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Edgar Krentz
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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EDGAR KRENTZ

I. A SURVEY OF TRENDS AND PROBLEMS IN BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

Any man fool enough to accept the assignment described in the title above deserves his fate. He is like the mythological traveler approaching ancient Thebes. To go forward means to meet the Sphinx and her dread riddle; to miss the answer means to be thrown headlong down a precipitous cliff and face destruction. Yet the possibility that one may deprive Oedipus of his glory by answering the riddle leads one to trudge along the dusty path under the hot sun.

The analogy is not entirely out of place. The title listed above presents a bit of a riddle, is itself a hermeneutical problem. Heiko Obermann describes the present state of theology as follows:

> Just as "eschatology" was the reigning catchword in theological circles for a long, long time, "hermeneutics" is increasingly the pass-word to the circles of those who have arrived theologically.[1]

The accuracy of that statement is easily verified by a glance at the number of entries under the heading "Hermeneutica biblica" in the major bibliography for Bible study, the *Elenchus Bibliographicus:* for 1965 there are 221 items, and 1966, 318 entries. To change the metaphor, one is in a veritable labyrinth of writings and opinions. One's fate is to turn into a mere cataloger of opinions, ranged one after the other in neat files all properly labeled, and thus run the risk of extreme superficiality. Or one may select those items that particularly interest him, betraying thereby his own problems and interests, and run the risk of being accused of overlooking what the real issues and problems are. With both riddle and cliff before me, I dare to hope that the Sphinx prefers selectivity to catalogs.

This essay was designed to provide background and orientation for those taking part in the six theological conferences on "Understanding and Using the Bible" in September 1968. Three general problem areas are discussed.

Problem Area 1. The Methods of Biblical Interpretation

The traditional definition of hermeneutics was that it was the "science of interpretation"[2] or the "theory of exegesis." Manuals of hermeneutics from Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1567) down to the present give the steps of interpretation by which the sense of an ancient book (the Bible) can be derived in the present. Such

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[1] "Introduction: The Protestant View of the Bible: Hermeneutics," *Christianity Divided,* ed. D. J. Callahan, H. A. Obermann, and D. J. O'Hanlon (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962), p. 75.

[2] "Die Wissenschaft vom Auslegen," *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* 1st ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1909), II, s. v. Hereafter *RGG.*

The author is associate professor of New Testament exegesis at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

words and rules as *usus loquendi, sensus literalis unus est,* etc., characterized such manuals. They were designed to help one understand what the written text said.

One "great revolt" came in this period, to borrow a phrase from James Luther Mays,[3] the rise of historical criticism as a means of interpretation. Historical criticism introduced into Biblical studies a factor as disturbing in its time as was the Reformation before it. This method is almost universally accepted in Biblical scholarship today.[4]

This judgment is ratified by the fact that the method is taken for granted in the study of Scriptures by practitioners of exegesis generally,[5] including Roman Catholic Biblical scholars,[6] and even by such a group as drew up the "Braunschweig Theses on the Teaching and Mission of the Church":

> 15. In Holy Scripture God's Word is given in the words of men (2 Cor. 4:7). But both sides of the Word of Scripture, the divine and the human, must be preserved unimpaired and undiluted. Faith acknowledges the Spirit's creation of the word of Scripture (John 14:26; 2 Tim. 3:15; 2 Peter 1:21) and its total historical character. The results of these considerations are:
>
> A. that the exploration of the word of Scripture in a secular-scientific way (for example, the historical-critical method) is justifiable and necessary and;
>
> B. that nevertheless the true divine assertion of every passage in Scripture, the Word of God in the word of man, can be grasped only through faith in the entire Gospel attested in Scripture. (1 Cor. 2:14-15)
>
> The latter statement provides the regulator for the possibilities of the historical-critical method. This method may not be employed in matters pertaining to the Christian faith when it finds fault with any part of the content of the New Testament writings; when it, for instance, absolutizes the mode of thinking employed in historical analogy and correlation.[7]

Thus one is not surprised to hear the Pontifical Biblical Commission urge on Catholic scholars the use of "the new aids to exegesis, especially those which the historical method, taken in its widest sense, has provided."[8] The *Instruction* goes on to define these new aids as source analysis, textual criticism, literary criticism, linguistic studies, and the "Method of Form-History."

This listing of the new aids is nothing more or less than a listing of methods developed by practitioners of historical criticism.[9] The steps are very similar to those formulated by the Ecumenical Study

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[3] *Exegesis as a Theological Discipline* (Richmond, Va.: Union Theological Seminary, 1960), p. 8.

[4] See Carl Braaten, *History and Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), pp. 33 ff. Hereafter *HH*.

[5] For example, Brevard Childs, "Interpretation in Faith," *Interpretation,* XVIII (1964), 432 ff. Hereafter *Int.*

[6] For example, Rudolf Schnackenburg, "Zur Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift in unserer Zeit," *Bibel und Leben,* V (1964), 21.

[7] CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, XXXVII (1966), 517.

[8] "Nova exegeseos adiumenta sollerter adhibebit, praesertim ea quae historica methodus universum considerata affert." "Instructio de historica evangeliorum veritate," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly,* XXVI (April 21, 1964), 299. Hereafter *CBQ*.

[9] One might add today tradition history. See the similar listings in Roy Harrisville, *His Hidden Grace* (hereafter *HHG*) (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 40 ff., and James Muilenberg, "Preface to Hermeneutics," *Journal of Biblical Literature,* LXXVII (1958), 22—24.

Conference, Wadham College, Oxford, 1949:

> It is agreed that one must start with an historical and critical examination of the passage. This includes:
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> 1. The determination of the text;
> 2. The literary form of the passage;
> 3. The historical situation, the Sitz im Leben;
> 4. The meaning which the words had for the original author and hearer or reader;
> 5. The understanding of the passage in the light of its total context and the background out of which it emerged.[10]

The same basic schema is to be found in the *Biblischer Kommentar — Altes Testament,* ed. Martin Noth under the headings *Text, Form, Ort, Wort, Ziel.*[11]

This method is *almost* universally used. This does not mean that it is universally accepted or even accepted with reservations. Imagine that a dialog might take place before us between a scholar who sees this method as indispensable for the study of the Scriptures, say Eduard Schweizer of Zürich,[12] and an earnest, worried, pious Christian, say Gerhard Bergmann.[13] We could certainly find representatives of either position on this side of the Atlantic.[14] We might imagine their conversation to go something like this:

Bergmann: I recognize that the Bible must be read as a historical document, that Introduction is a legitimate science, but the historical-critical method in Biblical studies has turned out to be entirely negative in its results (pp. 27—28). The method as presently practiced has its roots in historicistic thinking, in modern science and philosophy, and so is ultimately rationalistic and operates with a closed universe (pp. 12—15), which leaves no room for God's action in history. What this finally means is the dehistorification of the Bible (pp. 26 f.).

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[10] *Biblical Authority for Today,* ed. A. Richardson and W. Schweitzer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), pp. 241 ff.

[11] Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1955 ff. See also Gottfried Adam, "Zur wissenschaftlichen Arbeitsweise," *Einführung in die exegetischen Methoden* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1963), p. 80.

[12] For his views see "Die historisch-kritische Bibelwissenschaft und die Verkündigungsaufgabe der Kirche," and "Scripture — Tradition — Modern Interpretation," *Neotestamentica* (Zürich/Stuttgart: Zwingli Verlag, 1963), pp. 136—49 and 203—35.

[13] *Alarm und die Bibel. Warum die Bibelkritik der modernen Theologie falsch ist* (Gladbeck: Schriftmissions-Verlag, 1963).

[14] The great concern over modern Biblical scholarship in European circles is testified to by a number of factors: the *Offener Brief* of a group of Württemberg pastors; the movement *Kein anderes Evangelium;* and, most recently, the *Deutsch-skandinavische Theologentagung* in Sittensen (Bezirk Bremen), Feb. 21—25, 1968. For a summary of the meeting see Ernst Henze, "Offenbarung, Schrift, Kirche," *Lutherische Monatshefte,* VII (1968), 111—14; the resolutions adopted by that group, as well as the so-called Düsseldorfer Erklärung of the *Kein anderes Evangelium* movement and Bishop Dr. Hübner's 1967 remarks at Neumünster, are reprinted in the same journal, pp. 132—35. They would all go to reinforce the position of Bergmann. Willi Marzsen wrote an answer to Bergmann's volume under the title *Der Streit um die Bibel,* published by the same house in 1964; see also his volume *Das Neue Testament als Buch der Kirche* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1966).

Most of what has been stated in terms of the European debate could be documented in recent American literature, though there have been few organized movements here. See George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1967) and many articles in *Christianity Today.*

Schweizer: As you said, the Bible must be read in its place in history. But the place it occupies is very old. It is an ancient book that speaks directly only to its first readers, as Käsemann has stated.[15] The books were written out of the cultural framework of the first century or earlier and for their own time (R. Preus' formulation). But that means that we must listen to the book in its own time — and that can only be done by historical research. As Luis Alonzo Schökl said:

> A difference in periods of time within the same language presents less of a problem. The greater barrier is cultural difference: this can be nearly impossible to surmount. Within a closed culture, the continuity tradition mitigates the problem of distance, though even a living, closed culture can deceive us with its gradually accumulated changes (pp. 380—81).
>
> Holy Scripture is at once ancient and contemporary; incarnate in a particular time, it claims to speak to all generations; circumscribed in language and cultural perspective, it lays claim to universality. I cannot remove this distance and this tension, because Scripture can seek me only by virtue of this concretization, and only in its concretization can it reach me; it can move me only in a personal contact. There is no point in appealing to God's omnipotence, omnipresence, or efficacity, because God's way is the way of incarnation (p. 382).[16]

That the methods of historical research are secular is true. Its methodology is in its ultimate origin Greek and not Hebrew (remember the Greeks coined the word *methodos*). Such methods are profane, restricted in their value, and dangerous.[17] All interpretation of the Bible by any method whatever is! But we have no choice. We simply must use its procedures.[18]

Bergmann: But dare we? Historical work inevitably involves making decisions; what we here find is that negative decisions are made. Jesus' words are divided into the

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15 "Zum gegenwärtigen Streit um die Schriftauslegung," *Das Wort Gottes und die Kirchen*, ed. Fritz Viering (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), p. 20.

16 "Hermeneutics in the Light of Language and Literature," *CBQ*, XXV (1963), 371—86.

17 See E. Dinkler, "Das Wort Gottes, die Bibel und die wissenschaftliche Methode," *Fragen der wissenschaftlichen Erforschung der Heiligen Schrift. Sonderdruck aus dem Protokoll der Landessynode der Evangelischen Kirche im Rheinland, Januar, 1962*, p. 6.

18 One area of historical study deserves special mention, since it is frequently downgraded. To take the historical situation and the literal sense seriously demands that we take the question of literary form seriously. Most Christians are quite accustomed to the importance of literary form in interpreting Jesus' parables, the imagery of Revelation 20—22, or the Psalter. But we need to remember that literary forms, fashions, and conventions change. The poetic form called the dramatic monologue (Robert Browning's favorite) would have been impossible in ancient Rome or Palestine, while the diatribe of popular Hellenistic-Roman philosophy is strange and foreign to us, as is the Platonic dialog. We are all aware that styles change in homiletics. Years ago the rule was solid that no one should ever use slang or colloquialisms in the pulpit; today I wonder if this is ever mentioned.

It must be stated, in addition, that the closer a literary form is to one of our own, the more we are liable to make it conform to our standards, often quite unconsciously. Gospels are not biographies; *bioi*, lives, have a quite different form in the ancient world. Neither gospel nor *bios* is a modern biography, which is concerned to spell out the inner growth and development of a person. Or, to take another example, there is good reason to engage in a study of the form of the covenant in the ancient Near East. Such a study has much to say about the form and structure of Deuteronomy. See G. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh: The Biblical Colloquium, 1955).

genuine, the spurious, and the dubious (pp. 32 f.). Such is the result of form criticism. The meaning of Jesus is restricted to a few passages. Whole sections of our Bible are lost.

Schweizer: Not true. The authority of Jesus was not greater in His earthly life than after Easter. "In new situations, the heavenly Lord, through His Spirit, explained his former words and reinterpreted them in a new situation."[19] Thus the validity of these words is not subject to the results of a scholar's decision. Here is a case where we must do what true historical work always tries to do, to hear, as Käsemann put it:

> The cardinal virtue of the historian and the beginning of all meaningful hermeneutic is for me simply the practice of hearing, which begins by letting what is historically foreign maintain its validity and does not regard rape as the basic form of *engagement*.[20]

Not only does such historical work seek to hear; it also demands *Ehrlichkeit*, absolute honesty, in its work.[21] And such honesty preserves the distance between text and reader, allows what happened to happen in its own particularity, reminds us that the Word is particular and concrete.[22] Thus it frees us from a false concept of truth, for it shows that what we cannot ground historically is also true. Some truth, in fact, is lessened by a search for historical proof, for example, "the truth that my wife loves me is not supported, but destroyed if I employ private detectives to assure myself by demonstrable facts that she loves me."[23]

Bergmann: That doesn't really sound to me like the way the critics work. Most seem to look for parallels in the ancient world — and whatever has a parallel is not genuine Jesus. The Bible dissolves into a collection of ancient thoughts (p. 29).

Schweizer: Even you recognize the validity of historical work (p. 35). Your anxiety is certainly understandable.[24] The time has come to take seriously the values of this historical critical method. Parallels and even borrowings say nothing about authenticity or even originality. What is important is that it be used to understand the Bible, which from stem to stern has a human and earthly history. Kurt Frör has put it well:[25]

> The question cannot consist in whether the Bible is to be studied in the light of the history of religion. Without any reservations the Bible lies open to such comparisons. For, since God does His deeds in history, He allows Himself thereby to be classified in the world in which religious phenomena often look so much like one another as to be interchangeable. Indeed, He allows it to go so far that interchange not only takes place, but that through such "religionsgeschichtlich" study the unique character of the Biblical proclamation is underscored in the light of its

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[19] *Neotestamentica*, p. 220.

[20] "Zum Thema der urchristlichen Apokalyptik" (hereafter *Urchr. Apok.*), *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), II, 107, note 2. Trans. by J. M. Robinson, *The New Hermeneutic* (hereafter *NH*) (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 43.

[21] *Neotestamentica*, pp. 136 ff.

[22] See *HHG*, p. 68; Cullmann, "The Necessity and Function of Higher Criticism," *The Early Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), pp. 12—14; R. Funk, "The Hermeneutical Problem and Historical Criticism," *NH*, pp. 183—84.

[23] *Neotestamentica*, p. 142 (my translation).

[24] See *HHG*, pp. 15—21.

[25] *Biblische Hermeneutik* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1961), p. 49 (my translation).

contemporary world. The study of religious history and the Bible does not at all conclude with a radical erosion and leveling of the Bible, in which the Bible loses all its peculiar character; rather it makes clear what the Bible, for all its rootedness in its own world, has to say to that world as its own peculiar and unique word. One should not study the Bible with fear and reservations as a part of the history of religion. All depends upon one's recognizing the highly positive contribution of this method for the task of interpretation and then using it properly.[26]

Certainly, errors have been made in the past. And they will continue to be made — no matter what method of interpretation is used. But a method that is bound by its object, the texts, and not by some pragmatic need will eventually correct itself. One correction made in recent years, for example, has been the discovery that the New Testament is eschatologically oriented, a discovery now common coin in Biblical scholarship, but originally made by two critical scholars, Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer. The history of interpretation will show that careful study of the text by critical scholarship corrects one-sided reactions and theories. Faith and historical proof often do not support one another, though faith *is* also concerned with things that happen in this world and their meaning.[27] Historical criticism has shown us that facts and interpretation come to us together. Historical facts cannot be put on the same level as physical facts.[28] Historical criticism cannot establish or reject the interpretation. That is the area of faith.

Here the conversation broke off (or we break it off). Bergmann would probably not be convinced, while Schweizer has not said all that might be said. But the discussion has shown that the problem of method is one that needs much interpretation to clergy and church. That the results of

[26] It is true that there is a danger. From 1900 till about 1930 there was a tendency to remove all originality from the Bible, to regard it as a kind of composite patchwork of ideas borrowed from here and there, forming a kind of crazy-quilt pattern. But no responsible student of history today feels that the identification of similarities and even cultural loans can account for Israel or Christianity. W. C. van Unnik stated that "the full brightness and impact of Christian ideas only shines out in its ancient surroundings and not in the dim light of a quasi-eternity" (W. C. van Unnik, "ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη — a Problem in the Early History of the Canon," *Studia Patristica*, IV [Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1961], 217). Now there can be no doubt that the society that surrounded both Testaments was impregnated by religion in a way that we can scarcely imagine today. "The sky hung low in those days" is the way Gilbert Murray expressed it. Israel was brought out of a multi-godded Egypt into a land inhabited by the Canaanites. She lived out her history in a country surrounded by devotees of fertility and nature religions, where high places and sacral prostitution were normal. She went into captivity in Babylon, where the wisdom of the East included things religious. Small wonder that Isaiah 2 speaks against idolatry and Psalm 82 pronounces God's judgment on the pagan gods. For the New Testament the religious world included Palestinian Judaism and its Hellenistic counterpart, Greek philosophy and pseudo-philosophy, the ancient Greek and Roman gods and eastern religious imports, Greek and eastern mystery religions, magic and divination, and the whole shadowy underworld of religious superstition. Jesus' originality did not consist of novelty; He never defined the key terms of His preaching. Paul quoted from pagan authors and the Septuagint, used the exegetical methods of rabbinic scholars, adopted the terminology of his opposition. To posit such linguistic or cultural affinities says nothing beyond the fact that God speaks in a way that means to communicate. He wishes to be understood.

[27] *Neotestamentica*, p. 139.

[28] Ibid., p. 220.

historical criticism are not the basis of faith needs interpretation. Many have pointed out the shifting nature of the sands of historical criticism.[29] Others have underscored the factors of chance and the intuitive nature of historical research to make clear that the past is always an ambiguous book.[30] Laeuchli concludes that there is one great dialectic in the stream of history and the attempt to understand it:

> that the past is *dead* (and not one sentence will ever be heard in its original context), and yet that somehow, part of that past *is going on,* and is part of us;
>
> and that the past is *dead,* and in the encounter with it in us, it *comes back to life,* even creating something new (pp. 256 to 257).

Problem Area 2. The Scope and Nature of Hermeneutics

Thus a problem is raised by the historical method, a problem that can be formulated in various ways. How does Laeuchli's dead past come back to life and go on? Stated in terms of the Scriptures, how does the *deus dixit* (the historical side of the Scriptures) relate to the *deus loquens per scripturas?* In the dialog created above between Bergmann and Schweizer, most readers were probably very much aware that Krentz is not a dramatist and never will be; yet the chances are that you entered into dialog with the conversation. Plato knew what he was doing in teaching philosophy via dialogs; his dialectical method led him to question the validity of philosophical treatises. Our question is, How does the dialog with Scripture take place?

At several points in the fabricated conversation above, Schweizer suggested motifs that indicate that faith and historical research, while related, are not coextensive. Bergmann was also correct in his analysis of much historical work. The historicism of the 19th century, modeled according to Braaten (p. 20) on the empirical methods of the natural sciences, came to regard as reality and truth only that which it could expound in terms of causality within a closed continuum. Such a historicistic view of history is affirmed, at least in one sense, by Rudolf Bultmann[31] and is shared by Fuchs and Funk.[32] Not all historians share such a view, however; Bishop Neill states:

> The historian . . . does know . . . that history is to a large extent made up of the improbable, and of what by any sober calculation of reason would be regarded as the impossible. One of the most brilliant of twentieth-century historians, Mr. F. A. Simpson, has remarked that it would do historians no harm to believe six impossible things before breakfast every day.[33]

But if history has a restricted function (Schweizer) and if it leads, potentially, to a false view of reality, then one can see that historicistic Biblical interpretation raises a problem, and why Oscar Cullmann would argue that "a genuine and complete interpretation must go much further [than simple historical re-creation] and must try to develop *in modern language* the objec-

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[29] *HHG,* pp. 54 ff.

[30] See Samuel Laeuchli, "Issues in the Quest of a Hermeneutic," *Dialog,* IV (1965), 250 to 258.

[31] "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" *Existence and Faith* (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), pp. 291 ff.

[32] "Problem," *NH,* pp. 185 ff.

[33] Stephen Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861—1961* (London: Oxford, 1964), p. 281.

tive ideas expressed in the text." [34] Cullmann's sentence points us to two current major discussions in hermeneutics: (1) What is the full role of hermeneutics? and (2) What is the nature of understanding? (The sentence comes from the phrase "objective ideas.")

Both questions relate to the defining of the task of hermeneutics. The complexity and variety found in current definitions show that the classical definition, "the theory of exegesis," no longer serves.

Not long ago a reviewer wrote of a commentary on Hebrews that its author had

> confined himself to exegesis and not gone on to hermeneutics (the interpretation of the lessons of the book for the situation of its readers today); the remoteness of the sacrificial ritual with which Hebrews is so much concerned makes the hermeneutical task specially difficult in this epistle.[35]

What Bruce calls the "hermeneutical task" is occasioned by the very success of historical-critical methodology. Such a method makes the distance — chronological, cultural, linguistic, and even religious — between modern man and that ancient book, the Bible, very clear. Exegesis becomes a purely historical and descriptive task, to say what an old document meant for its first (and intended) readers.[36] But modern man wants to know what it means *now*. It is the preacher's task to tell him. Precisely here critical exegesis seems to leave him in the lurch; an impasse is all that seems to result.

The present state of the hermeneutical discussion is the result of the attempts to overcome the impasse introduced by the historical-critical method.[37] The question can be raised whether such an historical method by itself leads to a real understanding *(Verstehen)* of the text, whether it can actually be used purely by itself, and whether it is not dependent on or complementary to other factors. This question is, as Schnackenburg calls it, "das Kernproblem der Hermeneutik, dem man heute erhöhtes Interesse zuwendet." [38]

Friederich Schleiermacher, who introduced the modern study of hermeneutics, defined hermeneutics as the "Kunst des Verstehens" in 1832—33.[39] Thus he introduced the factor of psychological understanding alongside the factor of grammatical-historical interpretation. It is suggested that there is some interaction between text and interpreter of an almost divinatory character. His insight was carried forward by Droysen and Dilthey.[40]

Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth both attempted to bridge the gap between text and hearer raised by the method of higher criticism. Barth argued that the critical

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[34] Cullmann, *The Early Church*, p. 4.

[35] F. F. Bruce, Review of Hugh Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964) in *Christianity Today*, IX, 20 (July 2, 1965), 25.

[36] See Krister Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, I, 418—32.

[37] R. Marlé, *Introduction to Hermeneutics* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. 25.

[38] *Bibel und Leben*, V, 221.

[39] *Hermeneutik und Kritik* (Berlin: Reimer, 1878), p. 7; see also Werner Schultz, "Die unendliche Bewegung in der Hermeneutik Schleiermachers und ihre Auswirkung auf die hermeneutische Situation der Gegenwart," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, LXV* (1968), 23—52.

[40] See Ebeling, "Hermeneutik," *RGG*, 3d ed., III, col. 255.

method can only tell one "was da steht"; but this, as Ebeling points out,[41] is only a simple preparation for the task of understanding. Barth suggested that it must be followed by a *Nachdenken* until the wall separating first and twentieth centuries disappears. In the process, as Robinson puts it, "the object — which should henceforth be called the subject matter — . . . puts the subject in question."[42]

Bultmann also sought to overcome the hermeneutic impasse. Barth, he felt, did not take the text seriously enough. One who does soon discovers that there are variations and even contradictions in Paul. This is brought to light by an interpretation of the text, whose conditions for interpretation are no different from those of any other secular text. What is needed is a confrontation with the text's living word. To do this, one must rid the text of all that gets in the way of the word, that is, all that is mythological. Bultmann uses myth in a very specific sense, that popularized by the history of religions school. "Mythology is the use of imagery to express the other worldly in terms of this world and the divine in terms of human life, the other side in terms of this side."[43] Mythology thus uses language that ought to be verifiable of God, because it objectifies; but God and His truths are not objectifiable or verifiable.[44]

The purpose of myth, to speak of a transcendent power which controls the world and man, is thus "impeded and obscured by the terms in which it is expressed."[45] What is needed is content criticism. This interpretive principle was combined with existential interpretation, that is, with asking the question about the understanding of man's existence in the Scriptures that will call one's own understanding of existence into question. One cannot tear apart the act of thinking from the act of living, an insight Bultmann owed to Adolf Schlatter. Therefore, New Testament theology has the task of making "clear this believing self-understanding in its reference to the kerygma."[46] Thus the way the text is questioned becomes fundamental. Man must recognize his essential historicity, that being is "evolving, choosing for itself, and making itself, questioning itself, a problematic being, a 'possibility.'"[47] For Bultmann self-understanding becomes a hermeneutical principle.

That Bultmann's solution would not remain final was clear long ago. Ernst Käsemann expressed himself critically already in 1951:

> The difficulty is made still more pointed when one recognizes not only that the *deus dixit* must be designated as the address

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[41] Ibid., col. 256.

[42] J. M. Robinson, "Hermeneutic since Barth," *NH*, pp. 23—24; for the entire paragraph see Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 2—15; Marlé, *Introduction*, pp. 26—32.

[43] Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," *Kerygma and Myth: a Theological Debate*, ed. H. W. Bartsch, trans. R. H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K., 1953), p. 10, note 2.

[44] See on this H. Cancik, "Mythus," *Bibel-Lexikon*, ed. Herbert Haag (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1968), cols. 1196—1204; Gerhard Gloege, *Mythologie und Luthertum*. 3d ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963).

[45] Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, p. 11.

[46] Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Scribners, 1955), II, 251.

[47] Marlé, *Introduction*, p. 54.

(Anliegen) of the Biblical *kerygma,* but also that his *deus dixit* does not imply a constantly contemporary revelation. It is bound to a definite *kairos,* namely, to the history of the crucified and risen Jesus. Therewith the Scripture is primarily a witness to the God who deals with men, and only secondarily a witness to the man who is defined by this action; thus *the basic primacy of such revelation over* (and before) *faith* is underscored. There is certainly a correlation between revelation and faith, but the two do not coincide. It is not merely the gift and fruit of revelation that are included in it, but also the personal Revealer, who in His revelatory action shows Himself to be the one who stands over against man. In this recognition there arises, in my opinion, an insoluble difficulty *(Aporie)* if one identifies the question of theological content and the hermeneutical question, as Bultmann does. One cannot, on the basis of a generally valid hermeneutic, allow the validity of the Scripture's claim to be the witness to the God who reveals Himself personally in His actions; rather one must demythologize Him in favor of a religious self-understanding. On the other hand, faith becomes a religious Weltanschauung if one does demythologize. If none else can any longer do it, then the Biblical exegete must contest the validity of a generally valid hermeneutic which limits and defines the object of his inquiry from the outset. His hermeneutic cannot give him that content *(Gegenstand)* which his text alone can give him, namely, *deus dixit,* though a Biblical hermeneutic certainly must express itself about the proper *(sachgemäss)* interpretation of this *deus dixit,* and so will emphasize the necessity of an interpretation related to human existence. *Hermeneutics can only have a critical function for the theologian,* not however in the sense that it can put forward the thesis that hermeneutics finds its legitimate conclusion in existential statements. Hermeneutics is rather given its limits by the proclamation of its concrete text. The Reformation tension between the question of theological content and the hermeneutic problem is thus *not* dissoluble.[48]

This long paragraph, little noted in the literature, was written three years before the publication of Ernst Fuchs' *Hermeneutik* (1954). In many ways it protests Bultmann's solution and points to the path the discussion will take — though not always in a way to gain Käsemann's approval.[49] The idea of the priority of revelation to faith found its counterpart in the resumed (new) quest of the historical Jesus, while his call for the preservation of the Reformation tension between content and hermeneutics and his attack on a general hermeneutics found *Nachklang* in the new hermeneutic discussion. These two discussions, closely related, are the legacy of Bultmann's hermeneutic program.

The nature of the new hermeneutic is well known. It is the program of theology put forward by Ernst Fuchs, Gerhard Ebeling, and Manfred Metzger of Germany,

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[48] Ernst Käsemann, "Probleme neutestamentlicher Arbeit in Deutschland," *Die Freiheit des Evangeliums und die Ordnung der Gesellschaft* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1952), p. 146 (my translation).

[49] Not everyone can do everything, and in the present high tide of "interpretation" some must devote themselves to administering the estate left by the historians, if for no other reason than to disturb the interpreters. . . . This state of affairs awakens the suspicion that *sub rosa* historiography and interpretation are exchanging the role appropriate to them, in that interpretation no longer serves historiography in need of clarification, but rather turns it into a quarry for its buildings arbitrarily erected for contemporaries in need of a roof. . . . See *NH,* p. 43.

popularized and developed in this country by James Robinson and Robert Funk. Its central recognition, as Robinson puts it, is that language "itself says what is invisibly taking place in the life of a culture."[50] Now the task of hermeneutics is to grasp the conditions, explicit or implicit, for understanding.[51] Fuchs defines hermeneutics as "faith's doctrine of language."[52] Ebeling maintains that understanding is not understanding *of* language, but *through* language.[53] Hermeneutics thus has become a name not for the methodology of exegesis, but for the entire theological enterprise.[54] That is also why Kurt Frör has picked up Schleiermacher's definition and called hermeneutics the "Lehre vom Verstehen,"[55] and why Ebeling feels it "takes the place of the classical epistemological theory."[56] In this hermeneutic (note the singular) the Word is not an object, something to be interpreted, but is itself an interpreter that has a hermeneutical function. The Word interprets man and not vice versa.

When language fulfills its normal function, there is no need of hermeneutic. Perhaps it would be better to say, as Schökl does, that "language is itself a complex hermeneutic activity on several levels."[57]

[50] *NH*, p. 39.

[51] Ebeling, "The New Hermeneutic and the Early Luther," *Theology Today*, XXI (1964), 34.

[52] E. Fuchs, *Hermeneutik*, 2d ed. (Bad Cannstadt: R. Müllerschön Verlag, 1958), p. 101; Robinson, *NH*, p. 55.

[53] "Word of God and Hermeneutic," *NH*, p. 93.

[54] Ebeling, ibid., p. 89, note 16.

[55] Frör, p. 12.

[56] "Word of God," *NH*, pp. 93 ff.

[57] *Hermeneutics*, pp. 371 ff.

One remembers how surprised Strepsiades was to learn about gender from Socrates, though he had been using it for years (Aristophanes, *Nubes*, 658 ff.). But when the word is hindered for some reason or other, then hermeneutic is necessary. This is more than merely studying words. One must also know the matter, for in the last analysis God's Word is word in the full sense, assertion, completion that goes to its goal. The word is ultimately the Gospel, the *res* of which Luther speaks.[58]

Ebeling is strongly influenced by Luther and frequently cites him. The Gospel is something oral, not to be confused with the written records of it.[59] As such it stands

[58] Ebeling, "Word of God," *NH*, p. 96; Marlé, *Problem*, p. 100.

For Luther, the true theologian was the one who saw the redemptive acts of God: "Tolle Christum e scripturis, quid amplius in illis invenies?" (*De servo arbitrio*, WA 18, 606, as cited in H. Sasse. "On the Doctrine De Scriptura Sacra," Letters addressed to Lutheran Pastors, no. 14, p. 26.)

"The man who deserves to be called a theologian is not the one who seeks to understand the invisible things of God through the things that are made (Rom. 1:22) but the one who understands that the visible things and the hind parts of God are seen through suffering and the cross." Heidelberg Theses (1518, WA 1, 361—63, trans. J. Pelikan, *Luther the Expositor* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), pp. 56 ff.

[59] Ebeling's documentation for this is found in his essay "'Sola scriptura' und das Problem der Tradition," *Wort Gottes und Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), pp. 101 ff. Note, for example, the quotation from Luther's *Kirchenpostille* of 1522: "Ein klein Unterricht was man in den Evangeliis suchen und gewahrten soll," cited on p. 102 of Ebeling: "The Old Testament alone has the name Holy Scripture, while Gospel essentially *(eigentlich)* should not be a writing, but an oral word that interprets the Scripture, as Christ and the apostles did. That is why Christ Himself did not write anything, but only spoke; that is

over against tradition. The task of hermeneutics is not to recall tradition, but to allow the word (the Gospel) to exercise its force in the present. Language is the true reality; it is not a past event but a present reality. It comes into a historical situation. It presupposes the past, but brings it newly to reality by giving man word-character and reality. Jesus' language of love is the really authentic language for Fuchs, and can therefore meet us in the present. It brings to self-understanding, its goal, by criticizing our self-understanding, its presupposition.[60] This is the historical situation into which the word moves.

This exposition is certainly oversimplified. Yet it contains, I think, the main motifs of Fuchs and Ebeling. How have people responded? In the first place, there is by no means agreement that the interpreter can be described as either Bultmann or the new hermeneutic does. Paul J. Achtemeier, for example, states that Bultmann's system really has faith as its necessary preunderstanding, since only one who has faith can understand what acts of God mean — and acts of God are what the New Testament reports. The new hermeneutic seeks to escape this dilemma by arguing the "only pre-condition necessary is to be human, to be involved in the question about oneself and that the only approach needed for valid interpretation is honesty in face of the text."[61] Achtemeier emphasizes that Jesus, as the one who shows what true language is (since language creates the reality), is understood mainly in terms of what He said, not what He did. Even the cross is reduced to a new language (p. 110) and becomes secondary.

A question which we cannot discuss here but which is currently exciting interest is that of the adequacy of the philosophical foundation for the new hermeneutic.

The question of the proper preunderstanding and of objective exegesis has also awakened much interest. On the one hand, emphasis is placed on the necessity of approaching the text in a way not to prejudge the conclusions one will reach *(vorurteilslos)*. Thus Funk states that there is no possibility of "allowing the text to speak for itself unless we continue to champion and to practice an 'objective' approach to the

why he called his teaching Gospel and not Scripture; that is, he called it a good message or proclamation that ought to be urged on one with the mouth and not the pen" (WA 10, 1, 1:17, 7—12). Or again: "In the New Testament sermons should take place openly, verbally, via the living voice, and should bring forward in speech to the ear what earlier had been concealed in letters *(Buchstaben)* and secret vision. For the New Testament is nothing less than an opening up and revelation of the Old Testament. . . . Therefore it is not at all a New Testament way of doing things to write books of Christian doctrine; rather there ought to be a good, learned, pious, and diligent preacher in every place, who without books would draw the living Word out of the old Scripture and trumpet it before the people constantly, as did the apostles. For before they wrote books, they had preached to people with their living voice and converted them, which was their proper apostolic and New Testament task. . . . It is a departure from and failure of the Spirit that one must write books; it is caused by necessity and is not the manner of the New Testament. . . ." (WA 10, 1, 1:625, 19—627, 3). See also Gloege, *Mythologie*, pp. 137 ff. Ebeling's volume has appeared in English since this article was written under the title *Word of God and Tradition: Historical Studies Interpreting the Divisions of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968).

[60] See Robinson, *NH*, pp. 52 ff.

[61] "How Adequate Is the New Hermeneutic?" *Theology Today, XXIII* (1966), 101 to 112.

text." [62] Gadamer, however, argues that one always comes with an outline *(Entwerfen)* that is to be filled in. For him, to understand means to work out and correct one's preformed conceptions. Thus the idea of authority and tradition is not contrary to interpretation.[63] While Schnackenburg agrees that this is tied to man's essential historicity, Frör argues that the interpreter's preunderstanding is simply this, that he assumes God means to address us in the Biblical texts, that there is indeed a word *of God* present.[64] Martin Franzmann seeks to overcome the dilemma by taking seriously the fact that the interpreter is one who has been baptized (and thus has experienced God's grace), lives in the church, and awaits the coming of his Lord.[65] Thus the interpreter must define history from the perspective of this action of God in his life; objectivity is for him a false concept since he has experienced the power and working of God's Gospel. This discussion is often pursued in terms of the so-called hermeneutical circle.

Other interpreters might well raise the question whether the new hermeneutic adequately takes into account the church. Frör argues that the *Gemeinde* is the place where interpretation should take place, since it is there that proclamation takes place and the Word raises its claim on men,[66] while Brevard Childs makes a similar point in arguing that the genuine theological task can only be carried on when "it begins within an explicit framework of faith." [67]

We should also express appreciation for the fact that the new hermeneutic makes us aware that the task of translating the Gospel into relevant and current terms is not easy. As Harrisville has reminded us, it is something that is the

> hardest and bitterest task of all, and the question as to the proper balance between this actualizing and the steps which precede it will occupy biblical critics, pastors, and teachers long after we have turned to God. But it can never be escaped, for the Bible is never the Word of God quantitively. The Christ who proclaims himself in it intends further to be proclaimed. There is no possibility of leaning on a dogma or theory of the Scripture which can free the preacher from the agony of making the Bible contemporary. The Word of God is an event which begins with the text and culminates in the preaching, in preaching that is heard and understood.[68]

Käsemann has expressed himself negatively about the confusion of historical understanding and decision.[69] He would also feel sympathetic to Achtemeier's point that stress is placed on the individual's act of faith. Eschatology is individualized into decision. What has happened to the church? The new quest of the historical Jesus is indispensable, since the words of Jesus as reported in the New Testament have too often been objectified by interpre-

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[62] Funk, "Creating an Opening," *Interpretation, XVIII* (1964), 391.

[63] Gadamer, pp. 251—55; Schnackenburg, pp. 222—23; cf. Käsemann above.

[64] *Bib. Herm.*, pp. 53—54.

[65] "The Hermeneutical Dilemma: Dualism in the Interpretation of Holy Scripture," CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY (hereafter *CTM*), XXXVI (1965), 512—23. On the question of history see also Gerhard Ebeling, *The Problem of Historicity*, trans. Grover Foley (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967).

[66] *Bib. Herm.*, pp. 13—19.

[67] *Int.*, p. 438.

[68] *HHG*, pp. 58—59.

[69] *Urchr. Apok.*, 107.

tation from the death and resurrection. The new hermeneutic needs the historical Jesus to escape the Christ of faith and get back to Jesus' words as opposed to the cross and resurrection. There is thus an inversion in the structure of New Testament thought itself.[70]

There is one criticism of the new hermeneutic which is striking. John Dillenberger, a systematician, raises the question of prophecy for the new hermeneutic. What is there in the new hermeneutic that can possibly relate to the idea that truth has been delivered in the past only to be uncovered in the future? The whole argument from prophecy, so vital to the early church, is lost.[71]

Fuchs uses the example of a cat and a mouse to illustrate the nature of language. Put a mouse in front of a cat and you soon see what a cat is.[72] But, counters Achtemeier,[73] that will not really do. Suppose you replace the mouse with a saucer of milk, then a dog, and next a piece of catnip? At which point is the cat truly cat? Or is catness only determined by the cumulation of all the individual reactions? Analogical argumentation is dangerous, of course, but doesn't Achtemeier's point raise the question of heresy? Oepke says in his commentary on Galatians, "Eine Kirche, die nicht fluchen kann, kann auch nicht segnen." Is it not possible that there may be an inadequate self-understanding, a heretical self-understanding in the new hermeneutic? And who can say that it is?

On the other hand, there is much appreciation expressed for the emphasis made that the hermeneutic task is not completed until proclamation is reached. This is certainly an emphasis shared with the reformers. Thus Caemmerer says: "This the German thinkers have kept central: the preaching of today's minister of the Gospel. The reason is that it views the Word of God as central in the process of its message and that it views the preacher as responsible for translating that Word into action toward his people." Caemmerer also reacts positively toward Ebeling's emphasis that Word of God and Scripture are not identical.[74]

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[70] Achtemeier, p. 116; see also Braaten, "How New Is the New Hermeneutic?" *Theology Today*, XXII (1965), 228.

[71] J. Dillenberger, "On Broadening the New Hermeneutic," *NH*, pp. 155—57.

[72] *Hermeneutik*, p. 113.

[73] *Theology Today*, XXIII, p. 113.

[74] R. R. Caemmerer, "The New Hermeneutic and Preaching," *CTM*, XXXVII (1966) 105—106. There has been quite a discussion recently of the relation between exegesis and preaching, a relationship that Jacob Jervel has called "a crisis of confidence" (see p. 137, art. cited below). The following will serve as a minimal bibliography:

Barret, C. K. *Biblical Problems and Biblical Preaching*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964.

Elliott, John H. "The Preacher and the Proclamation," *The Lively Function of the Gospel*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1966. Pp. 99—130.

Harrisville, Roy. "Preaching: The Burden and the Joy," *Lutheran World*, XIII (1966), 165—75.

Jervell, Jacob S. "The Legitimacy and Limitations of Exegesis in Relation to the Church's Task of Preaching," *Lutheran World*, XIII (1966), 137—49.

Metzger, Manfred. "Preparation for Preaching — The Route from Exegesis to Proclamation," *Journal for Theology and the Church*, II: *Translating Theology into the Modern Age* (1965), 159—79.

Roloff, Jurgen. "Modern New Testament Research and the Church," *Lutheran World*, XIII (1966), 150—64.

Roth, Günther. "Der Skopus eines Textes in Predigt und Unterricht," *ZThK*, LXII (1965), 217—29.

Certainly, also the new hermeneutic supports the idea that lack of proofs does not remove truth. It has thus escaped the bind which the Enlightenment loaded on historical thinking.[75]

Problem Area 3. Hermeneutics and the Unity of Scripture

This section will gather a number of random questions that relate to the nature of authority, unity, etc., in hermeneutics. The list is by no means complete and is intended only to be typical.

1. Carl Braaten, in reaction to the new hermeneutic, raised for Americans the view of history and the resurrection of Jesus urged by J. Moltmann and W. Pannenberg.[76] He claims that Jesus has really ceased to exist for Fuchs and Ebeling and become a language event rather than a person.[77] Does such a view, asks Braaten, do justice to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 and to the many other places in the New Testament which do argue and interpret from history? [78] History is the universal means of God's revelation.[79] And that history has a sort of proleptic realization of its final goal in the resurrection of Jesus.

This emphasis on history in relation to revelation has been shared by others (Cullmann), and hotly contested by James Barr in a series of works.[80] The relation of Pannenberg's views to the Bultmann school is not yet clear.[81] As Julio de Santa Ana recently put it, "the variety of interpretations of history presented by today's theologians is proof of the lack of clarity on this subject." [82] Here is one of the great uncharted seas in current hermeneutical discussions.

2. Recent exegetical literature has tended to stress the variety inherent in the New Testament.[83] This variety must be brought into some kind of unity or placed under some kind of criterion in order to be manageable. What might such a criterion or basis of unity be? Here various answers will be mentioned to illustrate the problem.

The new hermeneutic generally answers: self-understanding called forth by the Gospel. Herbert Braun of Mainz has taken this position and radicalized it. In an essay entitled "The Problem of a New Testament Theology" [84] Braun argues that the only constant in the New Testament is anthropology. Therefore conduct, the interrelationship of the "I may" and "I ought" *(ich darf und ich soll),* is the unify-

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[75] H. G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit als Methode,* 2d ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1965), p. 255.

[76] *HH,* pp. 78—102; see also Funk's review in *Interpretation,* XXI (1967), 475—86.

[77] "How New Is the New Hermeneutic?" *Theology Today,* XXII (1965), 230.

[78] *HH,* pp. 93 ff.

[79] See Pannenberg's 7 theses in "Dogmatische Thesen zur Lehre von der Offenbarung," *Offenbarung als Geschichte,* 2d ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), pp. 91 ff.

[80] *Old and New in Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 65—102.

[81] See Robinson, "Revelation as Word and History," *Theology as History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), pp. 21—30.

[82] "Revelation and the Meaning of History," *Student World,* LX (1967), 326. The entire issue is devoted to hermeneutics.

[83] See the works by E. Schweizer listed earlier, James Robinson; "A Critical Inquiry into the Scriptural Bases of Confessional Hermeneutics," *Encounter,* XXVIII (1967), 17—34; E. Käsemann, many writings.

[84] *The Bultmann School of Biblical Interpretation: New Directions, Journal for Theology and the Church,* I (1965), 169—83.

ing factor in interpreting the New Testament. God is "the whence of my being agitated" toward love in the "I may" and "I ought." Peter McKenzie picks up this accent and gives an example of a sermon outline based on this hermeneutic in "Hermeneutics as a Practical Issue for the Christian in the University." [85]

Joachim Jeremias presents another view, though he to my knowledge has never carried it out consistently. For him the message of the historical Jesus is the call *(Ruf)* for which the theology of the apostles is the answer *(Antwort).* This view would seem to make the historical Jesus and His proclamation the unifying force in New Testament thought.[86]

Käsemann approaches the problem differently. On the basis of historical study he finds within the New Testament Enthusiastic theology at one end of the spectrum and Early Catholicism at the other. Thus the problem of the canon is raised. He concludes that the New Testament itself, therefore, demands "the theological task of 'discerning the spirits.'" [87] The canon within the canon that is demanded is the Gospel, *iustificatio impii.* (Käsemann was certainly influenced by reaction to his friend H. Schlier's insistence on the church as the center of the canon — and his subsequent conversion to Roman Catholicism.)

Catholic theology has tended to respond to Käsemann that he disregards the total witness of the New Testament.[88] Such a disregard loses valuable insights to be gained from the variety in the New Testament. Only the many voices contain the true tradition.

3. One final problem must be mentioned, even if it cannot be discussed. There has been surprisingly little discussion of the role of the Lutheran Confessions in the hermeneutical debate, even among Lutherans. (I recall Käsemann saying in a lecture: "Manchmal wäre es besser wenn man seine Voraussetzungen aus den Bekenntnisschriften nehme und nicht aus irgendeiner profanen Philosophie!") N. A. Dahl suggests that the Confessions demand honest intellectual work, that proper exegesis can be carried out only in a "continuous dialogue between the interpretation of Scripture in the Confessions and that being done by biblical scholarship." The Confessions thus point the exegete to the proper questions, call the exegete to his proper task, remind him by criticism that he is not doing the entire theological task, and point to the Gospel as the unifying force in the Scriptures.[89] The essay of Gerhard Gloege on justification as the center of the Scriptures strives to show that this central insight of the Confessions is not a reductionistic principle. It is not merely christological-soteriological, since this would underestimate, if not distort, the history of justification given in the Scriptures.[90]

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[85] *Student World,* LX (1967), 302—10.

[86] See Joachim Jeremias, *Das Problem des historischen Jesus* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1961). Eng. trans. in Facet Books, Fortress Press.

[87] Ernst Käsemann, "The New Testament Canon and the Unity of the Church," *Essays on New Testament Themes* (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1964), pp. 95—104.

[88] See John Elliott, "The New Testament Is Catholic: A Reevaluation of *sola Scriptura,*" *Una Sancta,* XXIII (1966), 3—18.

[89] N. A. Dahl, "The Lutheran Exegete and the Confessions of His Church," *Lutheran World,* VI (1959/60), 2—10.

[90] Gerhard Gloege, "Die Rechtfertigungslehre als hermeneutische Kategorie," *Theolo-*

The essay "The Lutheran Confessions and Sola Scriptura" adopted by the Commissioners of the ALC, the SELC, and the LC—Mo. Syn. gathers many relevant passages from the Confessions, but is scarcely a complete hermeneutics of them; while Ralph Bohlmann discusses some of the more pedestrian rules of philological exegesis in "Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions" without significantly raising the question of understanding from the Gospel out as defined in the Confessions.[91] This is an area in need of illumination.

Conclusion

Schökl has an illuminating paragraph in his article referred to earlier:

> The solution is a double movement: a centripetal movement of transporting the literary work into my language, my epoch and mentality; and a centrifugal movement of transporting myself into the language, epoch and mentality of the writer. Recall, for example, medieval religious art. The individuals dressed in medieval costume, the warriors of Joshua wear knightly armor, cities resemble Assisi, Viterbo, Toledo. On the other hand, at the end of the last century a German school of painters made a point of reproducing exactly the wardrobe, furniture, usages of the century in question, for example, the time of Christ. Yet, who would say that these painters eighty years ago interpreted the mysteries of our redemption better than their medieval predecessors? [92]

Interpretation for today, that is our task. Three quotations will make clear what that means:

> Preaching today is one of the most promising, even fascinating tasks which a man may fulfill in his life. It is at the same time one of the most risky and most dangerous things which he may undertake. Certainly it is one of the most difficult, burdening, and humiliating of all enterprises.[93]

Hermeneutics is a concern because we must fulfill that task,

> Denn wir arbeiten nicht für uns, unsere Hobbies und unsere Wissenschaft, sondern mit unserer Wissenschaft für die Gemeinde von heute und noch mehr vom Morgen.[94] (For we are not working for ourselves, our hobbies, and our discipline; rather we are working with our academic discipline for the church of today, and even more of tomorrow.)
>
> To understand and to interpret the Scriptures is the task of Lutheran theology from the times of the Reformation, and if we can possibly here and there apply some of the historical critical methods of modern exegesis to serve this concern of the Reformation, then it can only be in the sense of our Lutheran Confessions, which know that the interpretation of Holy Scripture is assigned anew to every generation,

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gische Literaturzeitung, LXXXIX (1964), 161 to 176. See also Edward H. Schroeder, "Is There a Lutheran Hermeneutic?" *The Lively Function of the Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1966), pp. 81—97, for a very stimulating discussion.

[91] *Aspects of Biblical Hermeneutics, CTM* Occasional Papers No. 1, pp. 21—47; more useful material can be found in Bouman's essay in the same volume.

[92] Schökl, p. 381.

[93] Edouard Schweizer, "Two New Testament Creeds Compared," *Neotestamentica*, p. 122.

[94] Käsemann, *Probleme*, p. 23.

otherwise the epitome of the Formula of Concord could not say: "But other symbols and writings cited are not judges, as are the Holy Scriptures, but only a *testimony and declaration of the faith,* as to how at any time the Holy Scriptures have been understood and explained in the articles in controversy in the Church of God by those then living." [95]

St. Louis, Mo.

[95] Manfred Rönsch, "A Critical Investigation of the So-Called Historical-Critical Method in the Interpretation of Holy Scripture," *The Springfielder,* XXVIII (1964), 41.