Third Revised Edition

Protestant Biblical Interpretation

Bernard Ramm

PROTESTANT BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

A Textbook of Hermeneutics

BY

BERNARD RAMM

THIRD REVISED EDITION

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DEDICATION

This volume is dedicated with Christian affection to Dean Earl Kalland of the Conservative Baptist Seminary of Denver, Colorado; a friend, scholar, and Christian.

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Types of Modern Theology
The Bible in the Church
The Infallible Word
Faith and History
Apologia pro vita sua

FOREWORD

Protestant Biblical Interpretation

Examination of the Principles of Biblical Interpretation

PREFACE

interpreted *diermeneuo*

hermeneutics

Problems in Christian Apologetics

City Temple Pulpit

The Walk, Conversation, and Character of Jesus Christ Our Lord

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HAPTER

INTRODUCTION

HE EED FOR ERMENEUTICS

ERMENEUTICS

sola fidei regula *prima fidei regula.*

Sola fidei regula

e.g

only

The Primary Need

human

to ascertain what God has said in Sacred Scripture; to determine the meaning of the Word of God

voice of God:

de jure

Inspiration

The Merchant of Venice

The Secondary Need

to bridge the gap

between our minds and the minds of the Biblical writers

language

sense

word order

word endings

culture-gap

geography

history

The extended investigations of modern times in these departments of knowledge have shed a great light over the pages of inspiration, *which no expositor who is worthy of the name will venture to neglect*.[1]

ENERAL NTRODUCTION

Assumptions

Scripture

the official manuscript *manuscripts*

basic theory

but to determine what was the original wording of the Word of God

historical criticism

radical *German rationalism* *radical*

German rationalism

higher criticism

higher criticism *radical*

neologists

neologism

Definitions

interpretation

pathar *pithron*

hermēneia *hermēneuō* *diermēneuō*

methermēneuomai

dysermēneutos *diermēneutes* *epilusia*

hermeneutics

science

organic

art

technē

Divisions

psychological hermeneutics

general *special*

Limitations of a Mere Knowledge of Hermeneutics

Qualifications of an Interpreter

sine qua non

In order to appreciate and use the Bible, the reader of it must himself have the same spirit which enabled its writers to understand their revelation of God and to record it. The Bible is a record, but it is not a dead record of dead persons and events, but a record inspired by the living Spirit who uses it to speak to men now. . . . It is the medium through which the living God now makes himself known. But to find in it the Spirit of God the reader must himself have that Spirit.[4]

that he be born again

a passion to know God's word

let the interpreter have always a deep reverence for God

utter dependence on the Holy Spirit to guide and direct *Bene orasse est bene studuisse*

infallible

It is necessary to complete this truth by adding that the Spirit of God does not communicate to the mind of even a teachable, obedient, and devout Christian, any doctrine or meaning of Scripture which is not *contained already in Scripture itself.* He makes men wise *up to* what is written, not beyond it.[8]

a revelation *the revelation*

all

literati

Not every interpreter can have the ideal equipment. Indeed, nor can attain to the ideal, and all that any can hope to do is to attain a reasonable balance of the qualities and varieties of equipment his task demands. To ask that every interpreter of the Bible should possess a wide linguistic equipment would be to deny the task of its interpretation to all but a handful of specialists, who might lack other equally essential qualities even though they possessed the linguistic knowledge. It does not seem unreasonable to ask, however, that all who would interpret the Bible to others should have some acquaintance with Hebrew and Greek. We should be astonished at one who claimed to be a specialist in the interpretation of Greek tragedy but who could not read Greek, or who offered to expound the Confucian classics without any knowledge of Chinese. But too often the biblical interpreter has little or no access to the original texts that he so confidently handles.[9]

art

openmindedness

HE QUIPMENT OF THE NTERPRETER

Profitable Bible Study *Syllabus for Old Testament Study;* *Syllabus for New Testament Study; A Bibliography of Bible Study* *A Bibliography of Systematic Theology*

Interpretation, The Expository Times, The Evangelical Quarterly, Bibliotheca Sacra, The Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature, New Testament Studies *Theological Studies*

amens

it is a veiled egotism

The Minor Prophets

entire

mind

new *matters unknown*

UGGESTED INIMUM IBLIOGRAPHY FOR XEGETICAL ORK

Biblical Texts *Biblia Hebraica*
Greek New Testament

Biblical Grammars

New Testament Greek for Beginners
A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament *A New Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament* *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament* *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*

Lexicons *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*
Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* *Biblical Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek* *Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments*

Concordia Theological Monthly

Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament

Bible Key Words:

Concordances *Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance* *Concordance of the Hebrew and Chaldee Scriptures* *A Handy Hebrew Concordance* *A Concordance to the Septuagint* *A Concordance to the Greek New Testament* *Englishman's Greek Concordance* *A Critical Greek and English Concordance* *A Concordance of the Greek New Testament*

Dictionaries. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* *Dictionary of the Bible* *Dictionary of the Bible. Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels. Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*

Atlases *Historical Geography of the Holy Land* *Historical Atlas of the Holy Land* *The Westminster Historical Atlas of the Bible* *Sacred Sites and Ways* *Biblical Backgrounds* *The Graphic Historical Atlas of Palestine* *The Biblical Archeologist*

Archeology, History, and Culture *The Land and the Book* *The New Testament World* *The Environment of Early Christianity* *The New Archeological Discoveries and their Bearing on the New Testament* *Light from the Ancient East* *Bible and Spade* *How Firm a Foundation* *What Mean These Stones* *Archaeology and the Old Testament* *From the Stone Age to Christianity* *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* *The Archaeology of Palestine* *Light from the Ancient Past* *Archeology and the Bible* *His Truth Endureth* *Ancient Records and the Bible* *The History of Palestine and Syria to the Mohammedan Conquest* *A Manual of Bible History* *Archaeology of the New Testament. The Biblical Archeologist*

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Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts *Introduction to the Old Testament: Text* *Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*

Commentaries. The International Critical Commentary

Commentary on the Holy Scriptures. Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. The Westminster Commentaries *The Bible Commentary for English Readers* *Critical and Experimental Commentary. The Interpreter's Bible* *The Bible Commentary*

Commentaries *Commentaries on the Old Testament* *The Expositor's Greek Testament*

Greek Testament with Notes. Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges *The Greek Testament* *Word Studies in the New Testament* *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

The Moffatt New Testament Commentary

The Interpretation of the New Testament

The New Bible Commentary

Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch

Profitable Bible Study

Interpretation

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL SCHOOLS

FEW studies are so rewarding in granting insight and perspective into problems as historical studies. This is true of the history of hermeneutics.

Terry has well said:

> A knowledge of the history of biblical interpretation is of inestimable value to the student of the Holy Scriptures. It serves to guard against errors and exhibits the activity and efforts of the human mind in its search after truth and in relation to noblest themes. It shows what influences have led to the misunderstanding of God's word, and how acute minds, carried away by a misconception of the nature of the Bible, have sought mystic and manifold meanings in its content.[1]

One of the cardinal mistakes in interpretation is provincialism, i.e., believing that the system in which one has been trained is the *only* system. Another mistake is to assume that certain traditional or familiar interpretations are the only adequate interpretations. Certainly hermeneutics ought to be purged of subjectivism and provincialism, and fewer studies are more capable of doing this than historical studies in interpretation.

Rather than trace the long history of interpretation from Ezra until today, the typical schools of interpretation will be presented, and this will preserve much of the historical element.

A. ALLEGORICAL SCHOOLS

1. *Greek Allegorism*

Allegorical interpretation believes that beneath the letter (*rhētē*) or the obvious (*phanera*) is the real meaning (*hyponoia*) of the passage.[2] Allegory is defined by some as an extended metaphor. There is the literary allegory which is intentionally constructed by the author to tell a message under historical form. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is such a one and such allegories occur in Scripture too.[3] If the writer states that he is writing an allegory and gives us the cue, or if the cue is very obvious (as in an allegorical political satire), the problem of interpretation is not too difficult. But if we presume that the document has a secret meaning

(*hyponoia*) and there are no cues concerning the hidden meaning interpretation is difficult. In fact, the basic problem is to determine if the passage has such a meaning at all. The further problem arises whether the secret meaning was in the mind of the original writer or something found there by the interpreter. If there are no cues, hints, connections, or other associations which indicate that the record is an allegory, and what the allegory intends to teach, we are on very uncertain grounds.

It may seem strange to list as our first school of interpretation the Greek school, but this is necessary to understand the historical origins of allegorical interpretation. The Greeks were not concerned with Sacred Scripture but with their own writings, and in this sense it is improper to classify them within the context of Biblical interpretation. But in that their allegorical method was adopted by both Jew and Christian they deserve this special attention.

The Greeks had two noble traditions. (i) They had a religious heritage in Homer and Hesiod. Homer's influence seemed to increase with the extension of time rather than diminish. The "Bible" of the Greek was the writings of Homer and Hesiod. To question or to doubt them was an irreligious or atheistic act. (ii) They had an astute philosophical (Thales, *et al.*) and historical tradition (Thucydides and Herodotus), which developed principles of logic, criticism, ethics, religion, and science.

The *religious tradition* had many elements which were fanciful, grotesque, absurd, or immoral The philosophical and historical tradition could not accept much of the religious tradition as it lay in the written documents. Yet, the hold of Homer and Hesiod was so great, popularly and with the thinkers, that Homer and Hesiod could not be declared worthless and forsaken. How was the tension of the two traditions to be resolved? The problem is at once *apologetic* and *hermeneutical*. It is interesting that the religious apology and the allegorical method of hermeneutics have the same historical root. The tension was relieved by *allegorizing* the religious heritage. The stories of the gods, and the writings of the poets, were not to be taken *literally*. Rather underneath is the secret or real meaning (*hyponoia*). Wolfson, Farrar, Geffcken and Smith have demonstrated how widespread this allegorical method became in Greek thought.

The important item to notice here is that this Greek tradition of allegorizing spread to Alexandria where there was a great Jewish population and eventually a large Christian population.

2. *Jewish Allegorism*

The Alexandrian Jew faced a problem similar to his fellow Greek. He was a child of Moses instructed in the law and the rest of a divine revelation. But as he mingled with the cosmopolitan population of Alexandria he soon learned of the Greek literature with its philosophical heritage. Some of these Jews were so impressed that they accepted the teachings of Greek philosophy.

The Greek faced the tension of a religious-poetic-myth tradition and a historical-philosophical tradition. The Jew faced the tension of his own national Sacred Scriptures and the Greek philosophical tradition (especially Plato). How could a Jew cling to both? The solution was identical to the Greek's solution to his problem. In fact, the Jew even got it from the Greek for Farrar writes, "The Alexandrian Jews were not, however, driven to invent this allegorical method for themselves. They found it ready to their hands."[4]

Here is one of the strange fates of history. The allegorical method arose to save the reputation of ancient Greek religious poets. This method of interpretation was adopted by the Alexandrian Greeks for the reasons stated above. Then it was bequeathed to the Christian Church. "By a singular concurrence of circumstances," continues Farrar, "the Homeric studies of pagan philosophers suggested first to the Jews and then, through them, to Christians, a method of Scriptural interpretation before unheard of which remained unshaken for more than fifteen hundred years."[5]

The first writer who seems to have written in this Jewish tradition of allegorism was Aristobulus (160 B.C.). His works exist only through fragments and quotations by other writers. Wolfson,[6] a leading Philonian scholar, believes that Philo actually cites from Aristobulus, thus aligning himself with those who believe that the writings (or oral teachings) of Aristobulus antedate Philo. Aristobulus asserted (i) that Greek philosophy borrowed from the Old Testament, especially from the Law of Moses; and (ii) that by employing the allegorical method the teachings of Greek philosophy could be found in Moses and the prophets.

The outstanding Jewish allegorist was Philo (born about 20 B.C.; died about A.D. 54). He was a thoroughly convinced Jew. To him the Scriptures (primarily in the Septuagint version) were superior to Plato and Greek

philosophy. He teaches practically a dictation-theory of inspiration he so emphasizes the passivity of the prophet. Yet, he had a great fondness for Greek philosophy, especially Plato and Pythagoras. By a most elaborate system of allegorizing he was able to reconcile for himself his loyalty to his Hebrew faith and his love for Greek philosophy.

One scholar notes that Philo actually had about twenty rules which indicated that a given Scripture was to be treated allegorically. Most of his rules however, can be classed under general headings.[7] Philo did not think that the literal meaning was useless, but it represented the immature level of understanding. The literal sense was the body of Scripture, and the allegorical sense its soul. Accordingly the literal was for the immature, and the allegorical for the mature. Nor did Philo believe that the allegorical method denied the reality of the historical events.

There were three canons which dictated to the interpreter that a passage of Scripture was to be allegorically interpreted: (i) If a statement says anything unworthy of God; (ii) if a statement is contradictory with some other statement or in any other way presents us with a difficulty; and (iii) if the record itself is allegorical in nature.

However, these three canons spill over into many sub-canons. (i) *Grammatical* peculiarities are hints that underneath the record is a deeper spiritual truth. (ii) *Stylistic* elements of the passage (synonyms, repetition, etc.) indicate that deeper truth is present. (iii) *Manipulation* of punctuation, words, meaning of words, and new combinations of words can be so done as to extract new and deeper truth from the passage. (iv) Whenever *symbols* are present, we are to understand them figuratively not literally. (v) Spiritual truth may be obtained from *etymologies* of names. (vi) Finally, we have the law of *double-application*. Many natural objects signify spiritual things (heaven means the mind; earth means sensation; a field, revolt, etc.).

Actual examples of this method may be found in the literature. Some of this is sound (major canon iii, and sub-canon iv) for there are allegorical and figurative elements in Scripture. But most of it led to the fantastic and the absurd. For example, Abraham's trek to Palestine is *really* the story of a Stoic philosopher who leaves Chaldea (sensual understanding) and stops at Haran, which means "holes," and signifies the emptiness of knowing things by the holes, that is the senses. When he becomes Abraham he

becomes a truly enlightened philosopher. To marry Sarah is to marry abstract wisdom.[8]

3. *Christian and Patristic Allegorism*

The allegorical system that arose among the pagan Greeks, copied by the Alexandrian Jews, was next adopted by the Christian church and largely dominated exegesis until the Reformation, with such notable exceptions as the Syrian school of Antioch and the Victorines of the Middle Ages.

The early Christian Fathers had as their Bible the Old Testament in Greek translation. This had been the Bible of Christ and the Apostles judging from their citations of the Old Testament in the New. One of the most basic convictions of the early church was that the Old Testament was a Christian document. C. H. Dodd's work, *According to the Scripture*, is an effort to isolate out these *testimonia* of the New Testament wherein Old Testament Scriptures are used to show the Messianic witness of the Old Testament to Christianity. The New Testament itself is replete with Old Testament citations, allusions, and references. The apologetic of Matthew and Hebrews is directly a proof of the fulfilment of the Old in the New. The allegorical method of interpretation sprang from a proper motive, in spite of the fact that it was usually improper in practice.

The proper motive was the firm belief that the Old Testament was a Christian document. This ground the Church can never surrender without retreating to Marcionism in some revived form. The allegorical method was its primary means of making the Old Testament a Christian document.

It must also be kept in mind that although these writers used the allegorical method to excess, they did unconsciously use the literal method. If we underscore everything they interpret literally (even though they might not spend too much time defending the literal sense of Scripture), we discover how much the literal approach was used in actual practice. In some cases the historical (approximating the literal) is actually made part of their hermeneutical system.

Two things may be said for the allegorizing of the Fathers: (i) They were seeking to make the Old Testament a Christian document. With this judgment the Christian Church has universally agreed. (ii) They did

emphasize the truths of the Gospel in their fancies. If they had not done this, they would have become sectarian.

The difficulties with the method are many. (i) There was a lack of a genuine historical sense in exegesis. The historical connections of a passage of Scripture were usually completely ignored. (ii) Their method of citing the Old Testament revealed that they had a very infantile understanding of the progress of revelation. They had the basic understanding that a great shift had taken place from the Old to the New Testament. But citing verses in the Old Testament, in themselves frequently very obscure, as if superior to verses in the New, revealed no understanding of the significance of historical and progressive revelation for hermeneutics. (iii) They considered the Old (especially) and the New Testaments filled with parables, enigmas, and riddles. The allegorical method alone sufficed to bring out the meaning of these parables, enigmas, and riddles. (iv) They confused the allegorical with the typical, and thus blurred the distinction between the legitimate and the improper interpretation of the Old Testament. The "allegorical," the "mystical," the "pneumatic," and the "spiritual," are practically synonymous. (v) They believed that Greek philosophy was in the Old Testament and it was the allegorical method which discovered it. (vi) In that the method is highly arbitrary, it eventually fostered dogmatic interpretation of the Scripture. Fullerton's judgment against the allegorical method at this point is very sharp:

> Instead of adopting a scientific principle of exegesis they introduce Church authority under the guise of Tradition as the norm of interpretation. The movement of thought which we have been following now becomes associated with the great dogmatic consolidations of the second and third centuries that led directly to ecclesiastical absolutism.[9]

The curse of the allegorical method is that it obscures the true meaning of the Word of God and had it not kept the Gospel truth central it would have become cultic and heretical. In fact, this is exactly what happened when the gnostics allegorized the New Testament. The Bible treated allegorically becomes putty in the hand of the exegete. Different doctrinal systems could emerge within the framework of allegorical hermeneutics and no way would exist to determine which were the true. This was precisely one of the problems in refuting the gnostics. The orthodox wished to allegorize the Old Testament, but not the New. The gnostics accused them of inconsistency. The only method of breaking an exegetical

stalemate created by the use of the allegorical method is to return to the sober, proper and literal interpretation of the Scriptures. The allegorical method puts a premium on the subjective and the doleful result is the obscuration of the Word of God. To cite Fullerton again:

> *When the historical sense of a passage is once abandoned there is wanting any sound regulative principle to govern exegesis. . . .* The mystical [allegorical] method of exegesis, is an unscientific and arbitrary method, reduces the Bible to obscure enigmas, undermines the authority of all interpretation, and therefore, when taken by itself, failed to meet the apologetic necessities of the time.[10]

To present a clearer picture of some of the patristic hermeneutical theory we shall briefly study Clement, Origen, Jerome, and Augustine.

(1). *Clement*. Clement of Alexandria found five possible meanings to a passage of Scripture.[11] (i) The *historical* sense of Scripture, i.e., taking a story in the Old Testament as an actual event in history; (ii) the *doctrinal* sense of Scripture, i. e., the obvious moral, religious, and theological teachings of the Bible; (iii) the *prophetic* sense of Scripture including predictive prophecy and typology; (iv) the *philosophical* sense which follows the Stoics with their cosmic and psychological meaning (which sees meanings in natural objects and historical persons); and (v) a *mystical* sense (deeper moral, spiritual and religious truth symbolized by events or persons).

(2). *Origen*. Patristic scholarship is indebted to Jean Dani**é**lou for a thorough study of Origen in his book entitled *Origen*. Part II of this work is devoted to "Origen and the Bible."

Origen is in the Aristobulus-Philo-Pantaenus-Clement tradition. Dani**é**lou shows how deeply Origen's system was marked by Philo. Origen had an apologetic motivation to be sure. He wanted to escape the crudities of lay people who were literalists to the point of taking everything symbolic or metaphorical or poetic literally. He was motivated to show that the New Testament does have its roots in the Old and so reply to the Jews. He wished to eliminate what were absurdities or contradictions in Scripture and make Scripture acceptable to the philosophically minded. His approach can be summed up as follows:[12]

(i). The *literal meaning* of the Scripture is the preliminary level of Scripture. It is the "body," not the "soul" (moral sense) nor the "spirit" (allegorical sense) of the Bible. The literal sense is the meaning of Scripture for the layman. Actually we perhaps should say "letterism"

rather than literalism for reasons we pointed out in the previous paragraph.

Further, the literal sense would leave us in Judaism. If we were to take the Old Testament in a strict literal sense we would believe and practice exactly as the Jews. We escape Judaism by spiritualizing the Old Testament.

Again, the literal in Scripture is the sign of the mysteries and images of things divine. It is to provoke us to a deeper and more spiritual study of the Bible. History, for example, is to be taken symbolically. Origen has a Platonic view of history which he reinterprets by means of Christian theology. The symbolization of history does not deny the actual historicity of the story.

(ii). To understand the Bible *we must have grace given to us by Christ*. Christ is the inner principle of Scripture and only those with the Spirit of Christ can understand Scripture.

(iii). The true exegesis is *the spiritual exegesis of the Bible*. "The Bible is one vast allegory, a tremendous sacrament in which every detail is symbolic," writes Dani**é**lou of Origen's fundamental thesis.[13] The Bible is a spiritual book, and its meaning is found only by spiritualizing it. Even the New Testament has elements in it which cannot be taken literally, and so must be spiritualized. In many cases this means nothing more than that a figure of speech has no literal meaning.

Origen's *spiritual* exegesis is a mixture of the typological and the allegorical. Dani**é**lou knows that the allegorical method was greatly abused, and is not in high regard among scholars. He seeks to rescue Origen from the charge of being an allegorist by insisting that he has basically a typological exegesis. That Origen allegorized Dani**é**lou does not deny. That his theory was much better than his practice he strongly affirms. But he does object to classifying Origen as an allegorist, pure and simple, and then condemning him because he is an allegorist. Dani**é**lou believes that Origen has the correct Christian principle of interpretation, but that Origen poorly practiced it, and that subsequent scholarship misrepresents him.

(iv). Origen believed that *the Old is the preparation for the New*. This implies two further assertions: (a) If the Old is the preparation of the New, the New is in the Old in a concealed manner, and it is the function of the Christian exegete to bring it to the surface. This is *typological exegesis* and is

based on the fundamental harmony of the Old and New Testaments. (b) If the New fulfils the Old, the Old is now superseded. There is continuity and divergence in the relationship between the New and the Old. Continuity means that the New is like the Old and therefore the Old is capable of typological interpretation. There is divergence between the New and the Old, and this means the Old is now out of date.

(3). *Jerome*. Jerome was a great Bible scholar in terms of the scholarship of antiquity. He translated the Bible into Latin (*Latin Vulgate*) which required him to become proficient in Greek and Hebrew. He noticed that the Hebrew Bible did not contain the Apocrypha and suggested its secondary nature and that it ought to be put between the Testaments. This suggestion was not carried out until Luther. Jerome placed great emphasis on the historical and the literal.

Jerome is similar to Augustine. In theory he developed some sound principles, especially because he was influenced by the literal school of Antioch. In practice he was an allegorist. He started out as an extreme allegorist, but influenced by the school of Antioch, he retreated from the allegorical tradition in theory or principle and emphasized the historical and literal.

He insisted that the literal is not contradictory to the allegorical as the extremists in the Alexandrian school asserted. On the other hand he evaded the *letterism* of the Jews. But in practice he was a typical allegorist even to allegorizing the New Testament.

(4). *Augustine*. Augustine developed a handbook of hermeneutics and homiletics called *De Doctrina Christiana*.[14] One very interesting aspect of this treatment is that *Augustine endeavors to develop a theory of signs*. This is missed by practically all the hermeneutical studies, yet in the light of contemporary philosophy it is most important. Here is a Father of the church that in so many words indicates that a theory of signs is basic to any theory of hermeneutics. Or, Biblical hermeneutics is but a special case of semantics (or semiotic). Augustine speaks of natural objects which are percepts but not signs, e.g., a piece of wood or metal. Next he speaks of things which signify other things. A tree may signify forestry service, a shoe a shoemaker, and an anvil the blacksmith guild. Then there are things whose sole function is to signify other things, i.e., words.

He defines a sign as: "A thing which apart from the impression that it presents to the senses, causes of itself some other thing to enter our

thoughts."[15] These signs are conventional or natural. Smoke is a natural sign of fire. Conventional signs "are those which living creatures give to one another."[16] From this he proceeds to discuss sounds and speech; God's method of communication to man through speech; and speech incarnate in the written Scripture. This is typical of the genius of Augustine to have put his finger on a critical point in a discussion which sometimes took a millennium or more to realize. It is regrettable that: (i) he did not follow through with complete consistency from his theory of signs to hermeneutics; (ii) that others did not catch any glimmer of light in his remarks about signs; and (iii) that historians of hermeneutics for the most part ignore Augustine's treatment of signs.

Augustine was driven to the allegorical interpretation of Scripture by his own spiritual plight. It was the allegorical interpretation of Scripture by Ambrose which illuminated much of the Old Testament to him when he was struggling with the crass literalism of the Manicheans. He justified allegorical interpretation by a gross misinterpretation of 2 Cor. 3:6. He made it mean that the *spiritual* or *allegorical* interpretation was the real meaning of the Bible; the *literal* interpretation kills.[17] For this experimental reason Augustine could hardly part with the allegorical method.

Summing up Augustine's hermeneutics we would say his controlling principles were:

(i) A genuine Christian faith was necessary for the understanding of the Scriptures. The inner spirit of the exegete was as important as his technical equipment. (ii) Although the literal and historical are not the end of Scripture we must hold them in high regard. Not all of the Bible is allegorical by any means, and much of it is both literal and allegorical. Augustine's great theological works indicate that the literal method was employed far more than he admitted on paper. (iii) Scripture has more than one meaning and therefore the allegorical method is proper. The supreme test to see whether a passage was allegorical was that of love. If the literal made for dissension, then the passage was to be allegorized. Besides this he had seven other somewhat farfetched rules for allegorizing the Scriptures. He did work on the principle that the Bible had a hidden meaning, and so in his allegorical interpretations he was frequently as fanciful as the rest of the Fathers. However, whatever was allegorized was

in theory to be built upon the literal and historical meaning of the text. (iv) There is significance in Biblical numbers. Augustine regarded the entire world of logic and numbers as eternal truths, and therefore numbers played a special role in human knowledge. If this is so then we can get much truth by an allegorical or symbolic interpretation of numbers in Scripture. (v) The Old Testament is a Christian document because it is a Christological document. In finding Christ in too many places however he obscured the genuine Christology of the Old Testament. (vi) The task of the expositor is to get the meaning out of the Bible, not to bring a meaning to it. The expositor is to express accurately the thoughts of the writer. (vii) We must consult the *analogy of faith*, the true orthodox creed, when we interpret. If orthodoxy represents Scripture. then no expositor can make Scripture go contrary to orthodoxy. To this must be added *love*. No man understands Scripture if he is not built up in love to God and man. Love and analogy of faith are apparently the two major controlling principles in his hermeneutics. In truth, love may be a form of spiritual intuition necessary for the deeper apprehension of Scripture. (viii) No verse is to be studied as a unit in itself. The Bible is not a string of verses like a string of beads, but a web of meaning. Therefore we must note *the context* of the verse; what the Bible says on the same subject somewhere else; and what the orthodox creed states. (ix) If an interpretation is insecure, nothing in the passage can be made a matter of orthodox faith. (x) We cannot make the Holy Spirit our substitute for the necessary learning to understand Scripture. The able interpreter must know Hebrew; Greek; geography; natural history; music; chronology; numbers; history; dialectics; natural science; and the ancient philosophers. (xi) The obscure passage must yield to the clear passage. That is, on a given doctrine we should take our primary guidance from those passages which are clear rather from those which are obscure. (xii) No Scripture is to be interpreted so as to conflict with any other—the harmony of revelation. But to do this we must *distinguish the times*. Augustine's statement ("Distinguish the times [*tempora* not *saeculae*] and you harmonize the Scriptures") means that we must take into account *progressive revelation*. Polygamy conflicts with monogamy only if we fail to note that revelation progresses. If we are aware of the progressive character of revelation we shall not make Scripture conflict. This is very

different from the dispensational interpretation put on these words, which is only possible by taking *tempora* as if it meant *saeculae*.

As magnificent an effort as this appears, it is disheartening to realize how far short in so many instances Augustine came. There is hardly a rule he made which he did not frequently violate. What compensated for this was: (i) the actual usage of the literal understanding of Scripture even though such a principle was not fully developed in his hermeneutical theory; and (ii) his great theological genius which could not help but see the theological grandeur of the Scriptures.

4. *Catholic Allegorism*

It would be over-simplification to assert that the only method of exegesis during the Middle Ages was the allegorical. It would not, however, be an exaggeration to assert that the preponderance of exegetical work was allegorical.[18] To clarify terminology we should note that the scholastics divided the meaning of the Bible into the literal and the spiritual (i.e., the *spirit* is more central to human personality than the body, so the spiritual meaning of the Bible is the more important one) or the mystical (i.e., it is more refined, subtle, less obvious). Under the spiritual or mystical are the three divisions of (i) allegorical or what passes as a combination of typology and allegorism, (ii) tropological or moral interpretation, and (iii) anagogical or how the church *now* anticipates the church glorified, the eschatological sense.

The Catholic Church in imitation of the Fathers has maintained the validity of the allegorical method or the spiritual method of interpretation. We shall not try to survey the history of interpretation during the Middle Ages but will present the Catholic theory which eventually emerged from it.

In studying Catholic pronouncements on hermeneutics it is very clear that the advancement of Biblical studies by Protestants has had its telling influence on the very spirit of the Catholic approach. (i) Catholic scholars admit the extremes that allegorism was carried to by some of the Fathers and some of the Scholastics. There is no stout defense of these exaggerations in Catholic hermeneutical literature except from real patristic sentimentalists. (ii) The importance and primacy of the literal meaning of Scripture is extolled. No longer is the literal declared to be for

spiritual infants or to be the mere surface of the Scripture. The position of the Alexandrians at this point especially is repudiated.

(1). Catholic scholars accept the Latin Vulgate as the authentic version for *public lectures, disputations, sermons*, and *expositions*.[19] This includes the apocryphal books as listed by the Council of Trent (Fourth Session). This puts the Catholic Church in odd position because the Hebrews wrote their Bible in Hebrew and Aramaic and the Apostles in Greek. This is common information to all Biblical scholars. It thus appears rather unusual for a translation to be given authentic status when the document may be had in the original languages. If the entire dogmatic structure of Catholic theology is based on the Latin it could be disconcerting to find it at variance with Greek and Hebrew.

One Catholic scholar states very directly the implied essence of the Catholic position: "The Greek and Hebrew texts are of the greatest value, as means in order to arrive at the genuine sense and full force of many passages in the Latin Vulgate."[20] Another scholar, however, has tried to use the Greek and Hebrew as his more basic sources in translating the Bible, and has been charged with duplicity.[21] This is a surface admission of the authenticity of the Latin but a tacit admission of the priority of the Hebrew and Greek.

(2). The Catholic interpreter obediently accepts whatever the Catholic Church has *specifically* said about matters of Biblical Introduction, and authorship of the books of the Bible.

(3). The Catholic interpreter accepts all verses which the Church has officially interpreted in the sense in which they have been interpreted. All told not more than twenty such verses have been officially interpreted. Further, in some instances the Church has indicated what meaning a verse cannot have. However, the number is actually much more than this because many of the official documents of the Church involve certain definite interpretations of certain verses. The official definition of the meaning of a verse is not usually made unless the verse has become controversial and the interpretation of it must be made.

(4). The literal and historical interpretation of Scripture is the foundation of the study of the Bible.[22] Maas and Fuller both make a strong point that Catholic exegesis considers itself built on the substantial ground of the literal interpretation and historical interpretation of Scripture. This is not exactly new in their tradition. Aquinas emphasized

the importance of the literal and even stated that no doctrine could be erected on spiritual exegesis. But making literal and historical interpretation such virtues is certainly due to the impact of Protestant Biblical scholarship.

(5). The Scriptures do possess a spiritual or mystical meaning which is beyond the literal. Thomas Aquinas taught very clearly that Scripture may have more than one sense because the author of Scripture is God.[23] God was able to inspire men in such a way that they wrote not only literal and historical truth but spiritual and figurative truth. Therefore, Thomas concludes, it is not proper to limit, the meaning of Scripture to the literal sense.

This spiritual or mystical interpretation which is an out-growth of the allegorizing of the early church became codified during the Middle Ages under three rules. (i) A passage may have an *allegorical* meaning. This refers to its future or prophetic meaning and includes allegorical and typological interpretation. In view of the abuses of the allegorical method many contemporary Catholics prefer the word *typological* to *allegorical*. (ii) A passage may have an *anagogical* (eschatological) meaning. It may "lead up" to the Church Triumphant. Thus the Church militant has features about it which anticipate the Church in glory. (iii) A passage may have a *tropological* meaning, i.e., teach a *tropos*, a way of life. This is the moral significance of the passage.

This spiritual meaning must be built upon the literal and historical meaning. Modern Catholic scholarship is making a serious effort to take the arbitrariness out of spiritual and allegorical exegesis. It is fully aware of the sordid history of fanciful allegorical interpretation. The Protestant scholar too must face the typical and predictive in the Old Testament, and so he likewise has a problem. It is the actual *practice* which reveals a very fundamental cleavage. When the manna in the wilderness, the passover of the exodus, the bread and wine of Melchisedec, and the diet of meal and oil by Elijah are made types of the Eucharist the Protestant objects. When Newman argues that the change of the Old Testament worship system as demanded by the New does not make a profound alteration from the material to the spiritual, again the Protestant objects.[24] Reading back into the Old Testament the sacramental and clerical system of Catholicism appears as simple *eisegesis* (reading into) and not *exegesis* (reading out of). It was this necessity of making all the Bible *sacramental* and *sacerdotal*

which was one of the reasons Newman wrote that "it may be almost laid down as a historical fact, that the mystical [allegorical] interpretation and orthodoxy will stand or fall together."[25]

(6). The Catholic Church is the official interpreter of Scripture. There are several important considerations here. First, the Church is the *custodian* of Scripture. The Bible was not given to the world but deposited in the Church. Hence one of the rights of the Church is to interpret the Scriptures. Another consideration is that the Catholics believe that Christianity is *The Deposit of Faith* deposited in the Catholic Church in an oral and written form. The usual Protestant notion that the Catholics have the Bible to which they add tradition is not quite accurate. There is the Original Tradition, or Revelation, or Deposit of Faith which is transmitted through the centuries in an oral form (tradition), and a written form (Bible). The final consideration is that the written form is obscure and needs an official interpreter. The average man is not competent to interpret the Scripture because it is a task beyond his abilities. For example a Catholic writes that "Every biblical scholar knows perfectly well that there is no book in the world more difficult than the Bible. It is a sheer absurdity to say that ordinary people, with no knowledge of Hebrew or Greek or archaeology or of the writings of the Fathers of the Church, are competent to interpret it."[26]

(i). The Church which bears the true Tradition (oral and written) is thereby the official interpreter of the Scriptures. Only that Church which bears the mark of apostolicity can know the real meaning of the written tradition.

(ii). No passage of Scripture can be interpreted to conflict with the Roman Catholic doctrinal system. "Any meaning [of a passage of Scripture] . . . not in harmony with the fact of inspiration and the spirit of the Church's interpretation *cannot be the true sense of Scripture*," writes a Catholic author.[27] This was also maintained by the Council of Trent (Fourth Session) in which not only the Church's right as interpreter was set forth, but individual interpretation condemned. Sometimes this is called interpretation by *the analogy of faith*.

Councils, commissions, and congregations do not have the virtue of infallibility, but their interpretations of Scripture enjoy a high authority.

(7). The Fathers are to be a guide in interpretation according to three principles:

(i). The interpretation must be solely about *faith and morals*. Statements about natural or scientific matters, or historical matters are not binding.

(ii). The Father must be bearing witness to the Catholic Tradition (the *Quod ubique, quod semper, quod omnibus creditum est* [what has been believed everywhere, always, by everyone] of Vincent, the classical definition of orthodoxy), and not to personal opinion.

(iii). The Fathers must have a unanimous witness to the given interpretation.

However, even when not all three canons may be applied to a given interpretation, nevertheless the opinions of the Fathers are to be held in veneration. This veneration of the Fathers resulted in much medieval exegesis being really studies in patristics and not exegesis in the proper sense.

(8). Obscure and partial teaching of the Scripture is to be explained by the fuller teaching in the unwritten tradition of the Church. The Roman Catholic believes that he has two sources of revelation which mutually interpret each other. Scripture makes clear matters of the unwritten tradition, and unwritten tradition makes clear obscure matters in Scripture.[28] Hence the Catholic scholar does not feel it necessary to find full teaching of all his doctrines in the Bible but allusions are sufficient (e.g., prayers for the dead, veneration for Mary, confession, the supremacy of Peter). The Catholic Church does not intend to limit itself entirely to the word of Scripture. Its source of revelation is the Deposit of Faith in an unwritten and written form. The unwritten tradition may then be used to fill out what is deficient in the written form (Scripture).

(9). The Bible is to be understood in terms of *the principle of development*. No one will deny that there is considerable difference between a modern cathedral and its worship services and the fellowship gatherings of the Christians as recorded in the book of Acts. The Catholic theologian believes that the doctrines of the New Testament are *seeds* which grow and develop so that what is seen in a modern Catholic cathedral was contained in seed form in the apostolic Church of the book of Acts.

(i). First, this is justified by the principle of implication. We are bound to believe all that is in the Scriptures and that which may be *properly deduced*.

The Trinity is not taught in so many words in the New Testament but the Christian Church has believed it to be a *proper deduction*.

(ii). Secondly, this is justified by the principle of *epigenesis*. Seeds do not merely enlarge. New doctrines are not determined solely by construing the necessary implications of Scripture. Seeds grow, develop and change. Yet in a real sense the "truth" of the tree is identical with the "truth" of the seed. This notion of the *epigenetic growth* of seed doctrines into the elaborate doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church was classically elaborate by J. H. Newman in his famous work, *The Development of Christian Doctrine*. The essay is a tacit admission that the present Catholic Church is far removed from the apostolic Church of the New Testament.[29]

(10). The attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Protestants is contained in the Encyclical, *Providentissimus Deus* of Leo XIII.

> Though the studies of non-Catholics, used with prudence, may sometimes be of use to the Catholic student, he should, nevertheless, bear well in mind . . . that the sense of Holy Scripture cannot be expected to be found in writers, who being without the true faith, *only gnaw the bark of Sacred Scripture, and never attain its pith* [italics are ours].

B. Literal Schools

1. *Jewish Literalism*

The literal method of interpreting the Bible is to accept as basic the literal rendering of the sentences unless by virtue of the nature of the sentence or phrase or clause within the sentence this is not possible. For example, figures of speech or fables or allegories do not admit of literal interpretation. The spirit of literal interpretation is that we should be satisfied with the literal meaning of a text unless very substantial reasons can be given for advancing beyond the literal meaning, and when *canons of control* are supplied.

Ezra is considered the first of the Jewish interpreters and the ultimate founder of the Jewish, Palestinian, hyperliteralist school. The Jews in the Babylonian captivity ceased speaking Hebrew and spoke Aramaic. This created the language gap between themselves and their Scriptures. It was the task of Ezra to give the meaning of the Scriptures by paraphrasing the Hebrew into the Aramaic or in other ways expounding the sense of the Scriptures. This is generally admitted to be the first instance of Biblical hermeneutics.[30]

Far removed from the land of Palestine, the Jews in captivity could no longer practice their accustomed religion (Mosaism) which included the land, their capitol city, and their temple. There could be no Mosaism with no temple, no land about which there were many regulations, and no harvest. Robbed of the national character of their religion the Jews were led to emphasize that which they would take with them, their Scriptures. Out of the captivities came Judaism with its synagogues, rabbis, scribes, lawyers, and traditions.

There is no simple manner by which Jewish exegesis can be *adequately* summed up. It is a complex system contained in a voluminous corpus of literature. Through the course of the centuries many talented rabbis expressed themselves on hermeneutics and various schools emerged (e.g., Karaites and Cabbalists). The Karaites were the literalists and the Cabbalists were the allegorists.

The Palestinian Jews did develop some sound principles of exegesis which reflected a token approach to the literal understanding of the Scriptures. Hillel formulated seven rules, Ishmael thirteen, and Eliezar thirty-two. Some of these principles are still part of a valid hermeneutics.

(i). They insisted that a word must be understood in terms of its sentence, and a sentence in terms of its context.

(ii). They taught that Scriptures dealing with similar topics should be compared, and that in some instances a third Scripture would relieve the apparent contradiction between two Scriptures.

(iii). A clear passage is to be given preference over an obscure one if they deal with the same subject matter.

(iv). Very close attention is to be paid to spelling, grammar, and figures of speech.

(v). By the use of logic we can determine the application of Scripture to those problems in life Scripture has not specifically treated. In this connection some of the valid forms of the logic of deduction or implication were used by the rabbis. This is still standard procedure in theological hermeneutics.

(vi). Their insistence that the God of Israel spoke in the tongues of men was their way of asserting that the God of Israel had adapted His revelation to the recipients of it. This implies a measure of accommodation and cultural conditioning of the divine revelation.

It would not be unfair to rabbinic exegesis to assert that it did not develop a profound self-conscious and critical theory of hermeneutics. Nor would it be unfair to state that they wandered far off from the good rules they did construct.

The major weakness of their system was the development of a hyperliteralism or a *letterism*. In the intense devotion to the details of the text, they missed the essential and made mountains out of the accidental. This was based on the belief that *nothing* in Scripture was superfluous and therefore all the grammatical phenomena of the text (pleonasm, ellipsis, etc.) had an import to the interpreter. Further, because the Bible was given of God the interpreter could expect numerous meanings in the text. The combination of these two principles led to the fantastic interpretations of the rabbis. The errors were then compounded by the enormous authority given to tradition.

Eventually this system developed into the system of the Cabbalists wherein *letterism* and *allegorism* form a grotesque alliance. By the use of *notarikon* all sorts of exegetical gymnastics were performed. Each letter of a word was made to stand for another word. By use of *gemetria* they endowed words with numerical values which became grounds for arbitrary and odd associations of verses. Let the modern student who wishes to play with the numbers of the Bible first read what the Jews did with *gemetria* and so learn moderation and restraint. By the use of *termura* they permutated the letters of a word and so extracted new meanings from old words.

Fortunately the Karaites and the Spanish Jews started a more intelligent procedure for the understanding of the Old Testament, and from this new inspiration has come much valuable exegetical literature.[31]

There is one major lesson to be learned from rabbinical exegesis: the evils of *letterism*. In the exaltation of the very letters of the Scripture the true meaning of the Scripture was lost. The incidental is so exaggerated as to obscure the essential.[32] Any exegesis will go astray which bogs itself down in trivialities and *letterism*.

2. *Syrian School of Antioch*

It has been said that the first Protestant school of hermeneutics flourished in the city of Antioch of Syria, and had it not been crushed by the hand of orthodoxy for its supposed heretical connections with the

Nestorians, the entire course of Church history might have been different. The Christian community was influenced by the Jewish community and the result was a hermeneutical theory which avoided the *letterism* of the Jews and the *allegorism* of the Alexandrians. It boasted of such names as Lucian, Dorotheus, Diodorus, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Chrysostom. As a school it influenced Jerome and modulated the allegorism of Alexandria in the West. It also had an influence on medieval exegesis, and found itself again in the hermeneutics of the Reformers.

The Syrian school fought Origen in particular as the inventor of the allegorical method, and maintained the primacy of the literal and historical interpretation of the Scripture. It is true that in practice some of the Antiochenes were found dipping into allegorizing, nevertheless in hermeneutical theory they took a stout stand for literal and historical exegesis. They asserted that the literal was plain-literal and figurative-literal. A plain-literal sentence is a straightforward prose sentence with no figures of speech in it. "The eye of the Lord is upon thee," would be a figurative-literal sentence. According to the Alexandrians the literal meaning of this sentence would attribute an actual eye to God. But the Syrian school denied this to be the literal meaning of the sentence. The literal meaning is about God's omniscience. In other words literalism is not the same as *letterism*.

Further, they avoided dogmatic exegesis. Dogmatic exegesis, which kept growing in the West due perhaps to so many controversies with the heretics, eventually developed into Roman Catholic authoritarian exegesis. But the Syrians insisted that the meaning of the Bible was its historical and grammatical meaning, and interpretations must so be justified.

The Syrians insisted on the reality of the Old Testament events. They accused the allegorists of doing away with the historicity of much of the Old Testament and leaving a shadowy world of symbols. The literal and historical approach guarantees to the Old Testament history its important reality.

In place of an allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament the Syrians presented a more sane typological approach. According to the allegorists, floating above the obvious historical meaning of the Old Testament events was another more spiritual or theological meaning. But according to the Syrians the historical and the Messianic were blended

together like woof and warp. The Messianic did not float above the historical, but was implicit in it. This not only weeded out much of the fanciful Old Testament Christological interpretation of the allegorists, but it rested the subject on a far more satisfactory basis. The relationship of the Old and New Testaments was made typological and not allegorical.

This also enabled the Syrians to defend the unity of the Bible from a better vantage point. They admitted the development of revelation. An allegorist might find something far richer about Jesus Christ and salvation in Genesis than in Luke. But if progressive revelation is correctly understood such a maneuver by an exegete is impossible. Secondly, they admitted that the unity of the Bible was Christological. The bond between the Two Testaments is prophecy (predictive and typological) understood in terms of (i) progressive revelation and (ii) the literal and historical exegesis of Messianic passages.

The result of these principles was some of the finest exegetical literature of ancient times. As Gilbert says, "The commentary of Theodore [of Mopsuestia] on the minor epistles of Paul is the first and almost the last exegetical work produced in the ancient Church which will bear any comparison with modern commentaries."[33] Grant observes that this school had a remarkable influence in the Middle Ages and became the pillar of the Reformation, and finally became the "principal exegetical method of the Christian Church."[34]

3. *The Victorines*

Scholars of the medieval period have established the fact that a strong historical and literal school existed in the Abbey of St. Victor in Paris.[35] Its outstanding men were Hugo of St. Victor, Richard of St. Victor, and Andrew of St. Victor. Just as the Jewish scholarship in Antioch of Syria influenced the Christian scholars there for literalism, so the Jewish scholars of the medieval period influenced the Victorines for literalism. Miss Smalley at several points in her exposition notes the friendly relations and interactions of this school with the Jewish scholars.

The Victorines insisted that liberal arts, history, and geography were basic to exegesis. History and geography especially form the natural background for literal exegesis. Literal exegesis gave rise to doctrine, and doctrine was the natural background for allegorization. A close check is

hereby put on allegorization for none is permitted that does not root in doctrine established by the literal sense.

The literal, rather than a preliminary or superficial study, was the basic study of the Bible. The Victorines insisted that the mystical or spiritual sense could not be truly known until the Bible had been literally interpreted. By literalism they did not mean *letterism* but the true and proper meaning of a sentence. This emphasis on the literal carried over into an emphasis on syntax, grammar, and meaning. True interpretation of the Bible was *exegesis*, not *eisegesis*.

4. *The Reformers*

The tradition of the Syrian school was reflected among the Victorines and became the essential hermeneutical theory of the Reformers. Although historians admit that the West was ripe for the Reformation due to several forces at work in European culture, nevertheless there was a *hermeneutical Reformation* which preceded the ecclesiastical Reformation.

There were two main factors that prepared the way for the Reformation in terms of hermeneutics. The first of these was the philosophical system of Occam. Occam was a nominalist, and much of the training which Luther had was in the philosophy of Occam. In Occam we find a separation of revelation and human reason. Human reason had as its territory nature, philosophy, and science. Revelation which was received through faith had for its territory salvation and theology. This was a radical separation of two elements that existed on friendlier terms in the philosophy of Aquinas. In Thomism reason not only dealt with philosophy but with natural religion, and natural religion became the mediating link between philosophy and revelation.

The two realms of grace and nature were separated by Occam. Therefore, whatever we know of God we know by divine revelation, not by human reason. The authority for theological dogma rested solely on divine revelation, and therefore upon the Bible. Thus Luther was so trained as to magnify the authority of the Bible as over against philosophy. When called upon to prove his position he appealed to Scripture and reason (logical deductions from Scripture). A traditional Catholic theologian would appeal to Scripture and reason but also to Thomistic philosophy, councils, creeds, and the Fathers. (The traditional

interpretation of Luther and Occamism has been challenged by B. Haegglund: "Was Luther a Nominalist?" *Theology*, 59:226–234, June, 1956.)

The second factor was the renewed study of Hebrew and Greek. Beryl Smalley (*The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*) had demonstrated that Hebrew studies were not as completely lacking among the scholastics as scholars formerly thought. It was Reuchlin, a humanist and a lawyer, who translated Kimchi's Hebrew grammar into Latin so that if a man had the time he could decipher some main elements of the Hebrew language.[36] With the Renaissance came a renewed interest in Greek, and Erasmus published the first Greek New Testament in modern times in 1516. The entire Bible in its original languages was now available for study, for a Hebrew Testament had been printed by 1494. Luther learned his Latin for the priesthood and could so handle the Latin Vulgate, and he also learned his Greek and Hebrew. He had a photographic memory and this did him good service in public debate for he could recall the reading of the Greek or Hebrew on a given passage. When he thought he might be shut up in prison, he selected as his two books of consolation a Hebrew and a Greek Testament.

Luther's hermeneutical principles were:[37]

(1). *The psychological principle*. Faith and illumination were the personal and spiritual requisites for an interpreter. The believer should seek the leading of the Spirit and depend on that leading. In his *Table Talk* he writes: "We ought not to criticise, or judge the Scriptures by our mere reason, but diligently, with prayer, meditate thereon, and seek their meaning" (*On God's Word*, IV). In that Scripture was inspired it demanded a spiritual approach by the interpreter for he also wrote: "The Bible should be regarded with wholly different eyes from those with which we view other productions" (*On God's Word*, IX).

(2). *The authority principle*. The Bible is the supreme and final authority in theological matters, and is therefore above all ecclesiastical authority. Its teaching cannot be countermanded nor qualified nor subordinated to ecclesiastical authorities whether of persons or documents.

(3). *The literal principle*. In place of the four-fold system of the scholastics, we are to put the literal principle. The scholastics had developed their hermeneutics into two divisions, the literal and the spiritual. The spiritual had been divided into three divisions (allegorical,

anagogical, and tropological). Luther maintained strongly the primacy of the literal interpretation of Scripture. In the *Table Talk* he affirms that "I have grounded my preaching upon the literal word" (*On God's Word*, XI). Farrar cites him as writing: "The literal sense of Scripture alone is the whole essence of faith and of Christian theology."[38] Briggs cites him as saying: "Every word should be allowed to stand in its natural meaning, and that should not be abandoned unless faith forces us to it."[39]

The literal principle implies three sub-principles:

(i). Luther rejected allegory. He calls allegorical interpretation "dirt," "scum," "obsolete loose rags," and likens allegorizing to a harlot and to a monkey game. Yet this is not the entire story. This was his opinion of allegory as used by the Catholics. He was not adverse to allegory if the content were Christ and not something of the papacy. In fact students of Luther have indicated his inconsistency at this point for Luther himself engages in some typical medieval allegorization. But in principle he broke with it, and in much practice he repudiated it even though he was not entirely free from it.

(ii). Luther accepted the primacy of the original languages. He felt that the original revelation of God could not be truly recovered until it was recovered from the Hebrew and Greek Testaments. His advice to preachers was: "While a preacher may preach Christ with edification though he may be unable to read the Scriptures in the originals, he cannot expound or maintain their teaching against the heretics without this indispensable knowledge." Luther did a great deal to sponsor the revival of Hebrew and Greek studies.

(iii). The historical and grammatical principle. This is inseparable from the literal principle. The interpreter must give attention to *grammar;* to the *times, circumstances, and conditions* of the writer of the Biblical book; and to the *context* of the passage.

(4). *The sufficiency principle*. The devout and competent Christian can understand the true meaning of the Bible and thereby does not need the official guides to interpretation offered by the Roman Catholic Church. The Bible is a *clear* book (the *perspicuity* of Scripture). Catholicism had maintained that the Scriptures were so obscure that only the teaching ministry of the Church could uncover their true meaning. To Luther the

perspicuity of the Bible was coupled with the *priesthood of believers*, so that the Bible became the property of all Christians.

The competent Christian was *sufficient* to interpret the Bible, and the Bible is *sufficiently* clear in content to yield its meaning to the believer. Further, the Bible was a world of its own and so *Scripture interprets Scripture*. At points where the Bible was obscure the Catholic referred to the unwritten tradition of the Church. But Luther shut the interpreter up within the Bible and made the obscure passage yield to a clear passage. Much of Catholic exegesis was nothing more than studies in patristics. This Luther rejected:

> I ask for Scriptures and Eck offers me the Fathers. I ask for the sun, and he shows me his lanterns. I ask: "Where is your Scripture proof?" and he adduces Ambrose and Cyril . . . With all due respect to the Fathers I prefer the authority of the Scripture.[40]

A corollary at this point is: *the analogy of faith*. The scholastics interpreted by glosses and catena of citations from the Fathers. This was arbitrary and disconnected. Luther insisted on *the organic, theological unity of the Bible*. All of the relevant material on a given subject was to be collected together so that the pattern of divine revelation concerning that subject would be apparent.

(5). *The Christological principle*. The literal interpretation of the Bible was not the end of interpretation. The function of all interpretation is to find Christ. Luther's rule at this point was: "Auch ist das der rechte Pr**ü**fstein alle B**ü**cher zu tadeln, wenn man siehet ob sie Christum trieben oder nicht."[41] Smith cites Luther as saying: "If you will interpret well and securely, take Christ with you, for he is the man whom everything concerns."[42]

This is Luther's method of making the entire Bible a Christian book. The Fathers did it with their allegorical method. Luther does it with his Christological principle.

This has been one of Luther's most controversial utterances. (i) One group (especially the neo-orthodox) claims that Luther did not hold to a narrow verbal inspiration view of Scripture. Luther felt free to challenge anything in Scripture not Christological. (ii) The strict orthodox Lutheran theologians claim that this is purely a hermeneutical principle, and not a principle of Biblical criticism. They adduce numerous statements of Luther to prove that he held to an infallible, inerrant Bible. Fortunately,

the study of hermeneutics does not have to await the outcome of this debate for it is crystal clear that this principle is first of all a hermeneutical maxim of Luther's.

(6). *The Law-Gospel principle*. Luther saw the root heresy of the Galatian churches transposed into a different key in the Catholic Church. The Galatians had been taught to (i) be circumcized—the seal of the Old Testament Covenant and (ii) to believe in Christ—the center of the New Covenant, and they would be saved. The Catholic Church taught that (i) to do religious works, and (ii) believe in Christ would save them. Justification by faith alone not only repudiated the Judaizers of the Gospel, but the Roman Catholic system of salvation.

Luther taught that we must carefully distinguish Law and Gospel in the Bible, and this was one of Luther's principal hermeneutical rules. Any fusion of the Law and Gospel was wrong (Catholics and Reformed who make the Gospel a new law), and any repudiation of the Law was wrong (antinomianism). The Law was God's word about human sin, human imperfection, and whose purpose was to drive us to our knees under a burden of guilt. The Gospel is God's grace and power to save. Hence we must never in interpreting the Scriptures confuse these two different activities of God or teachings of Holy Scripture.

* * *

With reference to Calvin, Fullerton observes that "Calvin may not unfittingly be called the first scientific interpreter in the history of the Christian Church."[43] Is there any other man in the history of the Christian Church who has turned out such a scientific, able, and valuable commentary on almost the entire Scriptures and also made one of the greatest contributions to theology in his *Institutes*? It is true that to Luther we owe the honor of having broken through to a new Protestant hermeneutics, but it was Calvin who exemplified it with his touch of genius. Speaking of Calvin's commentaries Wright says: "The more one studies these commentaries, the more astonished he becomes at their scholarship, lucid profundity, and freshness of insight. Although biblical studies have moved a long way since the sixteenth century, there is still little which can be held to be their equal."[44]

(i). Calvin insisted that the *illumination of the Spirit* was the necessary spiritual preparation for the interpreter of God's Word.

(ii). Calvin, with Luther, rejected allegorical interpretation. Calvin called it Satanic because it led men away from the truth of Scripture. He further stated that the inexhaustibility of Scripture *was not in its so-called fertility of meanings.*

(iii). "Scripture interprets Scripture" was a basic conviction of Calvin. This meant many things. It meant *literalism* (as defined in this book) in exegesis with a rejection of the medieval system of the four-fold meaning of Scripture. It meant listening to the Scripture, not reading Scripture to justify a host of dogmatic presuppositions—although scholars are not sure that Calvin escaped doing this himself. Calvin wrote: "It is the first business of an interpreter to let his author say what he does, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say,"[45] and in the dedicatory letter to one of his commentaries he added:

> We were both of this mind that the principal point of an interpreter did consist in a lucid brevity. And truly, seeing that this is in a manner his whole charge, namely, to show both the mind of the writer whom he hath taken upon himself to expound, look, by how much he leadeth the readers away from the same, by so much he is wide of the mark. . . Verily the word of God ought to be so revered by us that through a diversity of interpretation it might not be drawn asunder by us, no not so much as a hair's breadth . . . It is an audacity akin to sacrilege to use the Scriptures at our own pleasure and to play with them as with a tennis ball, which many before us have done.[46]

The "Scripture interprets Scripture" principle led Calvin to make a strong emphasis on grammatical exegesis, philology, the necessity of examining the context, and the necessity of comparing Scriptures which treated common subjects.

(iv). Calvin showed a marked independence in exegesis. He not only broke with Catholic exegetical principles, but with any sort of exegesis which was shoddy, superficial, or worthless. He rejected arguments for very orthodox doctrines if the exegesis involved was unworthy.

(v). Finally, Calvin anticipated much of the modern spirit with reference to the interpretation of Messianic prophecy. He showed caution and reserve in these matters, and stated that the exegete ought to investigate the historical settings of all prophetic and Messianic Scriptures.

5. *Post-Reformation*

In general the spirit and the rules of the Reformers became the guiding principles of Protestant orthodox interpretation. To name the scholars who followed in the footsteps of Luther and Calvin would be to name most

of the great exegetes from Reformation times until now. Briggs claims that the Puritans worked out the Protestant hermeneutics to a fine point.[47]

Not all post-Reformation exegesis was of the same high standard as that of Calvin, and that there were extremists no one can doubt although Farrar's judgment on these men is extreme. However, a very significant advance was made by Ernesti, who was a classical scholar. He published his *Institutio Interpretis* in 1761 and in it maintained the thesis that the skills and tools of classical studies were basic to New Testament exegesis. Ernesti stated that grammatical exegesis has priority over dogmatic exegesis, and that literal interpretation was preferred over allegorical exegesis. His principal emphasis was on the necessity of sound philology in exegesis. Of Ernesti Briggs writes: "It is the merit of Ernesti in modern times that he so insisted upon grammatical exegesis that he induced exegetes of all classes to begin their work here at the foundation" [grammatical interpretation].[48]

C. Devotional Schools

The devotional interpretation of Scripture is that method of interpreting Scripture which places emphasis on the edifying aspects of Scripture, and interpreting with the intention of developing the spiritual life.

1. *Medieval Mystics*

The medieval period produced both scholasticism and mysticism. The mystics read the Scriptures as means of promoting the mystical experience. Such representative men were the Victorines (Hugo but more especially, Richard) and Bernard of Clairvaux. The principal book of the mystics was the *Song of Songs* which they readily interpreted as the love relationship between God and the mystic resulting in spiritual delights told in terms of physical delights.

2. *Spener and Francke—Pietism*

The post-Reformation period was a period of theological dogmatism. It was a period of heresy hunting and rigid, creedal Protestantism. Farrar's account of it although perhaps extreme is nevertheless depressing.[49] He says it was characterized by a three-fold curse: "The curse of tyrannous

confessionalism; the curse of exorbitant systems; the curse of contentious bitterness."[50] Speaking of bitterness among theologians, he writes: *"They read the Bible by the unnatural glare of theological hatred."*[51]

It was in reaction to this situation that *pietism* developed. Pietism was the effort to recover the Bible as spiritual food and nourishment to be read for personal edification. It was a distinct reaction against dogmatic and fanciful exegesis. Spener, who was influenced by Richard Baxter, published his *Pia Desidera* in 1675 and maintained that the Bible was the instrument in God's hands for effecting true spirituality. Spener organized his *Collegia pietatis* wherein believers met together for Bible study, devotions, and prayer.

The second great pietist was A. H. Francke who was much more the scholar, linguist and exegete. Francke organized with Anton and Schade a *Collegium Philobiblicum* for the study of the Scriptures with an emphasis on philology and the practical bearing of Scripture on life. Later he went to the University at Halle which became the center of pietism. Francke insisted that the entire Bible be read through frequently; that commentaries were to be used but with discretion so as not to take the place of the study of Scripture itself; and that only the regenerate could understand the Bible.

Farrar says that Bengel was the "heir and continuator of all that was best in Pietism."[52] Bengel studied under the pietists and was impressed by their spirituality, their wonderful Christian fellowship, their emphasis on grammatical and historical interpretation, and their emphasis on the application of Scripture to spiritual life. Bengel eventually wrote his famous *Gnomon* which is concise, grammatical, penetrating, and which emphasizes the unity of the Scriptural revelation. His work in textual criticism represents one of the great landmarks in the development of New Testament textual criticism.

The influence of pietism was great. It influenced the Moravians and Zinzendorf. Others in the pietistic tradition (or at least emphasizing the devotional, practical, and edifying study of the Bible) are the Puritans, Wesley, Edwards, Matthew Henry, and the Quakers.[53]

3. *Modern Emphasis*

The insights of the pietists have not been lost. It would not be amiss to say that the average Christian reads his Bible in the devotional tradition,

i.e., for his own blessing and spiritual food. The devotional material on our book shelves is imposing and the preacher is expected to have a devotional emphasis in every sermon above and beyond whatever doctrinal or exegetical remarks he may have to make.

The devotional and practical emphasis in Bible teaching is *absolutely* necessary. The purpose of preaching is more than doctrinal communication or exposition of the meaning of Scripture. It must reach over into life and experience, and this is the function of the devotional teaching of Scripture. The vital, personal, and spiritual *must be present in all the ministries of the Word.*

There are two weaknesses of devotional interpretation:

(i). It falls prey to allegorization especially in the use of the Old Testament. In the effort to find a spiritual truth or application of a passage of Scripture the literal and therefore primary meaning of the passage is obscured. If it is not a case of bald allegorizing it may be excessive typology. Given enough allegorical and typological rope one may prove a variety of contradictory propositions from the Old Testament. One may prove Calvinistic security (the central board in the wall of the Tabernacle) or Arminian probationalism (the failure of faith at Kadesh-Barnea). A Reformed expositor may prove that the soul feeds on Christ while discussing the sacrificial system, and a Catholic prove his doctrine of the mass.

All sorts of distortions have been made of the historical records of the Old Testament (and occasionally the New) in order to derive a spiritual blessing or to make a devotional point.

(ii). Devotional interpretation may be a substitute for the requisite exegetical and doctrinal studies of the Bible. Strong doctrinal sinews and solid exegetical bones are necessary for spiritual health. If the emphasis is completely devotional the requisite doctrinal and expository truth of Scripture are denied God's people.

D. Liberal Interpretation

As early as Hobbes and Spinoza rationalistic views were held about the Bible. The debate over the Bible in modern times is a debate of rationalism versus authoritarianism. Rationalism in Biblical studies boils down to the fundamental assertion that whatever is not in harmony with *educated* mentality is to be rejected. The critic defines *educated* in a very special

way. The authoritarian position asserts that if God has spoken, the human mind must be obedient to the voice of God. That there is a blind or credulous authoritarianism cannot be denied, but it is not true that authoritarianism is anti-intellectual.[54] The rationalistic premise has led to radical criticism of the Scriptures.

This radical treatment of Scriptures reached its full tide in the nineteenth century. Suffice it·to say that by the middle of the twentieth century most theological seminaries have accepted the basic theses of radical criticism, and many of its conclusions. The Barthian reaction will be discussed later. In broad perspective the following rules have governed the religious liberals as they approached the study of the Bible:[55]

(i). *Religious liberals believe that "modern mentality" is to govern our approach to Scripture*. This "modern mentality" is made up of a complex of presuppositions, e.g., standards of scholarship as practiced in higher education, the validity of the scientific *outlook* as well as *method*, and the ethical standards of educated people. Whatever in the Scriptural account does not measure up to these criteria is rejected. Scholarship claims that all books are to be treated as human documents and by the same methods and the Bible is no exception.[56] Science presumes the regularity of nature so miracles are not accepted. The doctrines of sin, depravity, and hell offend the liberals' moral sensitivities so these doctrines are rejected. This also means a rather free use of the text of the Bible. If a book of the Bible seems "patched" the text may be re-arranged, e.g., as Moffatt does with the Gospel of John in his translation. If the text is obscure the text may be remade, e.g., as is done too frequently in the Old Testament part of the *Revised Standard Version*.[57]

(ii). *Religious liberals redefine inspiration*. All forms of genuine inspiration (verbal, plenary, dynamic) are rejected. If liberalism rejects all transcendental and miraculous activity of God, then it must reject a supematuralistic doctrine of inspiration and revelation which it does.[58] In its place it puts Coleridge's principle that the inspiration of the Bible is its power to inspire religious experience. Revelation is redefined as human insight into religious truth, or human discovery of religious truths. Or as Fosdick puts it: "The under side of the process is man's discovery; the upper side is God's revelation."[59]

The canon of criticism is "the spirit of Jesus." Whatever in the Bible is in accord with the "spirit of Jesus" is normative, and whatever is below the ethical and moral level of the "spirit of Jesus" is not binding. Bewer writes quite clearly at this point: "To the Christian the only norm and standard is the spirit of God as revealed in Jesus . . . all those parts of the Old Testament which are contrary to the spirit of Jesus, or which have no direct spiritual meaning to us, are for us without authority."[60]

This means that the doctrinal or theological content of Scripture is not binding. It was Sabatier who argued that religious experience was fundamental and theology was the afterthought of this experience. But the religious experience could not be completely expressed in thought-form so theological expression was but symbolical of the religious experience. With this essential thesis Fosdick agrees, for to him religious experience is the heart of religion and theological forms are temporary. One of the chapters of his book has the title, "Abiding Experiences and Changing Categories." His thesis is expressed in these words: "What is permanent in Christianity is not mental frameworks but abiding experiences that phrase and rephrase themselves in successive generations' ways of thinking and that grow in assured certainty and richness of content."[61]

(iii). *The supernatural is redefined*. The supernatural may mean: that which is extraordinary, miraculous, oracular, not attainable in knowledge or power by ordinary human nature. Or it may mean: above the material order, or beyond mere natural processes, e.g., prayer, ethics, pure thought, immortality. Historic orthodoxy has accepted supematuralism in both these meanings. Religious liberalism accepts only the latter.

Everything in the Bible which is supernatural in the first sense is rejected. Colwell argues that the *same* methodology must be used in interpreting the Bible as is used in interpreting the classics; no special principle may be appealed to by Christians. If, therefore, we reject all reports of miracles in the classics as violating our scientific good sense, then we must reject miracles in the Scriptures.[62] When the miracle or supernatural is found in Scripture it is treated as folklore or mythology or poetic elaboration.

(iv). *The concept of evolution is applied to the religion of Israel and thereby to its documents*. Fosdick's book, *The Modern Use of the Bible*, is considered a

most lucid presentation of the Wellhausenian interpretation of the Old Testament. The primitive and crude, ethically and religiously, is the earlier; and the advanced and elevated, is the later. We can thereby re-create the evolution of the religion of Israel and rearrange our documents accordingly. "We know now that every idea in the Bible started from primitive and childlike origins and, with however many setbacks and delays, grew in scope and height toward the culmination of Christ's Gospel," is Fosdick's point of view.[63]

In the study of the canon this put the prophets *before* the law. The basic Wellhausen position calls for considerable rearrangement of books and materials.[64]

The same procedure has been applied to the New Testament. Hamack's *What is Christianity?* is considered the finest and clearest expression of religious liberalism. Its thesis is that Jesus, a good man in the highest prophetic order, is transmuted by theological speculation and Greek metaphysics into the strange God-man of the creeds. The critic of the New Testament must be an expert archeologist and geologist to uncover the strata of accretions imposed on the true Jesus of history.

However, archeological work, further work in criticism, and the uncovering of much papyri demonstrated that all such stratigraphy was due to fail. In *Formgeschichte* (form or historical criticism) an effort is made to develop a pre-literary theory for accounting for the New Testament. The New Testament was the creation of the Christian community out of its spiritual needs, and so the Gospels are not the life of Christ as much as they are the life of the early church.

(v). *The notion of accommodation has been applied to the Bible*. Much of the theological content of the Bible is weakened or destroyed by asserting that the theological statements are in the transitory and perishable mold of ancient terminology. For example, the only terms in which Paul could describe the death of Christ were from bloody Jewish sacrifices or the blood-baths of Mythraism. Thus Paul's doctrine of the atonement is accommodated to the expressions of his time and these are not binding on us. It is claimed that our Lord in dealing with the Jews had to accommodate his teaching to their condition, especially in matters of Biblical Introduction, e.g., the historicity of Adam and Eve, of Jonah, of the Davidic authorship of the Psalms.[65]

The religious liberal feels it is his assignment to recast the essence of the New Testament doctrine in the language of his contemporaries, and in so doing must strip off the concepts and images of the Old and New Testament cultures.

(vi). *The Bible was interpreted historically—with a vengeance*.[66] The historical interpretation is used in a special leveling and reductionist sense by the religious liberal. He means more than painting the historical backdrop of the various passages of the Bible. It is a method which endeavors to break the uniqueness of the Scriptures. It makes religion a changing, shifting phenomenon so that it is impossible to "canonize" any period of its development or its literature. It believes that there are social conditions which create theological beliefs and the task of the interpreter is not to defend these theological beliefs (as in orthodoxy) but to understand the social conditions which produced them. It stresses the continuity of Biblical religion with surrounding religion, and emphasizes "borrowing," "syncretism," and "purifying."

Further, in so stressing the necessity of finding the meaning of a passage for the original hearers of it, it repudiates the prophetic or predictive element of prophecy. It rejects typology and predictive prophecy as Christian abuses (although in good faith) of the Old Testament.

(vii). *Philosophy has had an influence on religious liberalism*. Immanuel Kant made ethics or moral will the essence of religion. Kant shut himself up almost completely to the *moral* interpretation of Scripture. Whatever was not of this he rejected. This emphasis on the moral element of Scripture with its tacit rejection of theological interpretation has played a major role in the liberals' use of the Scripture.

Deism made ethics the essence of religion too. In a typically deistic fashion Jefferson went through the Gospels picking out the ethical and moral, and rejecting the theological and so published his *Jefferson Bible*.

Hegelianism has had its influence on Biblical interpretation. According to Hegel progress in the clarification of an idea involves three terms: the thesis, the antithesis, and the synthesis. This Hegelian waltz was applied to the totality of human culture including religion. Hegelian students were not slow in applying it to the Biblical records. Wellhausen applied it to the Old Testament, and Strauss and the Tuebingen school to the New.

Thus in the Tuebingen school the strife between Pauline factions and Petrine factions is harmonized by the Lucan approach.

Ethical idealism and idealism with strong ethical and religious elements has had its influence on American religious liberalism. At the headwaters of much of our American religious philosophy were Josiah Royce and Borden Parker Bowne. Bowne's personalism through his students and their students has had a real influence on much of Methodist and liberal theology in America.

E. Neo-Orthodoxy

Karl Barth ushered in a new era in Biblical interpretation when he published his *Römerbrief* at the end of World War I. This was a new approach to the theological interpretation of the book of Romans. This new movement has been called "crisis theology" because it so emphasized God's judgment of man; "Barthianism," because it stems from the original thought of Karl Barth; "neo-orthodoxy" because it dissevers itself from liberalism and seeks to recover the insights of the Reformers; "neo-supematuralism" because in contradiction to modernism it reinstates the category of the transcendental; "logotheism" because it is a theology of the Word of God; "neo-evangelicalism" because it seeks to recover the Christian gospel in contrast to the social gospel of liberalism; "neo-liberalism" because it is claimed that although differing in many ways from liberalism it has not really broken with it; and "Biblical realism" because it makes a new effort to rediscover the theological interpretation of the Bible.[67]

The movement has been fractured into a series of submovements rendering simple description difficult. We shall try to set forth those hermeneutical principles which would more or less characterize the center of this movement.

(i). *The revelation principle*. This movement makes it very clear that the historic, orthodox position with reference to inspiration, revelation, and Biblical criticism can no longer be maintained.[68] The *infallibility* of the Bible is denied. The Bible is not one harmonious whole but a series of conflicting theological systems and ethical maxims. Some parts of the Bible are definitely sub-Christian and perhaps it would not be too strong to say even anti-Christian.[69] The *inerrancy* of the Bible is denied. In

matters of science, anthropology, history, and geology, the Bible is flatly contradicted by modern science. The Hebrews had the typical Semitic cosmology and outlook on nature. The traditional notion of *revelation* is denied. Revelation as a communication of that truth not ascertainable by human powers is strongly repudiated. It is dubbed "propositional revelation" and an attack on "propositional revelation" is one of the typical themes of neo-orthodoxy. All historical and orthodox forms of *inspiration* are denied (verbal, conceptual, plenary),[70] and in more than one neo-orthodox treatise the word inspiration never even makes the index. Those who believe in verbal inspiration are guilty of a *mechanical* or *dictational* theory of inspiration and the additional charge of *bibliolatry* is made against them.

Although neo-orthodoxy has challenged some of the theses of radical criticism it has accepted in main the results of the same. Lewis puts it bluntly but he expresses the opinion of the movement when he writes: "The one certain thing about the new Biblicism is that it is not a revamped fundamentalism."[71]

However, no matter how strongly neo-orthodoxy has reacted to the orthodox view of the Bible, it has not capitulated to modernism. It finds its normative use of the Bible in terms of its doctrine of revelation. Very briefly the essence of the doctrine is this: *Only God can speak for God*. Revelation *is* when, and only when, God speaks. But God's speech is not words (orthodox view) but is *His personal presence*. "The Word of God" is God Himself present to my consciousness. The "objective" form of this speech is Jesus Christ which is God present in mercy, grace, and reconciliation. When God addresses me by Jesus Christ and I respond, then revelation *occurs*. Revelation is thus *both* God speaking to me of grace and forgiveness in Jesus Christ *and* my response of faith to this personal address.

The Bible is thus not revelation or the word of God directly, but a *record* and a *witness* to revelation. It is not the word of God directly. It is the word of God in the indirect sense that the Bible contains the normative *witness* of revelation of the past, and the *promise* of revelation in the future. The Bible is a trustworthy yet fallible witness to revelation. Although a man may unmistakably experience revelation, he never gets a *pure* communication. The revelation is always *broken* or *diffracted* through the

prism of its medium. Therefore the Bible, a record of revelation, can never be directly the revelation of God nor a pure communication of it.

The neo-orthodox interpreter then looks for the Word behind the words. The religious liberal saw no Word behind the words of Scripture, but only a record of remarkable religious experiences. The orthodox identified the human words of the Bible with the Word behind the words. [72] The neo-orthodox thinker proposes to dig through the human, fallible words of the Bible to discover *the original witness to the Word of God*.

(ii). *The Christological principle*. God's Word to man is Jesus Christ. Only that part of the Bible which is witness to the Word of God is binding. This introduces the second fundamental hermeneutical principle of neo-orthodoxy, the Christological principle. Only that which witnesses to Christ is binding. and doctrines are understood only as they are related to Jesus Christ, the Word of God.

As we read the Old Testament we encounter a variety of incidents. Whatever is not in harmony with Jesus Christ the Word of God is not valid witness. Lewis declares that there is nothing in the Old Testament about God that is binding upon Christian men which "cannot be reconciled with what God has disclosed himself to be in the Incarnate Word, and with the requirement of human life and thought and action that is the proper issue and concomitant of this disclosure."[73]

Further, it is argued by Brunner that no doctrine is a Christian doctrine unless it receives a Christological orientation. Such doctrines as creation and sin are not to be directly approached in the Old Testament for only in Christ do we truly know what it means to be a creature (and thereby have the proper grounds for understanding creation in Genesis) and only in Christ do we know what sin is (and thereby understand Genesis 3). The rule for understanding "*all* Christian articles of faith is the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ."[74]

(iii). *The totality principle*. Barth, Brunner, Lewis, and Niebuhr argue that one cannot prove a doctrine by the citation of a text of Scripture or a few texts of Scripture. The teaching of the Bible is determined by a consideration of the totality of its teaching. Lewis insists that crass literalism does not yield the true meaning of Scripture. The Scriptures are properly interpreted only when we apply the totality principle and Brunner argues that "we are not bound by any Biblical passages taken in

isolation, and certainly not by isolated sections of the Old Testament."[75] No doubt the Bible interpreted *in particular* leads to orthodox doctrines. To take the Bible seriously (as neo-orthodoxy intends to do) without taking it with a crass literalism, is to interpret each doctrine from the totality of the Biblical perspective guided by the Christological principle.

(iv). *The mythological principle*. The Bible contains discussions about such topics as the creation of the universe, the creation of man, the innocency of man, the fall of man, and the second coming of Christ. The liberal either rejected these teachings forthright, or altered them so as to change their Biblical character. Neo-orthodoxy seeks to interpret these doctrines *seriously* (as liberals failed to do), but not *literally* (as the orthodox do). The *via media* is to interpret them *mythologically*.[76]

The myth is a form of theological communication. It presents a truth about man's religious existence in historical dress. *Creation* is such a myth for it is a truth about religious existence in historical form. Genesis 1 is not meant to tell us actually how God created the universe. Rather it tells us on the one hand of our creaturehood, and on the other of the limits of scientific investigation. Creation really means that eventually science comes to the end of the line in its explanation of the universe and must there surrender to truth of another dimension. The *Second Coming* of Christ is a religious truth in historical form to the intent that man can never find his happiness nor his meaning in purely historical existence. The *Fall* is the myth which informs us that man inevitably corrupts his moral nature. The *Incarnation* and the *cross* are myths telling us that the solution to man's problems of guilt and sin is not to be found in a human dimension but must come from beyond as an act of God's grace.

Neo-orthodox writers make it clear that Biblical myths are radically different from pagan and classical myths. The latter are the productions of human imagination and the elaboration of tradition. The Biblical myths are a serious and meaningful (although imperfect) method of setting forth that which is transcendental about man's religious existence and can best be represented in historical form. Because myths do not actually teach literal history but the conditions of all religious existents, mythological interpretation may sometimes be called *psychological* interpretation as suggested in Kierkegaard's subtitle to *The Concept of Dread* ("A simple

psychological deliberation oriented in the direction of the dogmatic problem of original sin").

(v). *The existential principle*. The existential principle of interpretation has its roots in Pascal's method of Bible study and received its initial formulation in Kierkegaard's meditation on "How to Derive True Benediction from Beholding Oneself in the Mirror of the Word."[77] According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. To read the Bible *as God's word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the word of God. The Bible is not God's word to the soul until one reads it as one *ought* to read the word of God. "He who is not alone with God's Word is not reading God's Word," pens Kierkegaard.[78]

Kierkegaard gives the illustration of a boy who stuffs the seat of his pants with napkins to soften the blows of the licking he is expecting. So the scholar stuffs his academic britches with his grammars, lexicons, and commentaries and thus *the Bible* as *God's word* never reaches his soul.

This existential approach to the reading of Scripture has been taken up by neo-orthodoxy. The Bible contains a special history (*Heilsgeschichte*), the history of salvation. Some of it is mythological in form, and some is actual history. This history within the Bible is the record that revelation has occurred, and so constitutes a promise that as men read the Scriptures revelation may occur again. This *Heilsgeschickte* is normative for all men and the instrument of occasioning revelation. From the human standpoint revelation may be invited by reading the Bible *existentially*, i.e., as Kierkegaard suggested with eagerness, anticipation, with a spirit of obedience, with a passionate heart.

The existential situation is a profound situation of life. It is an experience involving decisions about the most fundamental issues of life. Brock defines it as follows:

> Existenz is an attitude of the individual to himself, which is called forth by such concrete situations as the necessity for choice of profession or a conflict in love, a catastrophic change in social conditions, or the imminence of one's own death. It leads immediately to sublime moments in which a man gathers his whole strength to make a decision which is taken afterwards as binding

upon his future life. Furthermore, Existenz never becomes completed, as does life through death. In its different manifestations it is only a beginning which is faithfully followed or faithlessly forgotten. Moreover, Existenz is not real in being known, it is real only in being effectuated, in remembrance of it, and in resolutions for the future which are taken to be absolutely binding.[79]

The Bible is not primarily history, although it contains history. It is not primarily a theological textbook although it contains theology. It is a book about existence, about life at its most comprehensive expression, about God. To understand it at this level one must read it existentially. By this existential reading the Bible may become the word of God to the reader. Speaking of this Grant says:

> The deepest interpretation of Scripture is that concerned with 'existential' situations: life and death, love and hate, sin and grace, good and evil, God and the world. These are not matters of ordinary knowledge like the multiplication table or the date of the council of Nicea. There is . . . no special method for the attainment of these deeper insights; the historical method is not replaced but deepened.[80]

It is precisely at this point that the famous continental scholar, Eichrodt, levels one of his major criticisms at Fosdick. Fosdick has read *into* the Old Testament his evolutionary theory of the progress of religious ideas. Had he read the Bible with *existential* insight he would have noted more carefully the mighty redemptive and revelatory acts of God in making Himself known to the people, and the corresponding insight into the meaning of these acts which the prophets and real believers in Israel shared.[81]

Grant mentions also the German scholar Oepke,[82] who attacks the liberal's historical-critical method in that it is dead and fruitless, and suggests in its place the super-historical method—the existential method. The scholar reads his Bible with the full apparatus of his learning, yet personally he might be very nominal in his spiritual life. The scholar has an intellectual knowledge of the Bible. In contrast to this is the devout believer who has little of the scholar's critical apparatus yet who derives a rich blessing for his soul from his Bible reading. The latter reads his Bible *existentially* whereas the former reads it historically and critically.

(vi). *The paradoxical principle*.[83] It was Kierkegaard who not only developed the existential principle but also the paradoxical. This full story is too long to tell. The heart of it is this: Hegel, a German philosopher, made much of *divine immanence* and *logical rationality*. He was a pantheist and because of his belief in the pervasiveness of his logic his system has

been called *pan-logism*. Kierkegaard challenged these categories with the counter-categories of *divine transcendence* and *logical paradox*.

If man is a limited and sinful creature, and if God is Wholly Other (that is, very different from man), then man cannot have unambiguous knowledge of God. The truth of God must appear to man as dialectical or paradoxical. Any given doctrine must be defined in terms of assertion and counterassertion. Assertion and counter-assertion appear to man as paradoxical. Exposition of doctrine by means of assertion and counter-assertion is what is meant by the expression *dialectical* theology.

This dialectical procedure and the resultant paradoxes is not wilful indulgence in irrationalism. It is not the contention of the neo-orthodox to assert fiat contradictions. Rather, it is the inevitable nature of theological truth, and an uncritical application of the law of contradiction leads to a premature and inaccurate formulation of Christian doctrine.

Examples of these paradoxes are: man is a creature of nature, yet possessing spirit he transcends nature; man must use reason to understand God, yet God is beyond human reason; man is responsible for his sin, yet he inevitably sins; man's historical existence is at the same time destructive and constructive; man must lose his life to save it; God is One yet Three; the cross is foolishness yet wisdom; God is absolute holiness yet unmeasured love.

The truths of man's religious existence can never be precisely or rationally defined, but are tensions between contrarities not capable of complete rational explication yet sufficiently adequate for our religious understanding. Religious reality is too rich in meaning and content to be stated in strict, non-contradictory form.

F. The Heilsgeschichtliche School

Amidst the orthodoxy and liberalism of the nineteenth century, von Hofmann of Erlangen endeavored to break through to a fresh Biblical-theological synthesis. He tried to combine the insights of Schleiermacher concerning religious experience as the point of departure for theological thought, the critical study of the Bible, and orthodox Lutheran theology. He attempted to ground religious authority on the tripod of: (i) the experience of regeneration; (ii) the history and fact of the church; and (iii) Scripture.[84]

His principal contribution to hermeneutics is his notion of holy history or salvation-history. For his basic insight he is indebted to Schelling (as Tillich is in our century), for Schelling saw history as the manifestation of the eternal and absolute and not as so many events to be chronicled. Revelation is a higher form of history reaching backward into the past and forward into the future. The supreme content of this superhistorical history, this metaphysics of history, is Jesus Christ.

With this clue from Schelling, von Hofmann said that a historical event had roots in the past, meaning in the present, and portent for the future. In the study of prophecy we must know: (i) the history of Israel, (ii) the immediate historical context of the individual prophecy; and (iii) the fulfilment intended. This is what von Hofmann considered to be the *organic* view of Scripture. All Scripture was bound together in this holy history for every event looked backwards, to the present, and to the future. Preuss says that "it was the first time in the history of Biblical interpretation that an organic view of history was applied to the problems of exegesis in a systematic way."[85]

Christ is the central point of history. God is the active agent; Christ, the focal point. Yet this does not exhaust the content of history, for the present age portends another age, the millennium. Von Hofmann thus takes his place with the Lutheran millenarians of the nineteenth century.

Further, von Hofmann taught that the Holy Spirit not only inspired the Scriptures, but He guides the church. We are never to formalize, dogmatize, or canonize our interpretations of Scripture but ever be sensitive to more teaching from the Holy Spirit. Interpretation is not to be static, but dynamic moving along under the leadership of the Spirit.

Revelation was first historical. It is God's acts in history. But with these events was given a divine interpretation of them. Communication of ideas was necessary to make the event meaningful. Scripture is thus the product of historical event plus inspired interpretation.

Further, the older method of proving a doctrine by piecing together a catena of Scripture from all over the Bible is seriously challenged by Hofmann. He insists that *every* verse or passage be given its historical setting which should in turn give it its true meaning and its weight in proving any doctrine.

The outstanding American representative of this school is Otto Piper.[86] Piper admits indebtedness to von Hofmann and to his Salvation

history principle. He claims to be neither neo-orthodox nor liberal nor fundamentalist. One of the major theses of von Hofmann was that inspiration and criticism were not disjunctively related, and this major thesis Piper also accepted. Accordingly he is not appreciated by the liberals who deny any real inspiration nor by the fundamentalists who believe that concessions to criticism are fatal.

The authority of the Bible, according to Piper, is not its claim to verbal inspiration (for this claim is really the claim of the post-Reformation dogmatists) nor is it some higher type of knowledge which it seeks to communicate (for this is the error of gnosticism), but rather "that the Bible confronts us with facts that are more comprehensive and more important than anything else we know."[87] The Bible speaks to us of Jesus Christ and God's offer of forgiveness and salvation through faith. We find that out of our experience with life, this is precisely what our souls need, and upon faith we find ourselves blessed with the blessedness of the gospel. Hence Scriptures are not rationally vindicated, but they are vindicated out of life. The Bible is thus the Word of God (not the words of God as in verbal inspiration) because I *sense* that it is true. God speaks to me out of the Bible. He speaks of sin and forgiveness. The general address of the Bible becomes God's Word to me when I receive it by faith. Piper admits this is subjectivity (i.e., the Bible is the Word of God only to those who respond to it), but this need not alarm us. First, as long as we are willing to relate our experience to other knowledge it is not a solipsistic principle, and secondly, all *important* knowledge is subjective.

In the interpretation of the Bible Piper accepts in principle the critical treatment of the Bible for he pens, "All the attempts to exempt the Bible from the kind of criticism that we apply to other historical documents are just as futile as were the theological protests against the discoveries of paleontology."[88] But to be sure he does not follow this to drastic measures for at times he stoutly resists the efforts of the critics to do away with the supernatural. But he does insist that the interpreter must engage in the preliminary and critical studies of Biblical introduction, canon, and text.

Assuming that the critical study of the Bible has been made, the interpreter is then guided by three major hermeneutical principles (the quest for the life-movement of the given book; the comprehension of its message; and the appropriation of its message).[89]

In the study of the life-movement of a document we perform the following: we attempt to discover the unity of the book; we ascertain the persons to whom the book is communicated and its bearing on the interpretation of the book; we try to follow the succession of ideas or arguments in the book; we note the literary mold or form or structure of the book; and we must note the basic unity of the entire New Testament in its kerygmatic preaching and witness.

Comprehension of the document, Piper's second step, is (i) locating each idea in the author's total view of life and reality, and (ii) determining "the relationship which exists between the ideas of the documents and the ideas of our own mind."[90] This involves, among other things, the determination of the world view of the New Testament writers. The cogency or believability of this world view lies in "the fact that it is most comprehensive and most consistent taking all kinds of facts and experiences into consideration and that it reaches into depths of meaning not fathomed by any world view."[91] If an interpreter fails to discover this world view and insists on interpreting the New Testament from the so-called modern scientific world view he can only *misinterpret* the New Testament.

The fallacy of allegorical interpretation is that it is reading into Scripture the views already held by exegetes, rather than the discovery of the world view and system of values held by the writers of Scripture. Equally at fault is a narrow literalism, for communication is too complex to be limited to simple, literal interpretation. The *real* literal interpretation is the meaning found "in the original text when its component words are understood in the world view and according to the scale of values of the author."[92]

The final stage is appropriation which is our reply to the challenge of the Bible. Appropriation means that we critically study the Scriptures for we should not take seriously a spurious or unauthentic document. After criticism establishes the genuineness and the authenticity of a document we may proceed to its appropriation. The rationalist and liberal are so out of harmony with the supernatural character of the Scriptures that they are not able to truly appreciate them. The post-Reformation orthodox and their modern orthodox and fundamentalist counterparts equally fail to properly appreciate the Bible. The Reformers have showed us the way

through the Protestant Circle. Coming to Scriptures out of faith we believe them to be the Word of God, and by properly reading them we in turn discover them to be the Word of God. Only *by* response and *in* response to Scripture do we appreciate it and truly know it as the Word of God.

G. Bultmann and the New Hermeneutic

In the 1950's the theological leadership in Germany was taken over by Bultmann and the scholars trained by Bultmann in important New Testament chairs. Bultmann's main concern is with hermeneutics and therefore deserves special attention. The essentials of his hermeneutics are as follows:[93]

(1). *The scientific principle*. All matters of fact are settled by the scientific method, and all historical statements can be accepted only if they can be verified by the ordinary procedures of historians. To ask a person to believe against science or against history is to ask him to sacrifice his intellect. To ask a man to believe that Jesus walked on water is to ask him to believe something contrary to science, and if the man does believe this he sacrifices his intellect. The conviction that a man must never sacrifice his intellect is a very deep conviction of Bultmann and the Bultmannians and measurably determines their exegesis of Scripture.

(2). *The critical principle*. Bultmann studied under the leading Old and New Testament critics of his time. He was shaped for life in his scholarly procedures by studying with these men. In his student days the history-of-religion-school *(Religionsgeschichtliche Schule)* was very strong in Germany.

The words, concepts, and expressions used in the New Testament are to be determined by an exhaustive study of the whole historical, literary, sociological, and religious background of the words, concepts and expressions. Thus the concept of "Lord" *(kurios)* is to be traced out in the religions and philosophies that were part of the environment in which the New Testament was written. The implication of all of this is that the meaning of the New Testament concepts are not given by divine revelation and to be so understood, but not borrowed from contemporary religion or philosophy. The implications of this for Biblical hermeneutics is very great. The historical setting of a concept becomes more important in understanding the text than in a strict exegesis focussing directly on the text alone.

The second major critical tool of Bultmann is form-criticism. The German word is *Formgeschichte*, which means tracing out the history of the literary forms contained in a document. Cultures have set models, forms, literary genre by which they perpetuate their traditions. The New Testament writers were no different from writers in other cultures. So they too used forms. The larger concepts are *Gattungen* and the smaller ones *Formen*. The Gospels in particular, are to be interpreted by a research into the forms of the Gospels. This too has the general effect of making the New Testament more a culturally conditioned document than a final revelation of God.

Such typical forms are pronouncement stories, miracle stories, myths, legends and "Novellen" (short stories). Bultmann's book, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, shows how radical or sceptical this kind of critical interpretation can be (although it must be mentioned that some men use form-criticism without drawing from it the scepticism so characteristic of Bultmann).

This critical approach has led to the famous Content-Criticism debate *(Sachkritik)*. The *Sache* of a document is what the document is attempting to communicate; it is the material substance of a document; or it is the burden of a document. Barth believes that all critical work is preliminary to the interpretation of Scripture. After these preliminary matters are settled then the interpreter follows through with a grammatical and theological exegesis of the text. So for Barth there is no Content-Criticism of the New Testament.

Bultmann rejects the idea that criticism is but the preliminary activity of the exegete before he does his exegesis, but that the criticism of the text must not be limited. It participates in all of the activities of the expositor. So with Bultmann there is *Sachkritik*. Barth maintains that when we have established the teaching of Scripture as Christians we are honor-bound to believe it. The *Sache* is part of faith. To Bultmann we may believe that the New Testament does teach the virgin birth, but Bultmann doesn't have to believe it. The *Sache* need not be accepted by modern man.

Bultmann at this point looks at *Sachkritik* from another perspective. He makes a distinction between what the New Testament says *(Gesagt)* and what the New Testament means *(Gemeint)*. So the real *Sache* of Scripture is what is meant, not what is said. This appears again in different form in the demythological debate as the distinction between what is said

mythologically and what is meant existentially. Again it must be indicated that this leads to a very radical interpretation of the New Testament.

(3). *The mythological principle*. Bultmann teaches that the church of the first century expressed its faith in mythological terms. Bultmann really has three different criteria in the light of which he calls a concept mythological. (i) If the writer of the New Testament is stating his faith in a worldly way, an external way, an objective way, then he is stating it mythologically. According to this a myth is a projection from the interior of man of some concept out in the world of events and objects. (ii) If the writer of the New Testament is asserting something contrary to science such as the mysterious multiplication of bread and fish by Jesus, then it is a myth. (iii) The third criterion is nowhere stated by Bultmann but the idea comes across loud and clear. Doctrinal teachings of the New Testament that are not acceptable to modern men are myths. A distinction must always be made with Bultman between how he carefully defines myth, and what he actually does with the concept in his interpretation. Obviously he has enormously inflated the concept of myth as indicated by the way he concretely handles the texts of the New Testament.

These myths are generally derived from Jewish apocalyptic myths and Greek mystery religions myths. Furthermore these myths do not occur just here and there but the New Testament is permeated with them. This theory of myth has a very direct influence on Bultmann's hermeneutics.

(4). *The demythological-existential principle*. In 1941 Bultmann wrote a famous essay, "New Testament and Mythology." The ideas were not particularly new to Bultmann, as he had used all the concepts given in this article in his previous work. But in this essay he puts forth his method so clearly, so directly, so consistently that the article became the charter of the whole Bultmannian movement.[94]

Bultmann uses the big word, *Entmythologisierung*. The German prefix *ent-* means to take away, remove. A parallel to this in English would be the *un-* in unmask. The first duty of the interpreter is to recognize the mythological character of a passage of Scripture, for such myths are not believable by modern man. But the myth says something. The early Church used the myth to say something; so the New Testament scholar must find out what the myth says.

At this point Bultmann uses Heidegger's existential philosophy to determine what the myth is trying to say. Bultmann believes that the New Testament writings grew out of existential encounters but were unfortunately put in mythological form. The modern scholar must now unmask the myth and recover the original existential meaning of the myth.

There is a lot of literature on Bultmann's use of Heidegger, but we cannot enter into the details. Basically the issue is this. Bultmann does not believe Heidegger was inspired of God, but that he does give us the best working model for doing exegesis and theology in the twentieth century. In some later date he could be replaced. But as of now his philosophy is the most useful for Christian theology. The critic states that Bultmann will let the New Testament say only what passes through the screening of Heidegger's existentialism. In addition to this, G. Noller in *Sein und Existenz* claims that Bultmann does not faithfully follow Heidegger, but systematically misrepresents Heidegger for his own theological purposes.

(5). *The dialectical principle*. Bultmann repeatedly states that if something is objective or historical it is not existential; if it is existential it is not objective nor historical. Faith lives only by decision and not by objective or historical supports.

However, the cross is a unique event. It is to Bultmann the one historical item he cannot surrender to criticism. It is at the same time a historical event in Roman history, and the act or event of God's salvation. But the relationship of the cross seen historically and seen by faith is dialectical. By this Bultmann believes that a historian cannot deduce from the historical study of the cross the meaning of the cross in salvation known only in faith.

(6). *The revelational principle*. Whether it is true or not, modern theologians assert that the old orthodox doctrine of revelation believed that revelation consisted in truths or doctrines or concepts given to the writers of Scripture whereas modern theologians believe that revelation is an event, an encounter, the presence of God Himself. Revelation is an existential encounter and not the impartation of information known only by supernatural revelation. Bultmann belongs to the modern theologians who believe that revelation is not a quality of Scripture but, in older language, an "experience."

The "Word of God," an expression Bultmann uses, is not then Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture is a record or a witness that revelation does occur, but it is not itself revelation or directly the Word of God.

Further, revelation involves both God and man in that it is essentially encounter. In the older orthodox view revelation was in Scripture whether a man believed it or not. In Bultmann and many other modern theologians, revelation happens only when both God and man participate in the event of revelation. God speaking a supernatural Word when not heard or believed by any man is not revelation to Bultmann.

The hermeneutical importance of all of this is that the interpreter is not looking for the divine revelation in Scripture and stating it in theological form, but he is looking for the "Word within the words," for the existential stratum of Scripture, for the manner in which Scripture addresses man.

(7). *The law principle*. This will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on prophecy. Bultmann does not believe that the Old Testament in any way predicts doctrines or concepts in the New Testament. It is not a "Christian" book. It is really a book of law. It shows how man fails his existential task and only in this sense it is a negative lesson about man; but the positive message of the Scripture is in the New Testament. This position greatly influences the way Bultmann interprets the Old Testament and how he interprets all those passages in the New Testament which claim to be fulfilment of predictions in the Old Testament.

From Bultmann there sprang a radical movement in which Bultmann's scepticism about the New Testament is carried even further, and a positive movement which attempts to push further the break-throughs of Bultmann. This positive movement is known as the *New Hermeneutic*.[95] Its two most articulate members in Germany are Ebeling and Fuchs. Its philosophical writer is Gadamer.[96] It goes beyond Bultman in the following:

(i). *The critical principle*. It is not only myths that modern man objects to in the New Testament but to any kind of error, historical or factual. The motto here is, "faith elaborates," and the interpreter of the New Testament must spot all such elaboration.

However there is another development in the New Hermeneutic that seems to go counter to this. According to Bultmann the only historical event necsssary for the kerygma is the cross. But his followers believe that

this historical basis is too small. So they have tried to find a broader historical base and started what is called "The New Quest for the Historical Jesus." Further, it was felt that Bultmann worked with too positivistian idea of history, but history in the twentieth century is not considered so positivistic or scientific. The influential book causing this change of mind was that of the British philosopher, R. G. Collingwood (*The Idea of History*, 1946). This view of history lessens the tension between history and faith which was so characteristic of Bultmann's theology.

(ii). *The hermeneutic principle*. The New Hermeneutic claims that the proper translation of the Greek word for hermeneutics should be singular and not plural. However, the entire role of hermeneutics (we shall continue to use the plural) is now reversed. Historically hermeneutics meant the various rules given for interpreting ancient documents. Sacred Hermeneutics listed the special rules for interpreting Holy Scripture.

In the tradition of Heidegger, hermeneutics now means how the existent (the *Dasein* — Heidegger's existential word for a person) sees or understands his own world and experience and sets this out in speech. This speech is then his hermeneutics of his world and experience. Hermeneutics in the traditional sense is now a subdivision of this newer concept of hermeneutics.

The New Hermeneutic claims that its new view of hermeneutics is not just for Biblical scholarship, but is really a philosophy within itself containing its own theory of knowledge (epistemology) and the basis for a new integration of the liberal arts for the university curriculum.

(iii). *The language principle*. The New Hermeneutic moves away from Bultmann's simple division between decisions that lead to authenticity and self-understanding and decisions that lead to inauthentic existence with no self-understanding. The New Hermeneutic has really developed an existential theory of language. The whole task of preaching from the original study of the text of Scripture to the delivered sermon is to be done within the context of this new theory of existential language. Instead of using the word *encounter (Begegnung)* for man's response to God, and God's response in the act of decision or faith, it uses the word *speech-event (Sprachgeschehen* or *Sprachereignis)*. Although in many ways the scholars of the New Hermeneutic will do exegesis in the traditional

Protestant manner of the past one hundred years, in other ways they will make radical departures in view of their existential theory of language.

Summary: The various efforts to understand the Bible have now been surveyed. It has not been our purpose to refute each of these methods here suggested, as that in principle is involved in the next chapter. In this following chapter we define and defend what we believe to be the conservative Protestant method of Biblical interpretation for we deem it the only adequate one to unlock the meaning of Sacred Writ. We believe it was the essential method of our Lord, of His Apostles, and all others who have been successful in understanding the pages of God's Holy Word.

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Chapter III

THE PROTESTANT SYSTEM OF HERMENEUTICS

A. Inspiration: The Foundation

The divine inspiration of the Bible is the foundation of historic Protestant hermeneutics and exegesis. With the Jews Protestants accept the inspiration of the Old Testament, and with the Roman Catholic and Eastern Oriental Churches they accept the inspiration of the New Testament. Protestants differ from Orthodox groups in rejecting the Apocrypha.

Historic Protestant interpretation shares much in common with the classicists in that it has documents coming from antiquity in ancient languages, and in terms of the cultures of those times. Both the Biblical interpreter and the classicist have the problem of determining the text, of translating, and of stating ancient concepts in their modern counterparts. For example, the classicist must explain that Aristotle's word for matter (*hyle*) is not the equivalent of our word *matter*. Likewise the Biblical interpreter must take a word like soul (*psyche*) and relate it by comparison and contrast with our present usage of the word in English.

The classicist has no documents he considers inspired although he may greatly value and admire them. One life-time scholar of the classics said in the hearing of the author that his idea of heaven was a group of Greek students sitting around a seminar table reading through the Greek literature again and again. The Protestant, however, is professedly dealing with inspired documents. At the point of inspiration a new dimension for interpretation is added. This new dimension has the following features:

(i). It has a *moral* or *spiritual* aspect. There is no moral or spiritual qualification necessary to understand the classics unless a man defends the brief that only a moral man can understand great art. The spiritual requisite is, however, central in Protestantism. The Bible: being a spiritual book demands of its interpreter a minimum of spiritual qualifications which are not necessary for the classicist.

(ii) It has a *supernatural* aspect so that what is suspect in classical studies is sober history in the Biblical records. The myths and marvels of Greek mythology are taken by the classicists as inventions of the human imagination. The Protestant accepts the existence of an Almighty God who in the progress of redemption performed mighty miracles. Therefore, in interpreting his text the Protestant takes soberly the miraculous whereas the classicist rejects it in his documents—and rightly so.

(iii). It has a *revelational* aspect adding new content to old words. Granted that the bulk of New Testament vocabulary is derived from classical and *Koinē* Greek, and that many of the meanings remain unchanged in the New Testament, there is yet no question that added depth is given to words in the New Testament. We are not here defending the notion—exploded by Deissmann—that there is a special or ecclesiastical Greek. But the New Testament does add new depth, new connotations, to such words as *faith, love, mercy, redemption, salvation, heaven*, and *judgment*.

The evangelical Protestant interpreter in accepting the plenary inspiration of Scripture severs company with all forms of rationalism, e.g., neo-orthodoxy, religious liberalism, or Reformed Judaism. Many of the critical judgments of the nineteenth century are today either discarded or modified. The imposition of an evolutionary theory of religion on the Scriptures has undergone some modification and even rejection by some scholars. The archeological researches have shown that much more is sober history in the Old Testament than was previously believed. Archeology has also shown the radical contrasts of Israelitish religion with surrounding religions. The conservative trend in Old Testament studies is one of the unexpected phenomenon of the mid-twentieth century.[1]

The position of the evangelical is that only a *full-fledged, intelligent Biblicism is adequate to the present day situation in science, philosophy, psychology*, and *religion*.

Because historic Protestantism accepts the plenary inspiration of Scripture certain over-all attitudes characterize it. (i) It approaches the Bible from the spiritual dimension of faith, trust, prayer, and piety. (ii) It engages in Biblical criticism to save it from being deceived or deluded or naive. It is not foundationally anti-critical. Unfortunately some representatives of the conservative viewpoint have unenlightened opinions as to the nature and purpose of criticism, but anti-criticism is not

part of the necessary structure of evangelicalism. Evangelicalism, however, is patient and watchful when confronted with critical problems, trusting that further research and investigation will weigh the evidence in its favor. The rewards of such an approach have been many, particularly from archeological research. (iii) It exercises the utmost care and scruples to discover the true text of both Testaments, to discover the true rules of interpretation, and to apply them with the greatest of pains and care that the word of man may not be intruded into the Word of God. It therefore does not indulge in the wholesale reconstruction of texts, histories, and documents which characterizes liberalism.

B. Edification: The Goal

Not only is Protestant interpretation grounded in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, but it takes also as the counterpart of that truth the great purpose of the Bible, namely, to produce a spiritual effect in the life of the man that reads it. Augustine was not wrong when he said the guide of interpretation was *LOVE*—love to God and love to man. All the historical, doctrinal, and practical truth of the Bible is for one purpose: *to promote the spiritual prosperity of man. The Bible is not an end; it is a means*. Its purpose is first of all to make us wise unto salvation, and secondly to benefit us in our Christian life through doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:15-17). The end result is that we might be *men of God* completely equipped in good works. The prostitution of the Bible from *means* to *end* is an ever present danger for little groups who study the Bible for no other reason than to study the Bible. Such groups frequently fall prey to such spiritual maladies as Pharisaism, spiritual pride, and popishness in interpretation.

This is to say the goal of all interpretation is *spiritual results* in the listeners. Hobart correctly says that "no man does good interpretation who does not look for results in men as the final aim of his interpretation."[2] Nor can we gainsay Rowley when he wrote:

> There is yet another principle of interpretation which remains to be mentioned without which no interpretation can be adequately relevant. . . . This means that the theological interpretation of the Bible which is often called for, and which indeed is to be desired, is not sufficient. For the Bible is more than a theological book. It is a religious book; and religion is more than theology. Its study should do more than develop right views about God, man, and duty; it should nurture right relations to God.[3]

The practical significance of this is that the crowning method of preaching is the expository method. This method puts the Holy Bible at the center of the public ministry of the preacher. It is a professed acknowledgment that the only dependable source for preaching is the Scriptures. It enables the full power and pungency of the Word of God to be released among the people of God. When resigning a church a pastor gave to his people this advice for the selection of his successor which shows directly the necessity for an expository ministry: *"Do not choose a man who always preaches on isolated texts, I care not how powerful and eloquent he may be. The effect of his eloquence will be to banish a taste for the Word of God and substitute a taste for the preacher in its place."*[4]

C. The Protestant Method of Hermeneutics

(1) *Theological Perspectives*

The Protestant method of interpreting Holy Scripture is based on certain theological convictions. Belief in Holy Scripture as the Word of God means that interpretation must be seen in a theological context. All the specific rules of interpretation must be contained with a larger frame of reference, and that frame of reference is theological. Therefore before we come to specific rules the Holy Scripture must be set in its proper theological context. Certain very general theological assumptions govern the particular exegesis of Scripture and these guiding assumptions are as follows:

(i). *The clarity of Scripture*. Holy Scripture is an ancient book, a very large book, and a book with many perplexing passages. How sense is to be made out of individual passages and the Holy Scriptures as a whole is the problem of the clarity of Scripture. The Roman Catholic Church had its theory of the clarity of Scripture. In that both Christ and the Spirit mystically indwell the Roman Church, the Church shares in the mind of Christ and the Spirit. It is therefore its gift to know the meaning of Scripture and in the exercise of this gift the Roman Catholic Church solves the problem of the clarity of Scripture.

The Reformers rejected this view of the solution to the problem of the clarity of Scripture. It was Martin Luther in his work, *The Bondage of the Will*, who determined the Protestant theory of the clarity of Scripture.

Luther spoke of the external and internal clarity of Scripture. The solution to this problem is fundamental for both the theory of hermeneutics and the practice of interpretation. Luther said that the external clarity of Holy Scripture was its grammatical clarity. If an interpreter properly follows what has been called "the laws of language," or "the rights of language," he can know what the Scriptures specifically mean. This is the application of the humanists' philological method to Holy Scripture.

The internal clarity of Scripture is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart or mind of the believer, illuminating his mind to see the truth of Scripture as the truth of God. By the use of scientific philology and the illumination of the Spirit we arrive at the clarity of Scripture, and there is no need to resort to the Church.

But this does not mean the Protestant interpreter knows the meaning of everything in Holy Scripture. Farrar cites the Talmudic rule: "Teach thy tongue to say, I do not know."[5] That there are passages that are puzzling and have to date yielded to the skill of no interpreter must be candidly admitted. Lindsay has put his finger on the cause when he wrote: "The obscurity of ancient documents is far more frequently occasioned by our ignorance of multitudes of things, then so familiarly known, that a passing allusion only was needed to present a vivid picture, than any difficulties connected with the language itself."[6]

Words and sentences occur in the context of a conversation, in the context of language, and in the context of a culture. Their meaning depends in a large part to these contexts in which they occur and without that context it is either difficult or impossible to know the meaning of the words or sentences. It is therefore no great thing nor something out of the ordinary that we should have words, concepts, and sentences that puzzle us in Holy Scripture.

(ii). *Revelation as accommodated*. Holy Scripture is the truth of God accommodated to the human mind so that the human mind can assimilate it. The Scriptures were written in three known languages of man (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek). The Scriptures were written in a human or social environment and its analogies are drawn from that environment. When we learn the content of that environment we can know the meaning of the revealed analogy.

Through such accommodation the truth of God can get through to man and be a meaningful revelation. Stated another way, revelation must have an anthropomorphic character.[7]

The accommodated character of divine revelation is especially obvious in such instances as the Tabernacle and in the parabolic teaching of Christ. In both instances the human and earthly vehicle is the bearer of spiritual truth. Our understanding of the spiritual world is *analogical* (although Brunner and Niebuhr prefer the use of the word *mythical* at this point, in that theological statements are hybrids formed of some element in this world, and indicating at the same time something about God or the spiritual order; and Tillich prefers the word *symbol* by which he means a manifestation of the truth of God in terms of our world in contrast to the more literal and the more flat word, *sign*). The fact of God's almightiness is spoken of in terms of a right arm because among men the right arm is the symbol of strength or power. Pre-eminence is spoken of as sitting at God's right hand because in human social affairs the right hand position with reference to the host was the place of greatest honor. Judgment is spoken of in terms of fire because pain from burning is the most intense pain man encounters in the ordinary experiences of life. The gnawing worm is the fitting analogy for the pain that is steady, remorseless, and inescapable. Similarly the glories of heaven are described in terms of human analogies — a costly structure of gold, silver, and jewels; no tears; no death; and the tree of life. The question as to whether descriptions of hell and heaven are literal or symbolic is not the point. The point is that they are valid, analogical descriptions of inescapable realities. The particular character of those realities will become apparent in their own time.

This anthropomorphic character of Scripture is nothing against Scripture, but it is necessary for the communication of God's truth to man. This the interpreter will always keep in mind. The point has been excellently stated by Seisenberger:

> We must not be offended by anthropomorphic expressions, which seem to us out of keeping with our conception of God. It is with a well-considered design that the Holy Scripture speaks of God as of a Being resembling man, and ascribes to Him a face, eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet and the sense of smell and hearing. This is done out of consideration for man's power of comprehension; and the same is the case when the Bible represents God as loving or hating, as jealous, angry, glad, or filled with regret, dispositions which apply to God not *per affectum* but *per effectum*. They show us that God is not coldly indifferent to loyalty or disloyalty on the part of man, but notices them well. Moreover we must not forget that man is made in the image and likeness of God, and that therefore

in the divine Being there must be something analogous to the qualities of men, though in the highest perfection.[8]

The interpreter who is aware of this anthropomorphic character of the divine revelation will not be guilty of grotesque forms of literal exegesis. More than one unlettered person and cultist has taken the anthropomorphisms of the Scriptures literally and has so thought of God as possessing a body.

Before leaving this subject of accommodation of Scripture it is necessary to declare our rejection of the liberals' use of the idea of accommodation. This particular species of interpretation by accommodation comes from Semler (1725-1791). To liberalism accommodation was the evisceration or enervation of the doctrinal content of the Bible by explaining doctrinal passages as accommodations to the thought-patterns of the times of the Biblical writers. B. Bacon's work, *He Opened unto Us the Scripture*, is replete with this kind of exegesis. Thus the liberals asserted that the Scriptures were not only accommodated in form but also in matter or content. This same sort of error is true in the *nth* degree in Bultmann's theory of the mythology of the New Testament. The atonement as a vicarious sacrifice is a way in which first-century Christians thought of the cross but, it is asserted, we are not bound today to think of the cross in that manner.

(iii). *Revelation as progressive*. By progressive revelation is not meant that the Biblical revelation is a process of evolution in the cultural or religious sphere. This idea of the evolution of religion in the Scriptures was a means of denying the real revelatory content of Scripture and of undermining the uniqueness of Biblical revelation. It received a clear and classic statement in Fosdick's *The Modern Use of the Bible*.

By progressive revelation we mean that the Bible sets forth a movement of God, with the *initiative* coming from *God and not man, in which God brings man up through the* theological infancy of the Old Testament to the maturity of the New Testament. This does not mean that there are no mature ideas in Old Testament nor simple elements in the New Testament. Progressive revelation is *the general pattern of revelation*. That this is the teaching of the New Testament may be argued from the following:

(a). In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord is not instructing His disciples to *break* or *loose* the law, for he came not to break the law but to fill the law full. In his *Commentary on Matthew* (*The American Commentary on the New*

Testament) Broadus gives a magnificent exegesis of this text (Matt. 5:17-20). Christ came to bring out the wider, larger, higher significance of the law. The law was proper as far as it went, but it did not go far enough. It taught a basic morality for the children of Israel but our Lord elevates the law to a higher level of motivation and spirituality. No abstinence from killing will do, but man must now act on the higher dictates of love. Refraining from cursing is not enough, for we must now look at the full sanctity of a promise. The morality of the Ten Commandments was a necessary point of beginning in man's ethical, spiritual, and theological development, but the Sermon on the Mount summons believers in God to a much higher level of ethical conduct.

(b). In his Epistle to the Galatians Paul divides up the dealings of God into the period before Christ and after Christ. The period before Christ is designated as a period of childhood, tutelage, immaturity, "grammar school education." In the fulness of time Christ came and with him comes the full revelation with its maturity of doctrine and morality. The Old Testament was a period of learning the theological alphabet, of carnal ordinances and elementary teaching. In Christ the fulness of revelation comes, and God's sons are reckoned as mature heirs.

(c). Exceptionally clear in relation to this point under discussion is Hebrews 1:1-2. We are told that God has two great revelations, one of which was given through prophets to Israel, and the other through a Son to the Church. Three adverbs commence the book of Hebrews (in the Greek text) and they each describe part of the manner in which God spoke through the prophets to Israel. First, the Old Testament was uneven in its progress through *time*. The revelations came sporadically. The *method* of revelation greatly varied. We have such a diversity as the law written with the finger of God, and Balaam rebuked by the voice of his animal. The *period* of this revelation is the ancient times *(palai)*, that is to say, the time of man's theological infancy and youth. In contrast to the first verse is the second which asserts that God has spoken his final word through His Son. God spoke clearly, directly, and conclusively through the highest possible organ of divine revelation, His Son, and so brought into existence his full revelation, the New Testament.

It is the additional teaching of the book of Hebrews that the Old Testament revelation was a *material* revelation, the spiritual truth being encased in earthly and cultural shells, and one of *types, shadows*, and

parables — whereas the New Testament is a *spiritual* revelation, and contains the substance, reality, and fulfilment of the Old Covenant forms.

This perspective of progressive revelation is very important to the interpreter. He will expect the full revelation of God in the New Testament. He will not force New Testament meanings into the Old, yet he will be able to more fully expound the Old knowing its counterparts in the New. He will adjust his sights to the times, customs, manners, and morals of the people of God at any given state in the Old Testament period of revelation, and he will be aware of the partial and elementary nature of the Old Testament revelation. He will take Augustine's words *(Distingue tempora et concordabis Scriptura)* "distinguish the times and you will harmonize Scripture" as a guide so as not to create a contradiction in Scripture by forcing a New Testament standard of morality or doctrine upon an Old Testament passage. Monogamy is a distinct emphasis of the New Testament and must not be urged as a contradiction to the polygamy of the Patriarchs who apparently had no revelation at this point.

Progressive revelation in no manner qualifies the doctrine of inspiration, and it in no way implies that the Old Testament is less inspired. It states simply that the fullness of revelation is in the New Testament. This does not mean that there is no clear Old Testament teaching nor that its predictions are nullified. On the other hand, the heart of Christian theology is found in the New Testament which contains the clearer revelation of God. Christian theology and ethics must take their primary rootage in the New Testament revelation.

(iv). *Scripture interprets Scripture* (or, "obscure passages in Scripture must give way to clear passages"). There is no question that there are passages in Holy Scripture that are very obscure for modern man which may have been very clear to the authors of the passages. Or there may be some doctrinal suggestions in Holy Scripture that we do not know how to bring out into their full clarity of meaning. The Roman Catholic Church claimed that it possessed the mind of Christ and the mind of the Spirit in its teaching magisterium so that it could render obscure doctrines clear. The Reformers rejected the claim of the Roman Catholic Church that it had the gift of grace and illumination to know what the Holy Scripture taught. In place of an appeal to the teaching magisterium of the Church, the Reformers proclaimed that Scripture interprets Scripture.

In this expression the word "Scripture" is used in a double sense. As the first word of the formula, Scripture means the total Scripture; in the second occurrence it means a part of Scripture, either a verse or a passage. Restated the principle would read: "The entire Holy Scripture is the context and guide for understanding the particular passages of Scripture." If this is true then no appeal is necessary to the teaching magisterium of the Church.

In the concrete task of writing Christian theology this principle means that the theologian must basically rest his theology on those passages that are clear and not upon those that are obscure. Or to phrase it yet another way, "Everything essential to salvation and Christian living is clearly revealed in Scripture." Essential truth is not tucked away in some incidental remark in Scripture nor in some passage that remains ambiguous in its meaning even after being subjected to very thorough research.

There is no question that much mischief has been done with Scripture in the history of interpretation by interpreters who claimed to have much truth in obscure passages of Scripture. Saul's encounter with the witch at Endor is an obscure incident and from which we can draw no certain conclusions about witchcraft. Paul's reference to baptizing for the dead (I Cor. 15:29) is so enigmatic to us today that no doctrine should ever be built upon it. Or Paul might be saying something like this: "You people in the Church at Corinth who claim that the day of the Lord is past, why do you practice proxy-baptism which presumes that the day of the Lord has not come?" In either case no doctrine of proxy-baptism can be taught in the Church from this one obscure verse.

In John 3:5 our Lord says we must be born anew by the Spirit and by water. Nowhere in the text is the meaning of water specified. The closest we can come to the meaning of water is what water might have meant to a Jew when used in this context. The most obvious meaning would be "a cleansing." But to import into this text a whole theology of baptismal regeneration is not defensible. Perhaps the New Testament does teach baptismal regeneration, but it cannot be established from the occurrence of the word "water" in one text.

Cardinal Newman defends the Roman Catholic concept of the nun from the case of Anna in the Temple (Luke 2:36-38).[9] From this one passing

reference to this woman mentioned here can no doctrine of nuns be justifiably defended.

Others who err at this point are those who approach I Peter 2:24 ("by whose stripes we are healed") with a detailed theology of divine healing. Here something is imported into the text that just is not there. The text does not univocally say "that just as Jesus bore our sins on the cross so that our sins may be forgiven, He also bore our diseases on the cross so that our sicknesses may be healed." That the expression is a metaphorical one speaking of the salvation of the soul is far more defensible than the notion that the clause teaches healing of our diseases. Peter gives no *extensive* discussion of healing in the atonement.

The real doctrinal element of Scripture is to be found where doctrinal topics are dealt with extensively. For example Romans 1-3 is an extensive discussion of the doctrine of sin; John 5 contains an extensive discussion of the deity of Christ; I Corinthians 15 has a long discussion on the theme of resurrection. Galatians discusses in much detail the relationship of the Law to the Gospel. It is in these great doctrinal passages that we get our stance for handling the occasional remarks on these doctrines in the other parts of Scripture.

(v). *The analogy of faith*.[10] Horne defines the analogy of faith to be "the constant and perpetual harmony of Scripture in the fundamental points of faith and practice deduced from those passages in which they were discussed by the inspired penmen either directly or expressly, and in clear, plain, and intelligible language."[11]

The basic assumption here is that there is one system of truth or theology contained in Scripture, and therefore all doctrines must cohere or agree with each other. That means that the interpretations of specific passages must not contradict the total teaching of Scripture on a point. This is similar to saying that Scripture interprets Scripture *(scriptura sacra sui ipsius inter pres)*. It also overlaps the problem of the unity of Holy Scripture. The diversity of Scripture is uniformly recognized. But beyond or behind this diversity is there any principle which expresses the unity of Scripture?[12]

The problem of the unity of theology, or the unity of Scripture, or the possibility of system in theology, is one of the most debated of modern issues in theology. This discussion divides itself into the following typical theories:

(a). *Theologies but no theology*. In his book, *The Religion of the New Testament*, Parsons argues that there is no one theology in the New Testament but several. This is not a new position but reflects the older conviction of New Testament scholars that we have a Johannine, Petrine, and Pauline type of theology. Parsons is by no means alone in this conviction but represents the viewpoint of a great number of Biblical and theological scholars. If this position is correct then there can be no analogy of faith.

(b). *Formal, systematic unity*. It was assumed by the authors of The Westminster Confession of Faith that there is but one system of theology contained in Holy Scriptures and they tried to summarize this system in their Confession. To put it another way, *systematic theology* — in the strict sense of the word "system" — is possible. In that the Scriptures do not tell us the whole mind of God, and in that even regenerate man is imperfect in his reasoning, there can be no completed system of theology. But the task of the theologian is to systematize the teachings of Holy Scripture the best he can. He is to aim at a final system of theology deduced from Sacred Scripture even though he knows that he could never in this life attain this final system.

(c). *Unity of perspective*. Some theologians believe that there is such diversity in Scripture that no system is possible. Rather, the unity of Scripture and therefore the unity of theology is in the persistent perspectives in Scripture. That is, God is always holy, true, and powerful; or, that man is always sinful; or that man lives by God's grace alone; etc. Theology is then unified around perspectives and attitudes like this and not by any formal system or any kind of systematic theology. Representative of this position is Torm *(Hermeneutik des Neuen Testament)*.

I presume that Bultmann would speak of the uniformity of the *existential perspective* in the New Testament. He too would agree that there are theologies in the New Testament but no unitary theology as such. The closest thing to a unity of thought is the manner in which John and Paul begin to reflect in their writings existential interpretations. If there is then any unity in the New Testament for Bultmann it must be in its common existential intention.

(d). *Theology of the cross*. The expression, "the theology of the cross," stems from Luther. He opposes it to the "theology of glory." The scholastics of the Middle Ages wrote their immense *summas* (catalogs) of

theology as if they were saints in heaven doing research in the library of the New Jerusalem. But Luther sees that sin has fractured man's existence. Just as the cross puzzles us and is a scandal to us, and yet we believe in it for our salvation, so our knowledge of God is puzzling and obscure. Theologians can write only a theology of the cross and not a theology of glory.

Lutheran theologians believe that the attempt of the Reformed theologians to write a systematic theology manifests too much rationalism in Christian theology. Although Lutheran theologians do not believe theology is a series of disconnected doctrines they tend to write more topically than systematically reflecting their belief in the theology of the cross.

In neo-orthodoxy in particular there has been a new restatement of the theology of the cross and a new attempt to present a Christological unity of theology. For example, both Barth and Brunner do not believe in the older notion of serious *systematic* theology. (Although Tillich calls his theology a systematic theology he is using the word systematic more in the sense of correlation of kerygma and theology, or theology and philosophy, and not in the older sense.) Neo-orthodox theologians have not only been influenced by Luther but also by Kierkegaard. Hegel attempted to formulate a universal philosophy which Kierkegaard called "the system." Kierkegaard opposed the concept of system because finite man, existential man, cannot achieve a system.

Neo-orthodoxy has a *radial* and *Christological* theory of the unity of theology. Christ is the center of Christian theology and all doctrines are to be related to Christ. Thus all doctrines are unified in their radial relationship (like spokes on a wheel) to Christ and not in terms of a network of dogmas forming a system.

Both Luther and Calvin claimed to have made Christ the center of theology. But, according to Barth, they did not really follow through on this belief. Barth intends to do this (and so does Brunner). So Barth's doctrine of revelation is Christological, his doctrine of sin is Christological, his doctrine of man is Christological. That is, the key to these doctrines is somehow to be found in Christ. Hence Barth has been called a *Christomonist*.

In summary of this discussion three more observations are in order: (a) A theologian may be working with elements in each of these theories of

theological unity. He may emphasize one but include elements of the other. One may believe (as I do) that there is a system of truth underneath the theological statements of Holy Scripture but that this does not exclude a very concentrated use of the Christoligical principle. (b) There are limits to any kind of systematization. A theologian may achieve a high consistency in his theology which I think men like Tillich or Bultmann have, but all theologies are eventually theologies of the cross. (Or put in logical terms, we may try to axiomatize Christian theology and so make it a perfect deductive system but in our sinnerhood and finitude we cannot achieve this goal.) (c) We cannot agree with Parsons or any other theologians who would fragmatize the Scriptures into conflicting theological chunks. If this is the case, the Scriptures have really lost any normative role in the writing of Christian theology.

(vi). *The unity of the meaning of Scripture*. It has been said that the Scriptures are like a piano or a violin. An artist may play any composition he wishes on either of these instruments. And so Holy Scripture is such a big book and such a diverse book it lends itself rather easily to the person who wants to impose on it some particular kind of theology.

An interpreter who imposes such an interpretation on Scripture (*eisogesis*, bringing a meaning into Scripture as opposed to *exegesis* in which the meaning of Scripture is brought out) may not realize at all that he is asserting the plurality of the sense of Scripture. But this is what he really asserts.

In emphasizing the unity of the sense of Scripture we do not mean to reduce the meaning of Scripture to a narrow literalism, to an ignoration of the prophetic and typological depths of Scripture. We mean to oppose certain hermeneutically outrageous ways of interpreting the Scripture such as:

(a). *Allegory*. A study of the commentaries or use of Scripture among the early Church Fathers reveals a fantastic use of the imagination in finding New Testament truth or spiritual truth or theological truth in the Old Testament by the use of allegorical interpretation. This is really an assertion of the plural meaning of Scripture. Believing in the unity of the sense of Scripture eliminates all allegorizing of Scripture, ancient or modern.

(b). *Cults*. Metaphysical cults, theosophical cults, divine science cults, pantheistic cults all base their interpretation of Holy Scripture on the

theory that the meaning of Scripture is plural. The first meaning is the ordinary historical or grammatical one; and the second meaning is the one the cultist brings to Scripture from the particular metaphysical system or religious system he is pushing. Once again the emphasis on the unity of the sense of Scripture puts an end to the cultic abuse of Scripture.

(c). *Protestant Pietism*. Many devout Christians believe that God speaks to them each day out of Scriptures and so gives them direction and guidance for the decisions of that day. Hence the Scripture is read in anticipation of *specific* directions emerging out of their reading of the Scripture that pertain *directly* to their lives and their decisions. Scripture is not only the fountain head of all theological truth and God's Word through the ages, but its phrases or sentences or verses are intended to be specific ways in which God can speak to each Christian each day he reads his Scripture in the light of the decisions and situations that Christian is confronted with that particular day.

For example, a very pious Protestant might be in a place of indecision whether he should take a certain trip or not. In his devotions he reads how the Church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas away on a missionary trip. So this Christian feels that God is speaking to him in that passage and it is now God's will that he should take the proposed trip.

This is a very direct assertion of plurality in the meaning of Scripture. (i) The first sense is what the record means of Paul and Barnabas setting out on a missionary trip. (ii) The second meaning is that God is telling this pious Christian of the twentieth century to take a trip.

But the pious Christian who does this has no idea that he is asserting a plural meaning of all Scripture. He does not know that much Catholic dogma is supported by allegory which is based on a plural meaning of Scripture; nor does he know that many cults base their theology in Scripture by the use of plural meanings in Scriptural texts. In short the Protestant who uses his Holy Scripture this way is unwittingly in some very bad theological company.

(vii). *Interpretation and application*. The true purpose of Holy Scripture is to be God's immediate earthly instrument for spiritually affecting mankind. The great classical verse on the inspiration of the Scripture (II Tim. 3:16), indicates what Scripture is to do to man. It is to teach, reprove, correct, and train in righteousness. Its goal is a man of God who is equipped spiritually and ready for every good work.

For this reason Barth has insisted in his hermeneutics that there is one bound from interpretation to application. Or to put it another way, interpretation intends application, or, teaching intends obedience, or, faith drives towards works. All of this is right, for Holy Scripture is not a theoretical book or a book of theological abstractions, but a book that intends to have a mighty influence on the lives of its readers.

But here we must remember the old adage: "Interpretation is one, application is many." This means that there is only one meaning to a passage of Scripture which is determined by careful study. But a given text or a given passage may speak to a number of problems or issues. Five or six different kinds of sermons could be preached from the text, "You must be born again" (John 3:7). What application the preacher makes of the text is determined by the purposes of the sermon. But the preacher must always distinguish the initial primary meaning of the text from the particular application he makes with it.

There is a real "homiletical temptation" at this point. The preacher wants the text to be relevant and contemporary. In order to achieve these purposes he may distort the text in some manner, or misrepresent it, or use it more for a motto than a point of Scriptural reference for his sermon. This can be done in such a way that it gives the congregation the false impression that his sermon expresses the original meaning of the text.

It is therefore mandatory for a preacher to realize that interpretation of the meaning of the text is one thing, and the range of application is another, and that he must always keep these two matters separate. And this warning should not be made only for preachers. In the devotional use of Scripture there is again the temptation to presume that a devotional thought or two gathered from the text is the original meaning of the text.

(2) The Philological Principle

In recent literature, philology means the technical and comparative study of words. It is roughly equivalent to linguistics. But in the larger historical context philology meant a total program in understanding a piece of literature. This included linguistics but also much more — such as history, cultural surroundings, and literary criticism. We are using the word *philological* in this second sense.[13]

Sometimes the philological method is called the historical method, or the grammatical method, or the historico-grammatical method, and sometimes the literal method where it is contrasted with the allegorical or mystical methods. It may also be called the critical method. By being critical, hermeneutical theory has become very self-conscious of what hermeneutics is all about and what criteria are necessary to insure faithful interpretation of documents. Any interpretation of a given passage or book of Holy Scripture must be given an adequate justification. Or to put it another way, the basis for accepting a certain interpretation must be made explicit. "Critical" does not mean the same as "sceptical," just as "academic" is not necessarily the opposite of the "spiritual." In essence, to be critical in the exegesis of Scripture means to bring into one's methodology the kinds of procedures that are characteristic of good scholarship. Devotional commentaries have a place in the general edification of the Church but they must never be considered as scholarly commentaries. The persistent problem of scholarship in any field is also true of Biblical scholarship: all scholarly work is done by men, and men who are not pure scholars but have their presuppositions, or biases, or favoritisms, or hostilities, or in recent hippie language "hang-ups" (or being "up tight"). While commending scholarship as the critical function in the interpretation of Scripture, we do not affirm that such scholarship is free from prejudices which are common to all men, scholars or laymen.

Competent interpretation of Holy Scripture is done in a context, the context of the principles of scholarship which have not been arbitrarily chosen but have emerged from the scholarly standards and procedures of our universities since their creation in the thirteenth century. Philological interpretation of Scripture means that the Biblical interpreter does very much the same sort of thing that any competent scholar would do working in the same general area. In Chapter 1 we have listed under point 5 those elements which an interpreter of Holy Scripture must have in addition to the ordinary tools of scholarship.

The true philological spirit, or critical spirit, or scholarly spirit, in Biblical interpretation has as its goal to discover the original meaning and intention of the text. Its goal is *exegesis* — to lead the meaning out of the text and shims *eisogesis* — bringing a meaning to the text. Or as Luther put it: "*Das ist der beste Lehrer, der seine Meinung nicht in die sondern aus der Schrift*

bringt" ("The best teacher is the one who does not bring his meaning into the Scripture but gets his meaning from the Scripture").[14]

It is very difficult for any person to approach the Holy Scriptures free from prejudices and assumptions which distort the text. The danger of having a set theological system is that in the interpretation of Scripture the system tends to govern the interpretation rather than the interpretation correcting the system. The most persistent criticism of Bultmann and Tillich is that they have adopted certain theological and philosophical principles in such a set, rigid manner that it is very difficult for them to entertain an interpretation of a passage of Scripture that does not agree with their system.

Illustrative of how one's theological position can distort interpretation is the manner in which the parable of the Ten Virgins is treated. Arminian theologians use it to show that Christians may fall from grace. Advocates of the concept of a second blessing (i.e., a second major work of God in the believer following the one of his salvation) see here the proof for a second blessing. Calvinists use the text to show that there may be profession of faith without really participating in salvation. Others try to derive some doctrine of the Holy Spirit from the passage on the basis that oil is the symbol of the Spirit. Others see it as part of a prophetic program to occur in some yet future event. To the contrary it is a simple lesson on the concept of spiritual preparedness, or readiness, or as Jeremias takes it, of repentance.[15]

Calvin said that the Holy Scripture is not a tennis ball that we may bounce around at will. Rather it is the Word of God whose teachings must be learned by the most impartial and objective study of the text.

The most fundamental presupposition of the philological method in Biblical exegesis is that all exegesis must be done in the original languages if it is to be competent and trustworthy exegesis. It was the humanists who came out of the Renaissance (that movement in western culture beginning in the fourteenth century in which western culture moved from the medieval period to the modern period and whose original impetus is associated with Petrarch, 1304-1374) that called the scholars back to the Greek and Latin texts of the great classics of the Greek and Roman world. Luther, Melanchthon, Bucer and Calvin were deeply influenced by the scholarship of the new humanism. This lead them away from dependence upon the Latin Vulgate, the Bible of the Christian west for a thousand

years, to the study of the Hebrew and Greek testaments. Calvin's *Commentaries* are considered the first real scientific, philological exegesis of Scripture in the history of the Church.

The great doctrines of our Christian faith can be established in any responsible or competent manner only by the interpretation from the original languages. This is a principle of all sound scholarship. Any philosopher posing as an authority on Plato must be able to read the Greek texts and any authority on the philosophy of Kant must be able to read German. The interpreter who interprets Scripture only in his modern langauge is always working with a linguistic veil between himself and original texts. And he never knows how thin or how thick this veil is.

At this point it is possible to give a thousand illustrations showing how a person without a knowledge of the original languages is really at a loss to do accurate interpretation. We shall be content with just one. In Ephesians 5:1 Paul exhorts Christians to be "imitators of God." The person who knows only English has no idea what is behind the concept of imitation. Unfortunately in English *imitation* usually means a cheap copy of the genuine article, or the artificial imitation of some outstanding personality. The concept of imitation is one of the fundamental concepts of the theory of art in classical times. In fact the first theory of art pronounced by Plato is that art is the imitation of nature. There is also the concept that *this* world is the imitation of a *heavenly* or *spiritual* world. The only reality or truth in this world is, therefore, that which is a copy of the other world. In Plato in particular there is the concept of the imitation of God. If God is the perfection, the model, the archetype of all things, then true religion is the imitation of God. There is also the imitation of God taught in the Old Testament: "and be ye holy for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44-45; repeated in I Peter 1:16). There is also the imitation of God taught in the Sermon on the Mount: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). What appears in the English text of Ephesians 5:1 as a spiritual truism is discovered to be in virtue of a knowledge of the Greek one of the great concepts of both the Greek and Hebrew traditions.

However, this is not the entire story of the use of the Scriptures in the Church. It was also a passion of the Reformers to translate the Scriptures into the language of the peoples. Luther is famous for his great translation of the Holy Scriptures into German. He did the New Testament himself

while in "captivity" in the Wartburg castle or fortress. He was the chairman of a group of scholars who translated the Old Testament. Both Luther and Melanchthon insisted that the entire school system of Germany be revised so that the lay Christian could read the German Bible for himself. Luther also broke with the scholarly tradition of writing everything in Latin. He began to publish his materials in German. This was again his desire to get Biblical and theological materials in the German language for the lay Christian.[16]

Calvin wrote his theology in Latin *(The Institutes of the Christian Religion)*. However with his own hand he made a masterful translation of his book into the French language. This is again in keeping with the spirit of the Reformation to get theological materials into the language of the people.

Although the Reformers set the right standard in the Church that Christian scholarship at its best must work with the Hebrew and Greek languages, they did not want theology or Biblical interpretation to become a new Protestant priestcraft. They did not want to make Scripture the book *only* for scholars. Every Christian can profit from reading his Scriptures in his national language. In fact there is a great deal he can get from Scripture without a knowledge of the original languages. There is no intention to take Scripture away from the lay person by insisting that competent interpretation can be done only with the original languages. The lay person may read his Scriptures and learn its history, be blessed and edified by its spiritual content, and come to know much of the essential theology of Holy Scripture all in the use of the translated Scripture.

(1). *Literal*. We use the word "literal" in its dictionary sense: ". . . the natural or usual construction and implication of a writing or expression; following the ordinary and apparent sense of words; not allegorical or metaphorical" *(Webster's New International Dictionary)*. We also use it in its historical sense, specifically, the priority that Luther and Calvin gave to literal, grammatical, or philological exegesis of Scripture in contrast to the Four Fold Theory of the Roman Catholic scholars (historical meaning, moral meaning, allegorical meaning, eschatological meaning) developed during the Middle Ages and historically derived from Augustine's Three Fold Theory. It was particularly the allegorical use of the Old Testament that the Reformers objected to, and the manner in which Roman Catholic dogma was re-enforced by allegorical interpretation. Hence the "literal"

directly opposes the "allegorical." This was programmatic with Luther and Calvin, and it does not mean that these men had no lapses back into allegorical interpretation.

The accusation so frequent in current theological literature that Fundamentalism is a *literalism* is not at all what we have in mind when we use the word "literal". The word is ambiguous. To some scholars the word "literal" means "letterism" and this is really what they mean when they say Fundamentalists are literalists. Others have thought that orthodoxy in theology is a literalism in the sense that it attaches almost magical or supernatural powers to the very words of Scripture. Some lingusts believe that the literal meaning of a word is determined by counting. Ordinarily we think that the word "bear" means an animal in its literal sense; and that a speculator in the stock market who is called a "bear" is a bear by metaphor. But if the population uses the word "bear" three times more frequently for the stock speculator than for the animal then the literal meaning of "bear" is the stock speculator.

Associating certain words with such things as nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc., is called *designation*. Every language represents a certain system of designation. Language also reflects several levels of designation. Ordinary conversation reflects popular, ordinary, common-sense designation; a learned lecture on physics represents a techincal designation; a poem represents metaphorical designation. The word "literal" in the theory of hermeneutics implies an understanding of this process of designation. It takes as the primary range of designation the customary, the usual, the socially-acknowledged designations. Thus the literal meaning of a word is its designation in the common stock of the language.

The older books on hermeneutics used the expression *usus loquendi*. This means that the meaning of a word is determined how the word was used in ordinary conversation. *Designation* is a better modern semantical term to use in developing a theory of interpretation, rather than *usus loquendi*.

When we assert that the literal meaning of a word or a sentence is the basic, customary, socially designated meaning we do not underestimate the complexity of language. There is a certain parallel between the thrusts, faults, and obtrusions of rocks in geology and the structure of languages. Languages are built up through centuries of use and become

laminated and encrusted. In asserting that hermeneutics must start with the literal meaning of words this assertion is made in the light of the complexity of language.

The spiritual, mystical, allegorical, or metaphorical usages of language reflect layers of meaning built on top of the literal meanings of a language. To interpret Scripture literally is not to be committed to a "wooden literalism," nor to a "letterism," nor to a neglect of the nuances that defy any "mechanical" understanding of language. Rather, it is to commit oneself to a starting point and that starting point is to understand a document the best one can in the context of the normal, usual, customary, tradition range of designation which includes "facit" understanding.

Horne has a very excellent definition of what is meant by *literal* in *literal* interpretation:

> Further, in common life, no prudent and *conscientious* person, who either commits his sentiments to writing or utters anything, intends that a diversity of meanings should be attached to what he writes or says; and, consequently, neither his readers, nor those who hear him, affix to it any other than the true and obious sense. . . . *The Literal Sense* of any place of Scripture is that which the words signify, or require, in their natural and proper acceptation, without any trope [figure of speech], metaphor, or figure, and abstracted from mystic meaning.[17]

Craven's excellent comments are as follows:

> *Normal* is used instead of literal. . . as more expressive of the correct idea. No terms could have been chosen so unfit to designate the two great schools of prophetic exegetes than *literal* and *spiritual*. These terms are not antithetical, nor are they in any proper sense significant of the peculiarities of the respective systems they are employed to characterize. They are positively misleading and confusing. *Literal* is not opposed to *spiritual* but to *figurative; spiritual* is an antithesis on the one hand to *material* and on the other to *carnal* (in a bad sense). *The Literalist . . .* is not one who denies that *figurative* language, that *symbols* are used in prophecy, nor does he deny that great *spiritual* truths are set forth therein; his position is simply, that the prophecies are to be *normally* interpreted (i.e., according to the received laws of language) as any other utterances are interpreted — that which is manifestly literal being regarded as literal, and that which is manifestly figurative being so regarded. The position of the *Spiritualist . . .* is not that which is properly indicated by the term. He is one who holds that certain portions are to be *normally* interpreted, other portions are to be regarded as having a *mystical . . .* sense. Thus for instance, Spiritualists . . . do not deny that when the Messiah is spoken of as "a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief," the prophecy is to be normally *interpreted;* they affirm, however, that when He is spoken of as coming "in the clouds of heaven" the language is to be "spiritually" (mystically) interpreted. . . . The terms properly expressive of the schools are *normal* and *mystical*.[18]

The reader will note in these citations the emphasis on "natural," "proper," "obvious," and "normal." These are but other ways of indicating *usus loquendi* or of semantic designation within a speech culture. This is not *letterism* which fails to recognize nuances, plays on words, hidden metaphors, figures of speech, lamination of meanings in a word, etc. Nor is it the alleged "wooden literalism" which is supposed to characterize orthodox, Fundamentalist, or conservative hermeneutics. As previously indicated this is a continuation of the hermeneutics of the Reformers. What is surprising in contemporary Roman Catholic Biblical scholarship is how much of the hermeneutics of the Reformers Roman Catholic scholars now use themselves; and how embarrassed they are with the allegorical excesses of previous generations of Roman Catholic scholarship and especially the use of allegory by the papacy in its recent pronouncements. In the declaration of the bodily assumption of Mary (by Pius XII, in 1950, in *Munificentissimus Deus*) the Scriptural support was assigning certain verses in the Psalms which spoke of Israel as references to Mary which was obviously an allegorical and not a philological exegesis of these verses. On the other hand the Reformers were not pledged to a slavish literalism, for Calvin himself wrote that "to show themselves men of letters, these good doctors prohibit even the least departure from the literal signification. . . . If this canon of interpretation be admitted, all the light of faith will be overwhelmed in crudest barbarism."[19]

In defense of the literal basis of Biblical hermeneutics it may be argued that:

(a). *The literal method of interpretation is the usual practice in the interpretation of literature*. Whenever we read a book, an essay, or a poem we presume the literal sense in the document until the nature of the literature may force us to another level. This is the only conceivable method of beginning or commencing to understand literature of all kinds. The non-literal is always a secondary meaning which presumes an already existing literal understanding of literature. This previous stratum of language is the *necessary* point of departure for the interpretation of all literature. If we attempt to read some oriental, mystical book we shall first attempt to understand it literally and when we see that procedure is not doing justice to the text we then forsake the literal program for a mystical, allegorical, or metaphorical one.

Therefore, without prejudging the nature of Holy Scripture one way or another (whether there is a deeper or profounder meaning expressed typologically, allegorically, mythologically, or existentially), we must start our interpretation of Holy Scripture from the stance of literal or philological interpretation.

(b). *All secondary meanings of documents depend upon the literal stratum of language*. Parables, types, allegories, symbols, figures of speech, myths and fables presume that there is a level of meaning in language prior to the kind of language this kind of literature is. The parable of the sower is understood only within the context of literal "farm" language. The symbolism of a lion is based upon what is asserted about lions in literal speech. Incense as a symbol of prayer is understood again within the context of the use of incense in daily life and expressed in the literal language of daily conversation. The typological or perhaps allegorical way Paul speaks of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in the book of Galatians is based upon the historical and factual statements about these people which in turn reflects the literal stratum of language. In that all non-literal statements are "take-offs" from the more original, more primitive literal langauge, then the literal exegesis is the point of departure in all interpretation, Biblical or extra-Biblical.

(c). *Only in the priority of literal exegesis is there control on the exegetical abuse of Scripture*. By the "exegetical abuse of Scripture" we mean all interpretation in the history of the Church and in the histories of cults which forces strange and un-Biblical meanings into Scripture by some form of allegorical interpretation (meaning by the "allegorical" any kind of reading into Scripture secondary or tertiary or even quaternary meanings).

In the history of the allegorical interpretation of Scripture it is not denied that there is a literal, historical, or grammatical sense to Scripture, but it is depreciated. It is the "fleshly" or the "superficial" understanding of Scripture. However in making such a value judgment the allegorists are generally blind as to how much literal interpretation they actually employ to get their own allegorical program moving.

Furthermore there are many kinds of spiritualizing or allegorizing of the Scriptures. The Church Fathers used an uncontrolled allegorical method to find Christian theology in the Old Testament. The Roman Catholic theologians used some version of allegorical interpretation to

justify their sacramentarianism and hierarchy from the Old Testament. Although some cults are deplorably literalistic in their understanding of Scripture, others of a more metaphysical or theosophical bent are given to strange allegorizing of Scriptures. For centuries the parables of the Gospels were not properly understood because they were given allegorical and not literal interpretations. How do we resolve the competition among the various allegorical schools of interpretation? There is really only one way: grant the prior right to literal interpretation of Scripture, and the right of literal interpretation to act as judge and umpire of any proposed allegorical or mystical interpretation of Scripture.

To rest one's theology on the secondary strata of meanings is to invite interpretation by imagination. That which supplies the imagination with its content is unfortunately too often non-Biblical ideas or materials. The only sure way to know the meaning of Holy Scripture is to anchor interpretation in literal exegesis. Literal interpretation is not the *Charybdis* of *letterism* nor the *Scylla* of *allegorism*. It is rather the effective, meaningful, and necessary control for the protection of the right interpretation of Scripture. This may be said even stronger. It is the theologian's or interpreter's *responsibility* to guard the use of Holy Scripture by the hedge of literal exegesis.[20]

There are three points at which the program for the priority of literal interpretation may be misunderstood and these points must be briefly commented upon:

(a). The program of the literal interpretation of Scripture does not overlook the figures of speech, the symbols, the types, the allegories that as a matter of fact are to be found in Holy Scripture. It is not a blind letterism nor a wooden literalism as is so often the accusation.

(b). It is not true that a belief in verbal inspiration of Scripture implies letterism or wooden literalism in hermeneutics. It is hard to understand why this accusation is made but it is a frequent one in theological literature. The belief in verbal inspiration does not mean, for example, that this belief makes the interpreter interpret the book of Revelation in a completely literalistic fashion. Verbal inspiration is a theory about the origin of Holy Scripture but it settles nothing in and of itself about theory of hermeneutics.

It must be admitted that some very orthodox people think that verbal inspiration and literal interpretation belong together for to them "literal

interpretation" means to take the Bible "as it is." Any other kind of interpretation is "tampering with God's Word." Their intention is genuine, but their idea of how Scripture is to be protected is both naive and wrong.

(c). Behind all discussions of hermeneutics or interpretation, about Scripture or about literature in general, are some very sophisticated theories of language. In philosophy, theory of language has become one of the major themes of modern philosophy. The defense of literal interpretation may appear to some reader informed about language theory that we presume that understanding language on the literal level is a matter of simple assertion or simple designation. Such pioneers in this field as Urban and Cassirer have shown how much metaphor or "dead metaphor" (such as the psychological word "attract" used as if it were a physical force in the statement "a magnet attracts nails") penetrates even the literal level of language. We are not unaware of this additional complex factor in language nor of the newer ideas of language dating from the Vienna Circle but a discussion of these matters is not necessary for the practical intention of this book.[21]

HAPTER

THE PROTESTANT SYSTEM OF HERMENEUTICS

Words

Greek-German Lexicon

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

etymologically

episkopos *epi*
skope *ō*

apo *stello*

theopneustos *-tos*

-tos
theopneustos

theopneustos *harpagmos*

harpagmos

Reportorium griechescher Worterverzeichnisse und speziallexika

(diakonos)

theos

comparatively

soul *spirit*

heart

The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross

Synonyms of the Old Testament *Synonyms of the New Testament*

Harmony of the Gospels

culturally

oikos *house* *oikia*
household

oikos *oikia*

house
household

supplications

compelled

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible

A Theological Word Book of the Bible

Light from the Ancient East

New Archeological Discoveries

cognate

Grammar

analytic

analytic

agglutinative *synthetic*

Inflection

special

Egg

eggs *Eat* *ate*

Decline

Declining *inflection*

house *houses* *He*

him

Conjugate *inflect* *conjugating* *Run*

ran *will run*

synthetic

the
the

the

Sprachgefühl

idioms *figures*
of speech *specialized terms*

Analytic Concordance to the Bible

parallel passages *cross references*

Verbal cross reference

apparent

real

real

son of man;
flesh *sarx*

Englishman's Concordance

Conceptual cross references

Parallel cross references

Harmonies of the Gospels

A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul

A Harmony of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles

Literary Mold or Genre

literary mold *mold* *genre*

all

Figures of speech

metaphor

simile

Hyperbole

historical

dramatic epic *apocalyptic*

poetry

wise sayings

legends, sagas *myths*

all

inherent

positive

Song of Songs

witnessing *kerygmatic*

preaching *teaching*

The Theology of Martin Luther

Evagelium und Gesetz

THE PROTESTANT SYSTEM OF HERMENEUTICS

Cultural

De Institutione Oratorio

The Marriage of Mercury and Philology

On Christian Instruction

Cambridge

Biblical Essays

Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash
Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

usus loquendi

Biblical geography

calvary *calvaria;*

Biblical history

Biblical culture

Material culture

Social culture

Orientalisms in the Bible Lands; *Encyclopedia of Bible Life;* *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*

the original

things

usus loquendi

neo-logism

German criticism
higher criticism

radical criticism

higher criticism

in, with

under

in, with *under*

An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures
Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible
Principles of Interpretation
History of Interpretation
Searching the Scripture
Biblical Hermeneutics
Practical Handbook for the Study of the Bible
The Science of Biblical Hermeneutics
Hermeneutical Manual
The Interpretation of Scripture
Biblical Hermeneutics
Biblical Hermeneutics
Companion to the Bible
Interpretation

Interpretation
Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics
Analytic Concordance
Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments
Principles of Biblical Interpretation
Principles of Expository Preaching
Biblical Study

THE DOCTRINAL USE OF THE BIBLE

didachē

revelational theism

any

teaching

doctrinal

the first profit of the Scripture is doctrine

valid

general hermeneutics

The theologian is a redeemed man standing in the circle of divine revelation

the Christological-soteriological nexus

The main burden of doctrinal teaching must rest on the literal interpretation of the Bible

et al

control

The main burden of our theology should rest on the teaching of the New Testament

final, full *clear*

the worth of the Old Testament to the Christian Church is that it is in seed and preparatory form a Christian document

Exegesis is prior to any system of theology

systematic

data *principium*

Principles of Sacred Theology

The theologian must not extend his doctrines beyond the Scriptural evidence

evidence

precisely

exact

exact

exact

cannot

correctly

best

limitations

spirit

probably the wisest opinion which we can adopt

exact *does*

The pursuit of a blessing should never be at the expense of truth

The theological interpreter strives for a system interrelated

system of truth

systematic

systematic

unity of perspective

completely historical ideal goal

historical progression

is in its final intention

completely discrete doctrines

The theologian must use his proof texts with proper understanding of his procedure

pure language

clean

But there must be a sound exegetical examination of every text cited

Institutes

What is not a matter of revelation cannot be made a matter of creed or faith

directly

ex cathedra

and binding to the conscience

Westminster Confession

apokaluphthē

The theological interpreter must keep the practical nature of the Bible in mind

all

complete

The theological interpreter must recognize his responsibility to the church

but they should also pay the greatest deference to the faith of the Church

i.e

dissenting from the Scriptures themselves

No doctrine should be constructed from an uncertain textual reading

Biblical Hermeneutics
Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible
Systematic Theology
Compendious Introduction to the Study of the Bible

Dogmatics
systematic
The Religion of the New Testament

Principles of Sacred Theology
Interpretation

THE DEVOTIONAL AND PRACTICAL USE OF THE BIBLE

All practical lessons, all applications of Scripture, all devotional material, must be governed, by general Protestant hermeneutics

every

The Bible is more a book of principles than a catalogue of specific directions

emphasis

what is the spiritual principle involved?
what ought I do?

The Bible emphasizes the inner spirit rather than the outward religious cloak

material
discrimination

emphasis

inner

In some statements it is the spirit of the statement that is to be our guide

spirit

spirit

Commands in terms of one culture must be translated into our culture

We must make a distinction between what the Bible records and what it approves

fact

ail

We may take direct application from all of those incidents that the Bible directly censures or approves

Express commands to individuals are not the will of God for us

In the lives of men in the Scriptures ' determine what the outstanding spiritual principle is

In the application of examples to our lives we do not need a literal reproduction of the Biblical situation

Note whether the promise is universal in scope

Note whether the promise is personal

Note whether the promise is conditional

Note whether the promise is for our time

no promise of the Bible is to be used that is not in keeping with sane, exegetical principles

seas

plus

basic theory

a minister of the Word of God

he is bound to the ministry of the Word of God

declaring the truth of God

his *his*

to minister the truth of God *ministers of the word*
witnesses of Jesus Christ

in
word and doctrine
the truth of Christianity

the message *kērukson ton logon*
witnessed

a
minister of the Word of God

the preaching of the Word of God

The minister must realize he is a servant of the Lord and bound to the word of the Lord

herald or preach

The preacher must use all Scripture in accordance with the rules of hermeneutics

meaning *To ask for exemptions from the strict rules of hermeneutics is then to ask for an exemption from preaching the true meaning of the Word of God*

saying that a passage of God's Word means what it does not mean

principlize *principlize*

principling

Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible

Biblical Hermeneutics
The Science of Biblical Hermeneutics
Knowing the Scriptures
The New Bible Handbook
An Introduction to the Study and Critical Knowledge of The Holy Scriptures
Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons
Interpretation

THE PROBLEM OF INERRANCY AND SECULAR SCIENCE IN RELATION TO HERMENEUTICS

infallibility

inerrancy

mutatis mutandis

How God Inspired the Bible

must be determined by Jewish usage

usus loquendi

in judging the inerrancy of the Scriptures we must judge them according to the customs, rules,

and standards of the times the various books were written, and not in terms of some abstract or artificial notion of inerrancy

A belief in the inerrancy of the Bible does not mean that all the Bible is clear

dysnoētos

When we assert the inerrancy of the Bible, we do not assert that the Bible speaks all its mind on a subject in one place

Is Christ Infallible and the Bible True?

Belief in the inerrancy of the Scriptures leads us to affirm there are no contradictions in the Bible

in mentis

pi

literalness

ipsissima verba

Belief in the inerrancy of the Bible does not demand the original manuscripts nor a perfect text

problem

non sequitur

When we assert the inerrancy of Scripture we do not assert that the Bible uses scientific language

No objection can be brought against inerrancy because the language of the Bible is phenomenal

No objection can be brought against the inerrancy of the Bible because it is a culturally conditioned revelation

ex hypothesi

through

It is not proper to attempt to find numerous correlations of Scripture and modern science

It must be kept in mind that Genesis 1 is in outline form

modus operandi

the first principles

without

Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible
Alleged Discrepancies in the Bible
Some Moral Difficulties in the Bible
International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
Biblical Hermenevtics
Does the Bible Contradict Itself?
Companion to the Bible
An Introduction to the Critical Knowledge and Study of the Holy Scriptures
The New Biblical Guide

The Bible, The Church, and Reason
Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible
The Bible's Seeming Contradictions
Alleged Bible Contradictions Explained
The Christian View of Science and Scripture

THE INTERPRETATION OF TYPES

Biblical Hermeneutics

prophetic element

Betrachtungweise
Auslegung

all

they

testify to him

Hypodeigma

Typos *typikos*

typt$\bar{o}$

Skia *skēnē*

Parabolē

Eikon *Antitypon*

Allegorō

saw too much as typical

all

the Old Testament is a rich mine of New Testament truth and the spiritual interpreter can dig it out

rationalists and critics

Lectures on the Criticism and Interpretation of the Bible

Philogia Sacra

innate *inferred*

moderate school

innate

inferred

A Catholic Commentary on the Holy Scriptures;
The Catholic Encyclopedia
Origen

Allegorical interpretation
foreign, peculiar *hidden*

by substituting a whole range of persons or things from an entirely different sphere of experience

Typological interpretation

something else

naturally out of the text *something else*

of the same sense

representative

divine intention

illustration

argumentum ad hominem

allēgoria

typos

allēgoroumena *typikōs legomena*

allegory

the same nature

preordained representative relation which certain persons, events and institutions of the Old Testament bear to corresponding persons, events, and institutions in the New

elements
genuine resemblance

designated

innate *inferred*

Dissimilarity

types are prophetic symbols

Note the typology of the New Testament and see how it treats the subject the New Testament

Tabernacle
Wilderness Wanderings

Locate in any given type the typical and the accidental

by designation

Do not prove doctrine from types unless there is clear New Testament authority

illustrate

Persons

Institutions:

Offices:

Events:

Actions:

Things:

Those symbols interpreted by the Scriptures are the foundation for all further studies in symbolism

general guides

context

Be aware of double imagery in symbols

Gematria

three

Four

seven *Ten*

Forty

value

purpureous

tekeleth

tola'ath shani

two *twice-dipped*

shesh

now

then

Biblical Hermeneutics
The Tabernacle
Old Testament Prophecy
The Typology of Scripture
The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
This Means That
Knowing the Scriptures
Handbook of Bible Types and Symbols
Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible
Das Hermeneutik dese Neuen Testaments
Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics

THE INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY

literal

literal

literal *literal*

(sensus plenior)

mystical *mystical*

pneumatische *pneumatic*

pneumatische *mystical*

typological

Principles of Biblical

Hermeneutics *The Science of Biblical Hermeneutics*

idealized

transportation;
armaments; *God's*
enemies

"may not
unjustly be called the insanity of literalism

can prophetic literature be interpreted by the general method of grammatical exegesis, or is some special principle necessary?

Fundamentals in the interpretation of any passage of prophetic Scripture
crux interpretum

give careful attention to the language of the prophetic passage

crossway

figurative, poetic *symbolic*

all

much of the prophetic description of the future is in the language of past, historical events

ex hypothesi

We must determine the historical background of the prophet and the prophecy

avenger

diligent attention must be paid to the context and flow of the discussion in the interpretation of prophecy

The interpreter must be mindful of the nonsystematic character of prophetic writings

two

Every interpreter of prophetic Scripture should search the entire body of prophetic Scripture to find what passages parallel each other

The interpreter must determine the distinct essence of the passage of prophetic Scripture

predictive

didactic

conditional

unconditional

fulfilled

unfulfilled

the problem of fulfilment in prophecy

manner

unfulfilled

multiple fulfilment

generic prophecy

double reference

compenetration

compenetrate

the literal meaning of a prophetic passage as his limiting or controlling guide

his

our

given to it by the Holy Spirit

does the Old Testament prophetic Scripture admit of any additional principle besides the strict, literal principle?

expanded typological principle

that they were seeking the Christian faith in what they deemed to be a Christian book

the natural race of Abraham, seems to go against the methods of interpretation applied by the apostles

dispensational

some change in the form of fulfilment

Old Testament is a Christian book

what hermeneutical method does the New Testament use in employing the Old?

prove

explain

illustrate

literally fulfilled

in an expanded typological sense

First

Second

multiple fulfilment

Third *epouranios*

Fourth

this rule

on the basis of this rule

Israel of God

Fifth

mediator

present work as mediator

present

present

all

all

en toto

interpret prophecy literally unless the implicit or explicit teaching of the New Testament suggests typological interpretation

crux interpretum

raison d'être

Body of Divinity

The centrality of Jesus Christ must be kept in mind in all prophetic interpretation

That Jesus Christ is our mediator and the salvation of sinners

by Him is the very substance, marrow, soul and scope of the whole Scriptures

veyled

revealed

light

apocalypse

prophetic, historical *symbolic*

context

Private inspiration

will of man *origination*

ginetai

came *came into existence*

were moved *interpretation*

to loose

epiluseos *disclosure*

Word Pictures in loco

Commentary

American Commentary

Greek Testament

Commentary *The Holy Bible Commentary*

ginetai

ginetai

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

Essays on Old Testament Interpretation

Repristination view

The Witness to Christ in the Old Testament

Church Dogmatics

Educational view

Promise view

programmatic

The Theology of Hope

The Future of Hope

Pattern view

New Testament Interpretations of Old Testament Prophecies
Old Testament Prophecy
The Grammar of Prophecy
Premillennialism and Old Testament Prediction
Prophecy: Jewish and Christian
Prophecy
Fairbairn versus Fairbairn
A Catholic Commentary on the Holy Scripture
The Prophets and the Promises
The Quotations of the New Testament from the Old
Premillennialism or Amillennialism?
The Future of the Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfilment
Regnum Dei
The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ
The Throne of David
Biblical Study
A New Standard Bible Dictionary
Old Testament Theology
The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
Smith's Dictionary of the Bible
The Science of Biblical Hermeneutics
Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible
Millennial Studies
Premillennialism in America
The Approaching Advent of Christ
God's Present Kingdom
Modern Premillennialism and the Christian Hope
The Coming of the Lord
Prophecy and the Church

THE INTERPRETATION OF PARABLES

parable

parabolē *paroimia*

paroimia

fable
myth
allegory
figures of speech

responsive

sine qua non

unresponsive

parabolē *mashal*

earthly
earthly

intends
earthly *analogical*

perspective principles

Christological
nature
mashal

his
himself

how does this parable relate to Christ?

the kingdom principle

the kingdom has come

actualized

here

here

prophecies

eachatological

The cultural principles

The Parables of Jesus

In the interpretation of every parable it is necessary to recover as much as possible the local color employed in it

Exegetical principles

Determine the one central truth the parable is attempting to teach

Don't make a parable walk on all fours

accessories

Determine how much of the parable is interpreted by the Lord Himself

Determine whether there are any clues in the context concerning the parable's meaning

The comparative rule

Doctrinal principles

will be done

ex hypothesi

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The Parables of our Lord Interpreted and Illustrated
The Interpreter's Bible

The Catholic Encyclopedia
The Parables of Jesus, Their Art and Use
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EPILOGUE

T whole system of Conservative Protestant Christianity rests unreservedly on special revelation and the divine inspiration of Scripture. In that the message of God has meaning only when interpreted, it is ever incumbent upon the church to reflect and inquire if she has rightly interpreted the Word of God. A system of hermeneutics is crucial to our theology.

It has been the spirit of this work to endeavor to present a system of hermeneutics that would most faithfully uncover the native meaning of the Sacred Scripture. We have surveyed both the fields of general and special hermeneutics, and have given lists of many principles. Such lists are as good only as the training, intelligence, and ability of the interpreter, and the tools he uses. It is the solemn duty of every interpreter to see if these rules are correct and to equip himself with training and tools to do adequately the task of a faithful interpreter.

There is a prevailing danger to let differences in interpretation interrupt the unity of the Spirit. When differences are sharp, feelings are apt to run high. With foreboding storm clouds of oppression billowing on the distant horizon, it is well for conservative Protestantism to discover bases of fellowship rather than of divergence. If we stand together in the great truths of the Trinity, of Jesus Christ, and of Salvation, let us then work out our interpretative differences in the bounds of Christian love and endeavor to *preserve* the unity of the Spirit. A hermeneutical victory at the expense of Christian graciousness is hardly worth winning.

Finally, we all need a new sense of respect for Holy Scripture. Believing it to be the veritable word of God, we must exercise all the human pains possible to keep from overlaying it with a gossamer pattern of our own spinning. In each of those cases where human error enters, divine truth is obscured. Let us then steer a straight course through the Holy Bible, neither turning to the left side of heresy nor to the right side of unbridled imagination.

Every interpreter, from the professional philologist to the Sunday school teacher, can well take to heart the following words of Barrows:

a supreme regard for truth. . .

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The Right, the Good, and the Happy: The Christian in a World of Distorted Values
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The Witness of the Spirit: An Essay on the Contemporary Relevance of the Internal Witness of the Holy Spirit

Since its publication in 1950, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* has been a standard introduction to hermeneutics in evangelical colleges and seminaries. Twice revised, this textbook has sold well over 100,000 copies.

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After surveying the history of biblical interpretation, the author devotes seventy pages to explicating "the Protestant system of hermeneutics." He then discusses the doctrinal, devotional, and practical use of the Bible. Following a chapter on the hermeneutical dimension of the problem of biblical inerrancy and secular science, he concludes with chapters on the interpretation of types, prophecy, and parables.

Bernard Ramm taught for over forty years at evangelical colleges and seminaries. He wrote several books, including *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, *After Fundamentalism: The Future of Evangelical Theology*, and *Offense to Reason: The Theology of Sin*.

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