the first place the Scriptures.¹ Preaching is also the Word of God, but only insofar as it is derived from Scripture.² Therefore criticism of Scripture is criticism of God.³ Behind this simple equation are certain theological and philosophical presuppositions which von Hofmann obviously did not share. To ascertain their precise nature cannot be the object of this investigation except insofar as Stoeckhardt himself has more obviously indicated them. To the assertion that the Bible is both

¹ Georg Stoeckhardt, "Predigt ueber das Evangelium am Sonntag Quasimodogeniti, Magazin fuer Ev.-luth. Homiletik, XV (1891), 102.

² Ibid., p. 101.

³ Georg Stoeckhardt, "Zur Inspirationslehre und zum ersten Capitel der Bible." Lehre und Wehre, XXXIX (1893), 327.

human and divine because it expressed God's thoughts under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through human thinking, willing and feeling and therefore possesses relative Irrthumsfaehigkeit. Stoeckhardt strongly objects: "Who is then really the author? Man or God? If men expressed their thinking, willing and feeling, it is not God's work in the simple sense of the expression"⁴ (our emphasis). In a review of Old Testament criticism he says that to refer to the Old Testament as God's Word and still find errors in it contradicts gemeinen Sprachgebrauch and is a babylonisch Begriffs und Sprachverwirrung for the critics do not respect sprachliche Wirklichkeit.⁵ When it is claimed that the Holy Ghost accommodated Himself to errors in the Scripture he writes:

Wir postulieren das Gegenteil: Indem der ewige Gott, der fleckenlos reine und heilige Gott in die Zeit, in die Geschichte einging, so konnte das nicht anders geschehen, als daga er Suende und Urrthum von seiner Person fernhielt.

Further investigation of Stoeckhardt's thinking would likely reveal a set of philosophical presuppositions differing considerably from von Hofmann's, particularly in the area of object-subject relationships.

⁴Georg Stoeckhardt, "Was sagt die Schrift von sich selbst?", p. 168.

⁵Georg Stoeckhardt, "Ueber Berechtigung der Kritik des Alten Testaments," Lehra und Wahra, IXL (1895) 325.

⁶Georg Stoeckhardt, "Zur Inspirationslehre und zum ersten Capitel der Bibel," p. 329.

It should be made clear, however, that Stoeckhardt's equating Scriptures with the objective Word of God is not done in the interest of a metaphysical or theological system. His interest is dominantly christological for Christ is grasped only in the Word.⁷ Furthermore, true to his basic principles, he is convinced that Scriptures claim to be the Word of God and claim to be inerrant.⁸

Stoeckhardt's view of revelation also differs from von Hofmann's. We have seen how von Hofmann sees revelation chiefly as a dynamic force in history. Stoeckhardt accents a static view of revelation. "Die Christliche Religion hat es mit goettlichen Geheimnissen zu thun ...die Gott uns offenbart hat."⁹ Everything has been revealed in Sacred Scriptures. The Holy Spirit teaches what is already there.¹⁰

It seems also significant that while this investigation did not exhaust all the Stoeckhardt literature it failed to discover an emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit at

⁷Georg Stoeckhardt, Commentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Roemer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1907), p. 274.

⁸Stoeckhardt, "Was sagt die Schrift von sich selbst?"

⁹Stoeckhardt, "Frank's Theologie," p. 171.

¹⁰Georg Stoeckhardt, "Predigt ueber das Evangelium am ersten Pfingstage," Magazin fuer Ev.-luth. Homiletik, XVIII (1894), 130-131.

all comparably with von Hofmann's. To be sure, when Stoeckhardt had to preach on the Pentecost pericopes he introduced a lively view of the Spirit. The Spirit teaches and illumines.¹¹ This is his office. He gives no new revelation, for Christ has already spoken all.¹² But it seems that the Holy Spirit in general has received a secondary role on Stoeckhardt's thinking. As we noted above von Hofmann saw this as a decided weakness in orthodox theology.

There are also decided differences in the two theologian's views of faith. We have already heard some of von Hofmann's utterances on this topic. His biographer interprets his entire theology as relating the individual personally to the material principle of the Reformation.¹³ It shall be shown below that Stoeckhardt, too, had a wide view of faith. For our immediate purposes it is necessary to describe certain elements in Stoeckhardt's concept of faith in order to clarify the differences between him and von Hofmann. Two elements are particularly to be noted. There is a significant emphasis on faith as a sacrificium

¹¹Ibid., p. 131.

¹²Georg Stoeckhardt, "Predigt ueber das Evangelium des ersten Pfingstages," Magazine fuer-Ev.-luth. Homiletik, XIII (1889), p. 174.

¹³Paul Wapler, Johannes v. Hofmann (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Werner Scholl, 1914), p. 216.

intellectus. A believer submits himself to the authority of Scripture and takes captive all his own thoughts.¹⁴ Scripture must be believed to be unconditionally the highest norm.¹⁵ There is also an element of viewing Scriptures as the chief object of faith, insofar as the equation between the Scriptures and the Word of God is strictly maintained. "Wir bauen und trauen auf die Schrift."¹⁶ As noted before it is to be emphasized that his interest for Stoeckhardt is Christological.

But the difference between the two theologians becomes much clearer when the fides qua, the specifically subjective element of faith, is discussed. Stoeckhardt is extremely reluctant to dwell on this aspect of faith. "Der Glaube ist ein Correlatbegriff, gar nicht denkbar ohne seinen Inhalt."¹⁷ His interest is always the objective faith. Yet in discussing Frank's theology he must admit that a certain sense "der geistliche Kosmos in das glaeubige Subject eingegangen sei. Gott hat einen hellen Schein in unsere Herzen gegeben, das sich die Klarheit Christi in uns widerspiegelt." But the "christliche Bewusstsein" is not

¹⁴Stoeckhardt, "Ueber Berechtigung der Kritik des A.T.," p. 326.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 328.

¹⁶Stoeckhard, "Predigt ueber das Evangelium fuer Sonntag Quasimodogeniti," p. 101.

¹⁷Stoeckhardt, Commentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Roemer, p. 272.

an independent thing; it is merely "Reflex der Schriftwahrheit."¹⁸ How does it exist, then, apart from hearing or reading the Bible? To be sure, we hear the Word only at certain times, but like the sweet taste of wine the Word lingers in our hearts even outside its actual use. Thus the Holy Spirit dwells in us,¹⁹

The difference between von Hoffman and Stoeckhardt at this point is clear. As we have noted above von Hofmann maintains that faith develops always in connection with the Word and never apart from it. But, he firmly holds, the content of faith is not simply a collection of Scriptural utterances. Instead the "christliche Bewusstsein" has an independent existence and an independent experience.²⁰

Thus the two men both recognize the subjective element of the Christian faith. The question which follows is which of these two views accurately describes the reality of the Christian's experience. But this is not within the scope of this examination.

¹⁸Stoeckhardt, "Frank's Theologie," pp. 71-73.

¹⁹Georg Stoeckhardt, "Predigt ueber das Evangelium des ersten Pfingstfeiertags," Magazin fuer Ev.-luth. Homiletik, XIX (1895), p. 168.

²⁰Wapler, op. cit., pp. 383-384.

CHAPTER IX

THE HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES OF STOECKHARDT

Georg Stoeckhardt left us no lectures on hermeneutics as did von Hofmann. However, he did indicate his exegetical principle in three significant writings. One of his earliest contributions to Lehre und Wehre was a lengthy series of articles on Weissagung und Erfuellung. He implicitly agrees with von Hofmann that the citation of the Old Testament in the New is of special significance for the understanding of Scripture. He criticizes von Hofmann (not mentioned by name but the references are obvious) for having conceded to the rationalists that the Scriptures contain errors. Nor does he agree with the typological interpretation of von Hofmann; typology must not be used except when indicated by Scripture itself. He complains that von Hofmann's view of the typological, complex and interacting development of sacred history beclouds all clear and certain thoughts and concepts. He follows other principles of exegesis which he claims to derive from Scriptures themselves. These presuppose a doctrine of direct verbal inspiration. The Holy Spirit allowed the writers to see future events. These prophecies are so numerous because the Holy Spirit wanted to make the New Testament facts clear to the people of the old covenant.

The prophecies all have to do with the primary data of salvation. The Holy Spirit thought them worthy a double witness, the prophetic and apostolic.¹ But even in difficult passages one must employ the Lutheran doctrine of one clear literal sense of Scripture. There is to be no exegesis sensu mystico.

The second significant hermeneutical treatise of Stoeckhardt was his single article in Lehre und Wehre entitled "Vom Schriftstudium der Theologen."³ In this work he urges that particular attention be given the "Gedankenzusammenhang" of the passages under consideration. Error arises mostly when exegetes introduce passages which simply do not apply. The exegete must carefully examine the boundaries of the thought of each passage and carefully note precisely what is to be revealed here.⁴

He is equally emphatic in urging the use of the original languages and the employment of every lexicographical aid available.⁵

¹Georg Stoeckhardt, "Wiessagung und Erfuellung," Lehre und Wehre, vol. 30 (1884), pp. 45-48.

²Ibid., p. 166.

³Vol. 31.

⁴Ibid., p. 363.

⁵Ibid., pp. 363-364.

In an interesting passage he hints at a use of the Scripture not confined to quoting powerful texts but suggests that in preaching against sin, for instance, one must work himself into the history of Israel and her judgment and on the basis of insights gleaned from preaching of the prophets should address himself to his contemporaries.⁶

We must note that in this article as in the first there is no significant mentioning of the work of the Holy Spirit in exegesis.

The third significant document is the forward to Stoeckhardt's commentary on Romans:⁷

In the present work the author has endeavored, first, to do justice to the language of the Epistle. He has, however, chiefly tried to bring to the full consciousness of himself and his readers the eternal thoughts of God that have been expressed in this apostolic missive. The historical interest which guides some modern exegetes in their exposition of Biblical books, and especially of the Epistles of the Apostles, cannot claim the glory of being a particularly scientific effort. Every writing must be judge by its peculiarity and its tendency. It is self-evident what is the tendency of the Holy Scriptures, and moreover, this tendency is plainly declared in 2 Tim. 3, 16: -- The method adopted in this commentary, viz., to offer a continuous and connected explanation and development of the text, such as is found in the writings of Hofmann, Godet, and

⁶ Ibid., p. 366.

⁷ Stoeckhardt: cited and translated by Dr. Dau in "Georg Stoeckhardt," Theological Quarterly, XVIII (1914), p. 20.

and, in its essential features, also in Philippi, seemed to me to suit best to the aforementioned exegesis. When the so-called glossatory method is employed, which attaches to the separate component parts of a text remarks concerning the language or the facts of the text, the trend of thought and the connection is easily lost.

In Stoeckhardt's essays and sermons there emerge certain emphases which betray wholly or in part the influence of von Hofmann's thinking. There is a strong emphasis on the historical, a broad conception of an historical "whole" which is at least the sub-structure of Scriptures. In his introduction to his work, Die Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments he writes:⁸

The Biblical History of the New Testament is, like that of the Old Testament, composed of separate stories. However, the trend and progress of the history is clearly recognized throughout. The author has sought to do justice to both features: he has, on the one hand, tried to present those matters which each section contains, taken by itself, and on the other hand, he has endeavored to place each separate story in its proper connection with the whole, and thus to show the course of New Testament history.

In another essay he refers to the chief content of Scripture as the "Geschichte des Gnadenbundes."⁹

There are also utterances of Stoeckhardt concerning the nature of faith which are reminiscent of specific passages in von Hofmann. He writes in a sermon that of

⁸Ibid., p. 19.

⁹Georg Stoeckhardt, "Zur Inspirationslehre und zum ersten Capitel der Bibel," Lehre und Wehre, XXXIX? (1893) p. 329.

course it is foolishness to dismiss the witness of prophets and apostles, yet this does not account for faith. Faith is more than well-based human conviction. Faith is final certainty. He who truly believes has the witness and seal of God in his heart.¹⁰ In this same sermon he proceeds: "Was ist der Glaube anders, als dasz wir Gottes Stimme, Gottes Zeugnisz vernehmen, und zwar innerlich vernehmen, als dasz Gottes Wort in unsere Innern widerhalt und da Anklang findet."¹¹ Despite some polemical excursions against the conclusions of archeologists, paleontologists and natural scientists¹² Stoeckhardt concludes that the chief content of Scriptures are objects of faith and can be apprehended only by faith.¹³

This faith is explicitly Christocentric, another notable emphasis of von Hofmann. Christ is the center and sum of all Old Testament prophecy.¹⁴ Christ is the sum of all Scriptures.¹⁵ Faith in Him, the Crucified and Arisen One,

¹⁰Georg Stoeckhardt, "Predigt uber das Evangelium des ersten Pfingstages," Magazin fuer Ev.-luth. Homiletik, XIV (1890), 107.

¹¹Ibid., p. 109.

¹²Georg Stoeckhardt, "Was sagt die Schrift von sich selbst?" Lehre und Wehre, XXXII (1886), 314-319.

¹³Stoeckhardt, "Zur Inspirationslehre und zum ersten Capitel der Bibel," p. 330.

¹⁴Stoeckhardt, "Weissagung und Erfuellung," p. 42.

¹⁵Georg Stoeckhardt, "Predigt ueber das Evangelium des ersten Pfingstages," Magazin fuer Ev.-Luth. Homiletik, XIII (1889), 174.

comprehends the entire content of the Christian faith.¹⁶

Although we have already noted in Stoeckhardt a much less active view of the Holy Spirit than that found in von Hofmann there are nevertheless to be found interesting references to the work of the Spirit in some few writings of Stoeckhardt. These passages certainly contain echoes of what in von Hofmann's thinking assumed a decisive role. For example, Stoeckhardt writes that our Christian knowledge is very much hindered in its progress by foolishness and an inability to understand. But when we continue in hearing, reading and learning the Holy Spirit comes and gives us illumined eyes of understanding so that we can always better understand and know.¹⁷

¹⁶Georg Stoeckhardt, "Predigt ueber das Evangelium am Sonntag Quasimodogeniti," Magazin fuer Ev.-luth. Homiletik, XV (1891), 99.

¹⁷Georg Stoeckhardt, "Predigt ueber das Evangelium am ersten Pfingstage," Magazin fuer Ev.-luth. Homiletik, XVIII (1894), 132.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSIONS

The contribution of von Hofmann to theology is clear. He offers a possible solution to the perplexing problem of maintaining an inspired Scripture and of recognizing the valid claims of historical criticism. He accomplishes this first by orienting theology in terms of faith instead of reason so the truth of Scripture is not to be proved, but recognized by faith alone. Furthermore he seeks to understand Scripture for what he thinks it is: the normative documentary authentication of the revelation of God in history Who is moving to bring all creation into unity with Himself, Who has given the Sacred Scriptures the purpose of making men wise unto salvation through faith. According to this purpose the Scriptures are to be judged. Therefore the truth which matters in the Scripture is only the Heils-
wahrheit; all else is a matter of relative indifference, he claimed. Thus, Scriptures are not to be judged according to the nature of God (which, he maintains, happened in scholastic orthodox theology), for God uses many human and imperfect means to accomplish his holy ends. With this concept of Heilsgeschichte von Hofmann is able to provide the structure for a dynamic view of revelation in which the

Holy Spirit plays a leading role. In recognizing the reality of the subjective participation of the subject faith he was able to blend the governing factor of revelation with the systematic and reflective insights of Schleiermacher. Whether his conclusions are Scriptural is not to be decided here. Finally, his view of the threefold method of drawing theological conclusions laid the foundation for an abiding relevance of the Church's Confessions to contemporary theology.

There are many remarkable parallels between the theologies of von Hofmann and Stoeckhardt. Not all of the parallelism should be interpreted as the result of a direct influence of one upon the other. Obviously there are many factors which contribute to the final construction of one's thinking. But especially in view of the close and admitted relationship between the two men it is not surprising to find this similarity, and not inaccurate to find many areas of direct influence of von Hofmann upon Stoeckhardt.

Stoeckhardt clearly has developed a sense of history and of historical development which one would expect from a student of von Hofmann. There is in his approach a passion for letting Scripture speak precisely what it intends to speak and a consciousness of the high demands of such an execution, another major accent of von Hofmann. In

addition we have indicated the central place of the Bible, and of faith in von Hofmann's theology, emphasis which Stoeckhardt shared and developed to a noteworthy extent.

The differences between the two are also decided. They seem to disagree on the nature of revelation and, perhaps, on the purpose of the Scriptures. They are most sharply divided on the place of the subject in theology. The Holy Spirit occupies a much less significant role in Stoeckhardt's thinking than it does in von Hofmann's. Further investigation would undoubtedly reveal and clarify significant philosophical implications residing in their utterances, which account for much of the apparent distance between the two great men who had so much in common.

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