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RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

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The New Hermeneutic and Preaching

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

The first unit in this series discussed the implications for Christian preaching of current studies in the philosophy and theology of language, studies which are usually identified by some such term as linguistic analysis and connected with names like Ian Ramsey and Frederick Ferré. As we now turn to the contemporary study of the Sacred Scriptures, we do not make a clean break with the preceding discussion.¹ The Biblical studies reveal the dominant question: What is the language of faith? The purpose of this review, however, is not to analyze the field of Biblical studies in general but to assess their contribution to preaching in particular.²

¹ See James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, eds., *The Later Heidegger and Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

² Directly concerned with "preaching today" is the Winter, 1964 issue of *Dialog* (3,1); most useful for the present purpose are the articles by Carl E. Braaten and John H. P. Reumann. Dealing with the New Testament is Stephen Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861—1961* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964); the astonishing grasp of both British and Continental work and the interplay of pastoral and missionary concern make this most helpful. Old and New Testament are interrelated in *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. Claus Westermann, (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963).

Richard R. Caemmerer is professor of practical theology and dean of the chapel at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. This article is one of a series of three lectures on the new hermeneutic and preaching delivered to the third annual Institute on Church and Society at Fort Wayne, Ind., June 1965. The first article appeared in the January 1966 issue of this journal, and the concluding article is scheduled to appear in the March 1966 issue.

I. SURVEY

In view of the many crosscurrents in the literature of this field it may be useful to give an overview first, into which particular data and observations may be fitted.

What is the connection between the preaching of the Christian church and of the Christian pastor at work in his congregation and the technique of Biblical interpretation? The pastor ordained in the Lutheran tradition will at once affirm that he is pledged to the Scriptures as the source and norm of his teaching. The pastor whose preaching is coupled with a catechetical process is accustomed to buttress his position by proof texts with which his people are familiar. If he conforms to the liturgy employed by his church, he adheres to pericopic systems of preaching texts. The children of his church's schools are introduced to selected narratives of the Old and New Testaments. He advises his people to read the Bible through regularly and tries to do it himself.

If he is trained in a conservative tradition, he recognizes that the understanding of the Scriptures depends on thorough lexicography and grammar, the discernment of the intended sense of the extract under view; on a recognition of the context from which it is excised and of the background for its composition; on awareness that some statements of the Scriptures propose to be literal fact, direct reporting of events or of discourses, while others are colored by a figurative, poetical, and parabolic quality that demands the recovery of meaning behind the front of

words. The preacher operating with traditional canons of interpretation recognizes a relation between Old and New Testament which involves prophecy and fulfillment. He also is aware of the fact that certain assumptions are basic to his interpretation: that the Scriptures are given so that he may know and preach Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; that the Bible is a resource for preaching which brings that Jesus Christ into relation with his people for their lives in this world and in the life to come.

This picture of the interpreter's task assumes that he feels at home in the Bible and trusts it. He may not understand all of its statements and may find himself gradually retreating to an inner canon of favorite texts of which very few are from the Old Testament. But he does not question that the Bible has meaning. He would like to believe that such meaning is pretty well the same in the entire 66 sacred books.

Every Christian preacher of our time knows, however, that for nearly 300 years many questions have been raised which apparently or actually attack the veracity of the Bible. The 19th century and the early 20th century saw the process carried to an extreme, driven by the study of comparative religion and the assumption that the supernatural was not a valid ingredient of believable reporting. This worked a hardship on Christian preaching. Julius Wellhausen withdrew from the theological faculty of Greifswald in 1882 and became a teacher of Semitic languages, explaining himself as follows:

I became a theologian because I was interested in the scientific treatment of the Bible; it has only gradually dawned upon me that a professor of theology likewise has the practical task of preparing students

for service in the Evangelical Church and that I was not fulfilling this practical task but rather, in spite of all reserve on my part, was incapacitating my hearers for their office.³

Many a preacher-pastor has been tempted to avoid Biblical studies because his faith in the Biblical documents might thereby be impaired.

The historico-critical study of the Bible continued unabated after Wellhausen. Preachers made their peace with it in works like Harry Emerson Fosdick's Beecher Lectures, *The Modern Use of the Bible*.⁴ In 1906 Albert Schweitzer published *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*,⁵ which ended with the conclusion that it is impossible to know anything precise about Jesus, that Jesus Himself was disappointed in what He expected of Himself, and that His follower can know Him only as he passes through "toils, conflicts, and sufferings." The "new hermeneutic," which in our time gives a program for the historico-critical method, does not intend to abandon it. The contemporary pastor who has been assured that the 19th-century methods of reconstructing the record of the Old Testament or of doubting the validity of the Gospel story are discarded will be troubled to discover that much of both continues.

What is new in the Biblical studies of this century and especially of the present is the hermeneutic method of distinguish-

³ Quoted by Alfred Jepsen, "The Scientific Study of the Old Testament," in Westermann, *Essays*, p. 247.

⁴ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1924).

⁵ Neill, p. 199; the entire discussion of Schweitzer, pp. 191ff., is important.

ing, to employ the current theological shorthand, between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ. Many terms have been devised to describe this difference. On the one hand we have history, recital of factual events, the narrative of a genuine human biography, *Historie*, of the Palestinian teacher known as Jesus. This is the quest that Schweitzer said had ended in a fiasco. Contemporary Biblical study affirms that there is more, seeks to develop more evidence, or returns to the same small yield. On the other hand we have the proclamation, or kerygma, or preaching, of the Christ, the Messiah and Lord of the church, not history in the sense of scientific recital of fact but a story to be told, *Geschichte*. The latter comes to us in the language of faith; it is the description of and call to commitment. It is preaching.

Old Testament studies in a parallel way have distinguished between the resources for examining the ancient texts, the literary sources of the books, the literatures of neighboring cultures, the archaeological contributions to understanding and the proclamation of the Old Testament, the guiding theological motifs of its heritage leading forward into the Christ of the New Testament. The New Testament, and particularly its kerygma, is understood in depth as this thrust of the Old Testament moves in upon it. The Old Testament does not have merely isolated forecasts and references to episodes in the New which can be termed fulfillments, but the New Testament is as a whole the fulfillment of the Old Testament as a whole. The Christian preacher therefore never retreats into a text of either Old or New Testament for his message but speaks from the fullness of both as he preaches Christ.

A survey of some of the details behind this summary may unfold resources for the preacher which are to be found not just in the interpreters of the Bible but in the Bible itself.

II. NEW TESTAMENT⁶

Albert Schweitzer's *Quest* and its skepticism concerning what may be known about Jesus Christ met with several reactions. The way had been paved by Martin Kähler of Halle, who in 1892 had attacked the whole principle of endeavoring to produce a life of Christ.⁷ He stated that the gospels do not satisfy the requirements of scientific biography, although they give a trustworthy picture of the Savior for believers. For Kähler the apostolic writings provide a "history of preaching." Faith is the heart of the method of theological understanding. The living Christ becomes a reality in faith through the preaching of the Word, a preaching within the context of the church. This Christ is identical with Jesus of Nazareth but does not depend on

⁶ Useful summaries of the development of recent hermeneutics of the New Testament are: James M. Robinson, "Hermeneutic Since Barth," in *The New Hermeneutic*, James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, eds. (New York: Harper & Row, 1964); Heinz Zahrndt, *The Historical Jesus*, trans. J. S. Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); Joachim Jeremias, *Das Problem des historischen Jesus* (Stuttgart: Calvar Verlag, 1960). More extended is Hugh Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

⁷ See Carl E. Braaten, "Martin Kähler on the Historic Biblical Christ," in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ*, Carl E. Braaten and Roy Harrisville, eds. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 79ff. Braaten's edition of Kähler's book was published by Fortress Press in 1965.

the scientific reconstructions of the facts about Jesus.

In 1918 a work appeared which was not on the subject of hermeneutics but applied a new hermeneutical method to a major book of the New Testament: *Der Römerbrief*,⁸ by Karl Barth. This book was a manifesto that the New Testament epistle must speak also to our time: that the historico-critical method prepares for understanding but that the old doctrine of inspiration provides the understanding without which the preparation is worthless. Barth said that he sought to look through the historical into the contemporary meaning of the Bible. This understanding comes when the man of today is hearing St. Paul speak to him. Barth called this the theology of crisis and the dialectical method: to bring this God into relation with this man. The Gospel — *Heilsbotschaft* — is not one message alongside of others, but the power of God "for salvation."

Man in this world is in prison. A deeper consciousness of how few the alternatives are that we have will make things only more clear. We are far from God, our falling away from Him is greater, the consequences are more far-reaching ([Rom.] 1:18; 5:12; 1:24), than we could dream. Man is his own master. His unity with God is torn in a way that does not allow us to imagine the restitution. His creatureliness is his bondage. His sin is his guilt. His death is his destiny. His world is a misshapen heaving chaos of natural, psychological, and a few other powers. His life is an illusion. That is our situation. "Is there a God?" A good question to ask! To want to imagine this world in its unity with God is either culpable reli-

gious pride or ultimate insight into that which is true beyond birth and death, insight from God. Religious pride must vanish if insight from God should take place. As long as counterfeit coins circulate, also the true ones are suspect. The Gospel provides the possibility of ultimate insight. But to work it must eliminate penultimate insights. It speaks of God as He is, it means Him Himself, Him only. It speaks of that Creator who becomes our Redeemer and of that Redeemer who is our Creator. It is in the process of turning us completely around. It announces the transforming of our creatureliness into freedom, forgiveness of sins, conquest of life over death, restoration of all that is lost.⁹

That is the content of the message of salvation (1:16) that is here proclaimed under fear and trembling but under the pressure of inescapable necessity: the eternal as event. (On [Rom.] 3:22, p. 69)

The kingdom of God must always, in its manifestation in Jesus most certainly, be believed. For it is announced and has come near as a new world, not as a continuation of the old. Our righteousness is actual and remains so only as God's righteousness. The new world is and remains only the eternal world, in the reflection of which we stand here and now. Truth is and remains the divine mercy directed toward us only as a miracle (vertically from above); on the historical and psychological side it is always its untruth.¹⁰ It is interesting to note that Barth's treatment of Romans 10 does not develop the doctrine of the Word of God with the dynamism and precision of his *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I, 1. This is a forecast of the situation that Barth's influence proceeded

⁸ Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief*, 3d rev. ed. (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1924).

⁹ Ibid., p. 13, on Rom. 1:16.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 77, on Rom. 3:24.

along systematic rather than exegetical lines. But the hermeneutical principle was clear: The Bible is there for the sake of the hearer now and for the sake of being proclaimed.

More specifically exegetical was the approach of Rudolf Bultmann, who really implemented the insights of Kähler. Much conservative reaction against Bultmann has arisen around his teaching of demythologization, construed to imply the denial of the reality of much of the Biblical record of the New Testament. He himself felt that the emphasis on this point detracted from his central concern.¹¹ But it does contribute to the mainstream of his mode of interpreting the Bible. The myth is a view of life and the world derived from late Jewish eschatology and Gnostic dualism, which tries to picture supernatural and other-worldly realities in this-worldly terms. The purpose of the myth is the depiction of the beyond. The effort must be made to discern the true intention behind the words, to serve the kerygmatic and preserve it against the merely historical.

A corollary of Bultmann's thought, in which he shapes the Biblical method in terms of a philosophy like Heidegger's, is his principle of eschatology.¹² Man is moving forward inescapably, he is the subject of history, every historical event has meaning. Of himself man is without

responsibility for his future, he is unfree; but he is set free in Christ, the end of history and the way by which God sets an end to the old world not in a final catastrophic event but in a continuing occurrence, an event repeated in preaching and faith.

Scholars disagree whether the "new hermeneutic" marks a shift from Bultmann. The question is important as it pertains to the question: What does the preacher preach from the New Testament? Bultmann himself has been especially concerned for that preaching. His concern has not been merely to make preaching palatable for the skepticism of the scientific age. He is concerned for a basically theological question: What is faith? He tries down to the present moment to forestall any attempt to corroborate a preaching of faith on the basis of historically verifiable fact.¹³ He describes the difference between the "historical" Jesus and the Christ-kerygma as follows:

1. In the kerygma the mystical form of the Son of God has appeared in place of the historical person of Jesus (as the synoptic gospels present it to the critical eye).

2. While the preaching of Jesus is the eschatological message of the coming—more precisely, of the breaking-in—of the kingdom of God, in the kerygma Jesus Christ is proclaimed as the one who died vicariously on the cross for the sins of men and was miraculously raised by God for our salvation. In Pauline and Johannine theology the decisive eschatological event has thereby already occurred.

3. For Jesus the eschatological proclamation goes hand in hand with the procla-

¹¹ See Heinrich Ott, *Geschichte und Heilsgeschichte in der Theologie Rudolf Bultmanns* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1955), p. 24. Ott corrects the misconceptions of Albrecht Oepke, Regin Prenter, and Karl Jaspers.

¹² Set out philosophically in the Gifford Lectures of 1955, which appeared under the title *History and Eschatology* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1957). Note pp. 145—155.

¹³ Rudolf Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," in Braaten and Harrisville, pp. 15—17.

mation of the will of God, with the call to radical obedience to God's demands culminating in the commandment of love. . . . When Paul and John connect ethical demands, and above all the commandment of love, with the Christ-kerygma, they do not do so by resuming Jesus' exposition of the will of God as it appears in the synoptic gospels.

Bultmann is determined that faith be not validated "behind the kerygma," a concept which in orthodox Lutheran theology is expressed by the statement that the efficacy of the Scriptures resides in the Gospel.¹⁴ Bultmann feels that the account of Jesus' view of His own death is not truly verifiable historically since the record comes after the event. "Faith does not at all arise from the acceptance of historical facts."¹⁵ Bultmann does not deny the continuity between the activity of Jesus and the kerygma, and he is interested in analysis of the historical Jesus available to criticism at this point.¹⁶ But he remains sensitive against the attempts to develop a psychological understanding of Jesus as a basis for faith or a continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygma by a special concept of time and history. He feels that they create the danger of rendering the kerygma unnecessary because the preaching of the historical Jesus repeated through historiography is sufficient. For Bultmann the proper way lies in the fact that "the kerygma has changed the 'once' of the historical Jesus into the 'once-for-all,'" and he

quotes 2 Cor. 5 and 6 or John 5 or 14 as illustrations of the process.¹⁷

The cleavage between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ is, on the other hand, quite denied by Ethelbert Stauffer,¹⁸ who feels that Biblical research is important to develop the portrayal of the God-man Jesus Christ. He feels that the worship of the kerygmatic picture of Christ rather than the historical Jesus of Nazareth is presumptive, and that it is important to grasp the epiphany of God in the humanity of Jesus.

The study of the historical setting of the New Testament as a mode of interpreting its message or detecting what was original and what was an overlay of the later church grew into the principle of *Formgeschichte*, whose outstanding advocates are Rudolf Bultmann and Martin Dibelius. Hans Conzelmann and Ernst Käsemann are contemporary scholars who seek to extract what is genuine in the New Testament in terms of what is patently not derivable from other sources.¹⁹

We should devote a word to a circle of interpreters for whom the term of our title, "The New Hermeneutic," has actually been coined. They are successors of Bultmann, and the "newness" of their method has to do with their understanding of his.²⁰ The

¹⁷ Bultmann, p. 40.

¹⁸ See Ethelbert Stauffer, "The Relevance of the Historical Jesus," in Braaten and Harrisville, pp. 43ff.

¹⁹ See Hans Werner Bartsch, "The Historical Problem of the Life of Jesus," in Braaten and Harrisville, pp. 106ff. Bartsch feels that 1 Cor. 15 and its evidence for the Resurrection is not meant to prove the Resurrection, p. 125. See Neill, pp. 236—291, on form criticism.

²⁰ Van A. Harvey and Schubert M. Ogden, "How New is the 'New Quest of the Historical Jesus?'" in Braaten and Harrisville, pp. 197ff., feel that Bultmann has occupied part of the new position.

¹⁴ E.g., Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, I (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp. 313, 315—317.

¹⁵ Bultmann, p. 25.

¹⁶ E.g., in G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960). Bultmann, pp. 29, 30.

American James M. Robinson devised the term in his *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*.²¹ Robinson feels that the stress in the research on the kerygma has "obscured the concreteness of (Jesus') historical reality."

The kerygma is largely uninterested in historiography of the 19th-century kind, for the kerygma does not lie on the level of objectively verifiable fact. But it is decisively interested in historiography of the 20th-century kind, for the kerygma consists in the meaning of a certain historical event and thus coincides with the goal of modern historiography.²²

Robinson with John B. Cobb, Jr., has edited a series of essays²³ in which two exegetes of the current movement are examined by American respondents. Gerhard Ebeling in "Word of God and Hermeneutic" brings his subject into the context of the Reformation *sola Scriptura*. He feels that the identification of Scripture with "Word of God" jeopardized the understanding of both. Ebeling stresses the meaning of word as "character of an event in personal relationship." Hermeneutic has to help the "word event" move from the text of Holy Scripture to the proclamation. "The primary phenomenon in the real understanding is not understanding of language, but understanding *through* language."²⁴ The word is an aid to under-

standing. Interpretation and hermeneutic are necessary only where the "word event" is hindered. This means that hermeneutic must be the theory of words; it must always have a bearing on actualities, it must address itself only to a man who is already concerned with the matter in question. Theological hermeneutic is the theory of the doctrine of the Word of God.²⁵ The text from Scripture in preaching demands the question: What is its aim? Its aim is that there should be further proclamation, with an ear open to the text and in agreement with it. The text is to be interpreted as word.

The text understood by means of the exposition now helps to bring to understanding what is to attain understanding by means of the sermon—which is (we can here state it briefly) the present reality *coram Deo*, and that means in its radical futurity.²⁶

Ernst Fuchs, in "The New Testament and the Hermeneutical Problem,"²⁷ describes his method as "pushing the historical Jesus into the foreground" because he feels that faith intends to be faith in Jesus Christ. The gospels intended to include the historical Jesus in the kerygma.

The awkward difficulty in Bultmann's program resides less in the New Testament manner of speech than in the New Testament compelling us to examine our self-understanding by learning to inquire in principle as to our alternatives for understanding ourselves.²⁸

²¹ James M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1959).

²² Ibid., p. 90.

²³ James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, *The New Hermeneutic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

²⁴ Gerhard Ebeling, "Word of God and Hermeneutic," in Robinson and Cobb, *The New Hermeneutic*, p. 93.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 99.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 109.

²⁷ Ernst Fuchs, "The New Testament and the Hermeneutical Problem," in Robinson and Cobb, *The New Hermeneutic*, pp. 111ff.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 117. Fuchs employs the concept of *engagement*.

Fuchs has better expressions concerning the nature of faith in God than many current writers. Faith becomes vulnerable through seeing. Jesus' preaching summoned a man to listen with regard to himself, to take something with him for the future. The language of faith gives not just understanding but summons; it "announces what time is for."²⁹ It works faith in life with God. The text is interpreted when God is proclaimed. In the interaction of the text with daily life we experience the truth of the New Testament.

And the remarkable thing is this that the book shines brighter and brighter the more difficult daily life becomes. God intends to remain God. Perhaps this is the fundamental hermeneutical statement precisely for our time.³⁰

Fuchs employs Sartre's principle of language as love. Language lays hold of us; our own hearing is therefore required in order to speak. The New Testament speaks the language of hearing.

The American respondents found some difficulties with this method. Amos Wilder³¹ feels that the content of kerygma as object of faith and the New Testament teaching on belief are slighted and the role of reason and imagination neglected. It is my surmise that the German approach, for all of its acuteness, fails in some of the broader appreciation of the Biblical documents which British and American Biblical studies have developed.³² But this the German thinkers have kept central: the

preaching of today's minister of the Gospel. The reason is that it views the Word of God as central in the process of its message and that it views the preacher as responsible for translating that Word into action toward his people.

III. OLD TESTAMENT

Also Old Testament studies have been important in maintaining the primacy of preaching and proclamation. Gerhard Ebeling defines the relation of the Testaments as

The Old Testament testimony to the provisional proclamation, the New Testament testimony to the conclusive proclamation, and church history testimony to the subsequent proclamation.³³

Much new material has enriched Old Testament studies through archaeological discoveries, improved understanding of Jewish thought, deepening recognition of the meaning of prophecy, and the enlarged understanding of the meaning of language. As with the New Testament, the specialists in Old Testament interpretation offer a bewildering variety of points of view and positions, but the preacher of the Gospel can find much to implement his use of the Old Testament in many of them. Thus Claus Westermann:

We must inevitably speak of the Old Testament theologically, answering the question of whether and in what way the God of which and for which the Old Testament speaks is the same God on whom Jesus calls in the New Testament and the God of the creed of the Christian church.³⁴

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 126—131.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 142.

³¹ Amos N. Wilder, "The Word as Address and the Word as Meaning," in Robinson and Cobb, *The New Hermeneutic*, pp. 198ff.

³² Neill has useful paragraphs on C. H. Dodd, pp. 255ff.

³³ Quoted from "Word and Faith" by Carl Braaten in *Dialog*, 3, 1 (Winter 1964), 16.

³⁴ Claus Westermann, "The Interpretation of the Old Testament," in Westermann, *Essays*, p. 44.

He claims that all approaches—and he quotes Noth, von Rad, Zimmerli, Buber, and G. Ernest Wright—have the basic position that the Old Testament reports history or a story of events that happened. True, the concept of history is not the classic one of the 19th century. But this is history in which God is speaking. The believer utilizes the Old Testament not because it presents an account of a sector of human history only but because in it God is seen at work. For Westermann this implies that a basic question in today's interpretation of the Old Testament is the question of promise and fulfillment.

Walther Zimmerli discusses this element of promise and fulfillment.³⁵ It pertains not merely to the reach into the New Testament but to the complex of time within the record of the Old as well. God is described in a covering and ongoing way as the God who is faithful to His promises. Both promise and fulfillment are bound to history; they are not mystic or punctiliar, but they direct the participant and the reader to the future. Recurrent and enlarging is the theme of God Himself freeing and saving.³⁶ The New Testament in this view becomes the capstone of the Old Testament process rather than a separate entity. This means that the message concerning Christ sounds the end of the Old Testament and summons to faith in the ultimate fulfillment. Zimmerli criticizes Bultmann's position³⁷ that the Old Testa-

ment prophecies are significant chiefly as portrayals of failure to come to God through legal means. Zimmerli rejects this criticism as a narrowing of the concept of promise to that of prophecy and an applying of the stripping away of history as such from the eternal and kerygmatic acts of God in Christ as Bultmann has done also with the New Testament message, although he grants that no "proof from prophecy" is valid for the Christian faith.

The primacy of history in the Old Testament record is not granted without demurrer. Thus James Barr attacks the hermeneutical principle of revelation through history³⁸ on the basis that there is little consensus on what history is and that there is much revelation in the Bible which is simply direct communication from God to men.

Hans Walter Wolff submits that the special starting point of Old Testament hermeneutics is that the Word of God to His people has to be interpreted in a manner more precise than the survey of literary types of the surrounding world.³⁹ He finds this uniqueness demonstrated in the contrast between the Old Testament and the

³⁵ Walther Zimmerli, "Promise and Fulfillment," in Westermann, *Essays*, pp. 89ff.

³⁶ Zimmerli reviews this motif in numerous forms in the Old Testament; note the summaries, pp. 108, 112.

³⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, "Prophecy and Fulfillment," in Westermann, *Essays*, pp. 50ff.; Zimmerli's critique, *ibid.*, pp. 118ff.

³⁸ James Barr, "Revelation Through History in the Old Testament and in Modern Theology," in *New Theology No. 1* edited by Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (New York: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 60ff. Barr has published *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), in which he attacks the method of current "Biblical theology" in employing terms in ways beyond the purely lexicographical. Barr does not discount the validity of *Heilsgeschichte* in the Biblical record.

³⁹ Hans Walter Wolff, "The Hermeneutics of the Old Testament," in Westermann, *Essays*, p. 167. This position, for which Wolff cites Martin Noth, does not receive universal acceptance.

synagog. A scholar like Friedrich Baumgärtel⁴⁰ holds that the situation involves rather a duality. Viewed historically, the Old Testament is a "non-Christian religion"; theological understanding in Christian terms can happen only through "prior understanding," and the reader must be protected from capricious, pietistic assumptions by viewing the Old Testament as God's Word to Old and New Testament man alike but outside of the Gospel; it is not evangelical Word.

Shall the Christian preacher then look for Christ in the Old Testament? Shall he wonder what Christ told the disciples on the road to Emmaus and on the first Easter evening when he unfolded His own suffering, death, and resurrection to them on the basis of Moses and the prophets? Horace Hummel gives a useful survey of the methods by which a Christology can be preserved in the Old Testament.⁴¹ He attributes to the influence of Barth the situation that the exegesis of some Old Testament texts has come from a sort of theological induction rather than a real exegetical method. The *Theological Hermeneutics* (1924) of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, assumed that the interpretation of an Old Testament passage was beyond question if it was fulfilled in a New Testament pericope. Hummel feels that the principle of *sensus literalis unus est* is at fault here. He feels that the Biblical records should be viewed as not less than historical but more; because God has chosen them for His redemptive purposes, they have a sacra-

mental quality. The scientific approach to the Bible has discounted the sacramental and has assumed a discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. The better hermeneutics has to see a continuity, not on the basis of proofs and external identities but of sacramental intent. To that end Hummel sees the need of granting a typological approach, which must be maintained in "charismatic non-mechanical flexibility."

Scholars like Walther Eichrodt⁴² deny the validity of the typological quest. Friedrich Baumgärtel rejects typological interpretation as unnecessary for faith.⁴³ Gerhard von Rad, however, sees typological understanding of the Old Testament as essential, observing in the Old Testament "something in preparation," concerning itself with the whole Old Testament and not just specific types, dealing "not with correspondences in . . . details . . . the Old Testament and the New may have in common" but with the kerygma itself, observing the leading by God of His people, never separating the historico-critical process from the theological.

Whether the term "typology" will be retained permanently for what has been outlined in this article, whether the very word perhaps is too heavily burdened with wrong connotations or has here been so far broadened beyond its established usage as to complicate rather than to further the discussion is an open question. . . . One must . . . really speak of a witness of the Old Testament to Christ, for

⁴⁰ Friedrich Baumgärtel, "The Hermeneutical Problem of the Old Testament," in Westermann, *Essays*, p. 134.

⁴¹ Horace Hummel, "Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament," *Dialog*, 2, 2 (Spring 1963), 108—117.

⁴² Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans., J. A. Baker, 2 vols. (London: SCM Press, 1961). I, 14; also, Walter Eichrodt, "Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method?" in Westermann, *Essays*, pp. 224ff.

⁴³ Baumgärtel, p. 144.

our knowledge of Christ is incomplete without the witness of the Old Testament. Christ is given to us only through the double witness of the choir of those who await and those who remember. . . . The Old Testament must first of all be heard in its witness to the creative Word of God in history; and in these dealings of God in history, in His acts of judgment as well as in His acts of redemption we may everywhere discern what is already a Christ-event.⁴⁴

What does contemporary hermeneutics give the preacher as he turns to a text from the Old Testament? One user may say that sometimes it merely hampers his understanding of the Old Testament in its primary meaning, that he is being asked to approach it with another man's presuppositions, or that he is being falsely accused of having some of his own. More generally, however, contemporary hermeneutics is offering the Old Testament to the preacher as a resource on two levels. It shows him the same God at work whom he and his people worship. As he seeks to understand the record of God at work toward the people of past time, he knows how to outline the ways of God to his people more clearly now. This is similar to the principle of tropology, familiar from Johann Michael Reu's *Homiletics*;⁴⁵ let the preacher discern the mode of opera-

tion to men in that time which is parallel to His way now. The quest for typology pointing to the New Testament should not erase the discovery of a tropology which bridges to the hearer directly.

On the second level the Old Testament stands before the preacher and his hearers as a record of God at work toward a people which is being moved toward the fulfillment of promise. Over the whole record broods the concept of the faithful God, the God of truth; and when Jesus says: "I am the truth, no man comes to the Father but by Me," this is the fulfillment of that total action, into which the preacher now brings his own hearers also—"I pray for them also who shall believe on Me through their word," says that same Jesus.

This does not solve all of the problems that Old Testament interpreters are discussing. Thus Wolfhart Pannenberg, who leads in reassessments of New Testament hermeneutical method, seeks to discover a meaning to history which arises from the Old Testament record, rather than imposing a principle of history on the record, and feels that the connection between the Old and the New Testaments "is made understandable only by the consciousness of the one history which binds together the eschatological community of Jesus Christ and ancient Israel by means of the bracket of promise and fulfillment."⁴⁶ This is a method with which the Biblical preacher is already familiar!

The preacher need not hesitate to use

⁴⁴ Gerhard von Rad, "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," in Westermann, *Essays*, pp. 17ff.; quotation from pp. 38, 39. See in the same volume Hans Walter Wolff, pp. 181—186. Alfred Jepsen, "The Scientific Study of the Old Testament," pp. 246ff., arrives at helpful corollaries of Wolff's results with a less typological method.

⁴⁵ Johann Michael Reu, *Homiletics*, trans. Albert Steinhäuser (Columbus: Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1950), p. 370. Note Wolff, pp. 190ff.

⁴⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," in Westermann, *Essays*, pp. 314ff., quotation p. 323. He applies the same principle to the New Testament event and our own time in "The Crisis of the Scripture-Principle in Protestant Theology," *Dialog*, 2, 4 (Autumn 1963), 307 ff.

Old Testament materials therefore in the light of current Biblical studies. He should do more than he may have been minded to before with what that story meant in its own time, what its tropology was in its own setting. But he is going to respect the leaning into the wind of the actors of that story, he is going to press with them into the light of fulfillment, he will preach Christ freely and unashamed, for thus the meaning of the Emmaus road will have been repeated, and with his people the preacher will have been able to say to the risen Lord, "Abide with us."

IV. A PERSONAL POSTSCRIPT

Speaking altogether from my own stance, I have several observations to make about the importance of the "New Hermeneutic" for the Christian pastor today.

1. It is useful for keeping clear in the preacher's mind that he had better let God be God and let faith be faith. Thus he will keep on repeating to himself: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him, but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel" and remember that he is being used by the Holy Ghost to keep his people in faith by that same Gospel.

2. The American version of the "New Hermeneutic" tends to widen the grasp and target of faith into the total gifts of God and to make the message shallow by which faith is to be engendered and sustained. Contemporary German theology on the other hand still tends to make faith into sureness, the confidence that a thing is so. It may be true that the believer is not being asked to prop his faith on ra-

tional or historical grounds like the ancient rationalist, but neither is he being directed to the redeeming work of God in Christ to strengthen his grasp of faith. The tendencies are apparent in a reluctance in the literature to come clean all the way with God's operation through the atonement through Christ for sin; they stress reunion rather than atonement. The atoning acts of Christ become only a paradigm for the Christian experience of death and life, of service and self-sacrifice. The latter trait is the method of American exposition and the preaching which takes its cues from it. If such presuppositions hamper the professional theologians, we may expect that they will bedevil the semi-professionals, the preachers; but it is the latter who stand in the crucial role of bringing the interpretation to the people. This is the most disquieting discovery of the current literature: hermeneutics is not just a preparation for preaching; it is preaching.

3. The preacher need not be afraid of the current Biblical studies. The scholars are for the most part engaging in the preacher's task. They are grappling with a primary question: What does the record say? Their answers are sometimes bizarre, sometimes penetrating. But not too many of them want the preacher to think that no Word of God comes through the effort. They are trying to hear first so that they can speak. No better program can be set before the preacher, too, as he proposes to use Scripture both from its source of the Spirit and for its purpose of profit to his people.

St. Louis, Mo.