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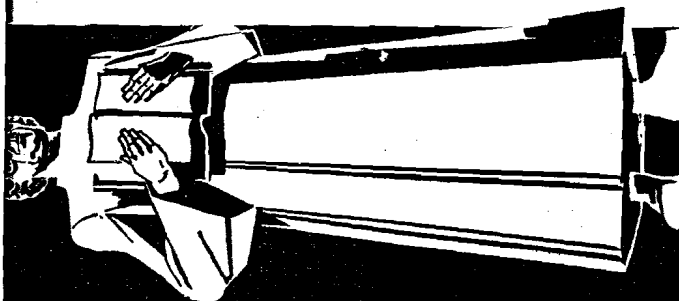
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The Outside Limits Of Lutheran Confessionalism In Contemporary Biblical Interpretation

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PART II GOSPEL VERSUS BIBLE

NO MATTER HOW one cuts the cake, the issue of confessionalism is also the issue of Scripture. I regret that some have apparently misunderstood my own earlier accent on a "confessional hermeneutic" as somehow intended to supplant *sola Scriptura*.²¹ This, of course, is emphatically not the case. Obviously, the *norma normata* is no stronger than the *norma normans*, just as, conversely, the latter is subject to all sorts of hermeneutical legerdemain when confessional principles of interpretation fade. The two stand or fall together.

In both cases, and as already noted with respect to the confession, we have a sort of "Gospel reductionism."²² What is absolutely indispensable if "biblicism" and "legalism" are really to be avoided increasingly finds itself a sort of spiritualistic sole survivor. "Gospel" itself often comes to imply only some brand of existentialism with a little traditional, Christian veneer. Instead of the Bible and the various doctrinal articles giving concrete form to the Gospel, the Gospel comes virtually to be pitted *against* the Bible, as "freeing" one from it or any ultimate concern about it. I thoroughly believe, also on the basis of my own experience, that this kind of Gospel-Bible dichotomization is the beginning of evil for any valid confessionalism, the Pandora's box which easily leads to increasing vaporization of the Christian substance.²³ By the same token, I think it really is the *parting of the ways* for much of contemporary Lutheranism (as of much of the rest of Christendom). It is so tempting to say "Just agree on the Gospel," but all evidence indicates that when a firm "formal principle" is no longer maintained, the "material principle" fast becomes shaky, ambiguous, and obscure too. It is also my personal experience that those who are so willing to settle for some amorphous "Gospel," not surprisingly, rarely find anything under the sun conflicting with it (short of explicit renunciation, which, of course, rarely occurs).

Strangest of all, this dichotomization often appeals for support to both Luther and the confessions! (I am not competent to discuss all issues in depth at this point, but it is hard to see how the appeal to either can even be allowed its day in court). Although neither makes a great point of inspiration or inerrancy, as such, it remains to be demonstrated that it was not simply assumed by all parties to the main debate (excluding, of course, some of the fringe sects).

Debates there were about Scripture, to be sure, but apparently none comparable to the fundamental, secularistic challenges to its authority in later times (something which those who accent history so much often inconsistently overlook). We have already noted what careful definitions are needed when speaking of Luther's "subjectivism," and the same would be true of any appeal to his alleged "dynamic" or "existential" interpretation (over against the "static scholasticism," etc.), which conveniently forgets that Luther was no systematician. Similarly, then, Luther's allegedly "cavalier" attitude toward Scripture (as it is often described) turns out to be *obiter dicta*, off-the-cuff observations, about certain minor exegetical problems such as Matthew's (27:9) apparent citation of Jeremiah instead of Zechariah, etc., with which any exegete must wrestle. Such observations surely have to be balanced against other repeated and explicit statements to the effect that Scripture was absolutely reliable, inviolable, etc. Hence, unless we are to assume that Luther did not know his own mind and consistently contradicted himself, it would seem to be a much more faithful reproduction of his thought to speak of "problems" which he observed in the Bible, rather than "errors" (at least in any methodological, hermeneutical sense; cf. below). Thus, if it be objected that Luther had no developed *theory* of inspiration or of hermeneutics, but only a "simple trust" in the Bible's sufficiency and reliability, I think we could happily settle for the latter, especially in contrast to most other options offered us today.

Likewise with the question of the canon. Luther's dislike of James, Esther, Revelation, etc., and his accent on "*was Christum treibt*" as a primary principle of interpretation are highly touted in some circles, as though they self-evidently demonstrated Luther's "subjective" stress on faith, Gospel, Christ, etc., over against an objective canon. Although, obviously, the two must coexist and complement one another, both Luther's general practice as well as his vehement objections to the spiritualism of the *Schwärmer* would seem to establish that Luther really meant to accent what must always be *central* in exegesis, not something which could be pitted against it. There is no hint that Luther ever elevated his observations into any kind of hermeneutical principle which would justify any canon within the canon. No doubt, certain books and parts of books enunciate the heart of the Gospel more immediately and clearly than others, but the less clear are also to be interpreted in the light of the clear. That is a far cry from erecting some new canon or any really "subjective" basis.

Neither did Luther's immediate heirs ever understand or interpret him in that way. Even *if* it were true that Luther did place the criterion of the Gospel in *opposition* to the canon of Scripture, we would still have to insist that *our* norm is the Book of Concord, *not* Luther as such. As a matter of fact, however, what we find there does not represent any relapse from the loftiness of Luther's insights, but, rather, conscious faithfulness to him. The increasingly strident Roman Catholic claim that the church *determined* the canon apparently resulted in a certain reluctance to accent canonicity, as

such, but, if anything, with even greater accent on the formal principle of Scriptural authority as the basis of judging truth claims. At the same time, there was, of course, a reopening of the ancient problem of the exact limits of the canon: the medieval "deuterocanonical" works are declared on the basis of earlier church history rather to be "apocryphal" and hence outside the canon, while the "antilegomena" are reexamined and reaffirmed with the early church as truly canonical.²⁴ However, there is no indication whatsoever that the *historical* question of precisely which books were inspired was ever allowed to becloud the *theological* issue of inspiration and hence the authority of the bulk of the canon. Also over against the Reformed tradition, there is somewhat greater reserve in placing a primary accent on the canon, but the difference may be exaggerated. The Lutheran concern that the *Gospel*, not the Bible as such, receive the primary accent probably has an inner relationship to the parallel accent on God's *love* over the Reformed stress on his holiness, but in neither case is the latter in any way denigrated. The question of what is logically or hermeneutically primary is, again, a different one from that of what is to be expounded in that light. Hence, at least as far as I can see, any attempt to exploit the fact that the confessors did not include a special article on Scripture, and, furthermore (apparently deliberately), refused to offer their own canonical list can only be regarded as a rather desperate, sophistical grasping at straws to attempt to justify a position which is, in fact, at basic variance from their own.²⁵

That is to say that the most elementary faithfulness to the Lutheran Reformation requires that *any and every* dichotomization of Scripture be uncompromisingly rejected. The substitution of exclusivity for centrality is expressed in various ways, but the net result varies little, if any. The dichotomy may be expressed in terms of "Christology" or "justification by faith" instead of "Gospel." In Lutheran circles one is not surprised to find it articulated in terms of "Law-Gospel:" rather than this key Lutheran insight being used to interpret *all* of Scripture, the attempt is made to *distinguish* "Law" from "Gospel" *within* the Bible (a modern variant of an old problem), so much so that sometimes when the debate gets hot one would almost think he had to choose *between* an authoritative Scripture and "Law-Gospel." Commonly, all *prescriptive* portions (e.g., the role of women) are styled "law," and in modern times, under the influence of historical investigation, those portions also come to be considered merely *descriptive*—of what was held at that time. The Old Testament, considered as virtually all "Law" and/or mere historical background to the New Testament, is an especially frequent casualty of such dichotomizations, resulting, as someone has said, in the abbreviation of the canon by one testament.²⁶ In addition, of course, the old assertion that the Bible is not the "word of God," but only contains it, is, in effect, still very much alive. While the former certainly runs the risk of true biblicism if not carefully qualified, and while a little theological sophistication will make one wary of overly facile definitions of "word of God," it is also crystal clear that the latter formulation inevitably substitutes canonical authority

with some other extraneous authority which must decide what is and what is not really God's word. The extent to which modern existentialist influences, represented especially in the entire Bultmannian movement, have virtually reduced the "word of God" to subjectivity or the *fides qua* is a major, but by no means untypical, example of the spiritualistic and relativistic impulses which seem inevitably to follow in the wake of any and all dichotomizations, even if that is no conscious part of the original intent.

The synonymity of *tota Scriptura* and *sola Scriptura* as an indispensable component of confessionalism requires special accent again today. The Reformation took the theological unity of Scripture as a self-evident corollary of its inspiration, and hence, common divine authorship, so much for granted that it scarcely even commented on it, just as with other aspects of the doctrine of Scripture. A generation ago again, under the aegis of neo-orthodoxy and "biblical theology," the unity of the Bible was virtually an unquestionable axiom, albeit in slightly different form. In today's radically different atmosphere, however, almost the *opposite* is virtually axiomatic, namely the simple dogma that the Bible is a collection of heterogeneous, non-unifiable "theologies." Not, mind you, simply a matter of varying accents and formulations (which was one of the great potential contributions of "biblical theology" over against the traditional tendency to equate unity and uniformity), but of completely irreconcilable testimonies as to the nature of the Gospel itself. What has changed? Really nothing, except the atmosphere and the axioms or presuppositions with which the study of the Bible is approached! Could there be a better illustration of the nonsense of "scientific objectivity," or of the indispensability of a confessional hermeneutic? Perhaps nowhere is the new mood expressed more programmatically and more militantly than in the works of the influential New Testament scholar, E. Kasemann, whose legion of faithful disciples all say, "Amen."²⁷

Indeed, if the Bible is no longer viewed as in its essence a seamless robe to be interpreted according to the "analogy of faith" (i.e., of Scripture as its own interpreter), but rather a miscellany of contradictory theologies, some good and some bad and all dated, the *entire basis* of any sort of traditional dogmatics or confessional theology collapses as well. Self-evidently, then, any confessional insistence upon doctrinal unity as a condition for union no longer has a leg to stand upon. The divorce of the exegetical and dogmatic disciplines follows almost as a matter of course, as it, in fact, has in most non-confessional circles today: the exegete believes that any acceptance of confessional postulates would inevitably compromise his "scientific freedom," and the systematician, in turn, finds few exegetical conclusions usable (even if he wants to) and so proceeds to erect a quite frankly "philosophical theology" in which, at best, Scripture often plays a very minimal role. No doubt, if the Bible is really *only* "testimony literature," hermeneutics is really not needed at all, for the simple reason that since, then, personal experience must be the primary datum of revelation, the Bible, as merely another derivative description, must suffer from all the relativity and

deficiency to which any human thought is prone, and the modern interpreter is at least on a par with the ancient writers. *Modern* history, it is argued, where we live is surely just as important as the ancient history of two or three millenia ago—and that means political and social action instead of the “once for all” of biblical theology. It easily (and not only theoretically!) then comes to the point where one can prove *nothing* from the Bible, except perhaps the reality of religious experience, not even (and perhaps especially not!) the existence of a personal God. It is precisely the prevention of that sort of neutralization of scriptural authority that a “confessional hermeneutic” in our day must be all about!

Hence, one more common dichotomization of Scripture must be abjured, namely, that which attempts to distinguish between the reliability of theological or doctrinal and other elements in the Bible. Unfortunately, however, no one yet seems to have determined satisfactorily where the line comes and, hence, how to prevent the camel’s nose of “*Ichtheologie*” from entering the tent. It remains to be established how a God who was impotent to prevent all types of marginal errors from entering his inspired scriptures should be trusted any more when it comes to the far more central theological ones. If logic does not convince, history should clinch the case. One might wish it were not so, but the wish is not the father of fact. It seems *inevitably* to be the case that from “minute” errors in fact the “degression of revelation” leads ineluctably to errors in substance or theology, and thence to the location of ultimate authority in the interpreter’s subjectivity. Loosed from the “external Word,” the Holy Spirit soon becomes hopelessly confused with man’s spirit and spirituality. What is “theological” is usually more or less formulated in Christological terms, but, as we have seen, that easily comes to have the greatest variety of meanings. Properly construed, our accent is no “bibliolatry,” but a corollary of the lordship of Christ (a favorite “liberal” phrase from which biblical inspiration is somehow curiously excluded!); no “obscurantism,” but a humble submission to our Lord’s authority and true enlightenment; no crutch or response of insecurity and little faith (comparable to rightist political cries for “law and order,” as some would have it), but an essential part of our freedom in the Gospel! Indeed, it is again a matter of faith, axioms, presuppositions, i.e., no proper subject for either proof or disproof. It is hard to see how that situation is altered in principle whether one applies it to all of Scripture, to only its doctrinal content or not to Scripture at all—or, for that matter, not even to Christianity in any sense, but to some totally other faith, unless one really is prepared to argue positivistically. Those who disagree often take umbrage at the suggestion that their dichotomization usually leads to a more casual attitude toward the Bible, but most of my observations, too, indicate that that *is* emphatically the case! Likewise, those who style themselves “evangelical” (in the usual American usage of that term) are usually more so, also in fact, at least as measured by any confessional definition of the substance of that term.

That is, confessionalism, in my judgment, *necessarily* implies taking one’s stand, in essence, on the side of “inerrancy,” (or of

"infallibility," no distinction being attempted here between those two terms), as I have always taught.²³ As often, however, one may wonder if it is the happiest *term*. (Maybe we should expunge *both* it and "*the historical-critical method*," as we suggest below). I certainly do not have in mind the evasion which limits it to its etymological (or allegedly "dynamic") sense of not leading astray from God's intended purpose; again, if one is not truly a "biblicist" the *evangelical* concern of "making wise unto salvation" must always remain paramount, but the danger here, one fears, is another subtle version of "Gospel reductionism." Likewise, the point is not to dissemble on the principle itself as an inevitable complement to "inspiration," but among the factors which becloud the term are (a) the excessive sloganeering which readily attaches to it; (b) its tendency to become a code-word for only one dogmatically held style or tradition of exegesis, especially that which held sway before the rise of modern historical perspectives, and (c) the frequent obsession to "prove" the Bible true as "inerrancy" all but becomes an end in itself, and the resultant distortion of doctrinal balance. Likewise, some concept of the "perfection" of Scripture would seem quite axiomatic if it really is God's word, but if the inspiration was really not mantic, but "historical," the term should be defined by empirical study of His Word. Neither does it seem fruitful to talk about "*absolute inerrancy*" or the like; like virginity or pregnancy, it either is or it isn't! However (if one may follow up the latter simile) just as a pregnancy may be of sorts (resulting in single or multiple births, etc.), so, within outside limits, "inerrancy" (if the term be retained) permits of a certain amount of difference in precise understanding and of exegetical variation. Although it seems to have always been a part of the church's (and synagogue's) dogma, it certainly has been explicated with some variation, depending on the prevailing exegetical usages. As we shall try to demonstrate shortly, it is capable of some adjustment to contemporary historical horizons too, without being in principle called into question. (At the same time, of course, if the differences are really only terminological, the basic concern of the fundamental unity and reliability of God's Word in all respects will set some relatively stringent outside limits to the permissible variation, which is precisely the concern of this paper).

Further difficulties with the term are suggested by its very negative form ("*inerrancy*"). That form suggests that its primary usefulness is perhaps in *apologetic* contexts (meeting attacks on the faith's first line of defense), although here too one might wonder if a more positive, evangelistic posture might not generally be more useful. In other contexts its "siege mentality" easily leads to misplaced emphases that can properly be called "biblicistic" or "fundamentalistic:" believing in Christ because the Bible is true, rather than vice versa; believing *in* the Bible and what it says in some primary, atomistic way independent of the Gospel, etc. Such attitudes are very common in the "Bible belt" and in much Protestant sectarianism, but they surely are a parody of Lutheran confessionalism—and it is probably anachronistic, at best, to attribute them even to

Orthodoxy in its own historical milieu. However, one should not fight windmills, or object so much that he becomes blind to the infinitely greater caricatures or perversions of the faith on the "left." Protests on this score obviously often cloak especially the existentialist confusion of the certainty of personal faith, where the Bible is theoretically dispensable, and the certainty of articulated theology, where it is anything but. That is, if "inerrancy" in many contexts is the wrong *Fragstellung*, "errancy" certainty is. If "inerrancy" on occasion threatens to become the tail that wags the dog with certain resultant caricatures, one cannot be blind either to the extent to which "errancy" becomes a basic and almost fanatically held hermeneutical principle—and the almost complete subversion of Scriptural authority which is bound to follow. But, again, the very form of the term, it is to be feared, encourages the almost fiendish delight which many liberals display in finding and multiplying alleged "errors" throughout the Bible.

Let us try to be more positive ourselves. If we assume the trustworthiness of the Bible in all respects, we must still concede many "problems."²⁹ There is no doubt that the Bible is true (dogmatics), but precisely in what respect is not always clear (exegesis). (Nor in a confessional context will we be playing word-games with the word, "truth.") We have already noted that such a formula perhaps best does justice to Luther's multifarious observations on the subject. No doubt, the difficulties and the possible solutions in and of themselves often remain the same, regardless of what one calls them, but *hermeneutically* it does ultimately make a *world* of difference whether they are construed as God's inability to reveal adequately or as man's inability to understand completely! Our great distance from and frequently extreme paucity of detailed information about the circumstances of the Bible should beget great reserve in suspecting "errors" (even of a textual sort). (One might here well recall St. Augustine's dictum on inerrancy: "Either the manuscript is faulty, or the exegete is mistaken, or you do not understand.") As a matter of fact, new information, especially from archaeology has solved many ancient riddles, while exposing many new ones.³⁰ The unity of Scripture always has put primary stress on the most natural, literal sense (cf. below), but has always also assumed a certain amount of various kinds of symbolism, hyperbole etc. Lacking clear evidence one way or another, there usually have been various hypotheses on how the problems might best be solved. Above all, as we have indicated, in passing, now several times, modern *historical* perspectives open up some new possibilities which scarcely even came to mind in earlier periods. But this now leads us into the third part of the paper.

FOOTNOTES

21. Cf. e.g., the journal, *Sola Scriptura*, I/1, p. 7, and elsewhere.
22. Try as I will, I cannot escape the conviction that, to one degree or the other, some such spiritualistic dichotomization is always operative when the Pauline injunctions against the ordination of women are set aside. (It must be conceded that Paul does not speak *explicitly* to the issue of

ordination, but only via some sophistry, it seems to me, can that be excluded from the import of his remarks.) Stendahl's influential study (*The Bible and the Role of Women*, esp. p. 21) is quite explicit about the disjunction between the "descriptive" or historical and normative senses of the Bible. But how does one prevent that principle from widening into a general historical and cultural relativism (including the argument that "women tend to be more interested in people than in abstract theological principles")? Nor am I able to see that the more sophisticated argument from "changing orders of creation" is not ultimately vulnerable to the same charge; in any event, it seems to me to be exegetically beside the point because Paul clearly does not argue from something he considers a result of sin, and hence subject to "redemption," but rather from a given already preceding the Fall. Also hermeneutically very revealing is the one-sided accent those who are more theologically oriented put on the "realized eschatology" of Gal. 3:28 *over against* the other passages. In any event, anyone who has his ears to the ground will easily hear no great concern with exegesis or theology of any sort at this point on the part of most Lutherans (like many other Christians, even including, *mirabile dictu*, not a few Roman Catholics), but only the axiom that at this point Paul was a child of his times. News reports indicated that neither the LCA nor the ALC conventions spent much time on the theology of the issue, but were very concerned about "justice" for women. It is also clear that many in LCMS who oppose—or at least are very lukewarm about—the ordination of women often refrain from protesting vocally for fear lest it impede church union. On the face of it, isn't it strange that those who seem most aware of the culturally different context of the Bible often seem so oblivious to the possibility that they may be using the egalitarian assumptions of *our* culture to relativize Scripture?

23. If this be granted, one can at least understand how so much defense effort can be thrown into the fray at this point that a conservative easily appears to become "biblicistic" or guilty of the obverse error of exalting Bible *over* Gospel, when that is anything but the intent. The Bible is not the citadel of the faith, but only its first line of defense, if you will. However, it is scarcely good defense strategy to abandon the outer bulwarks and *retreat* to the citadel! One does not succeed in stressing Gospel more by accenting Bible less. Furthermore (if we may continue with militaristic imagery—for which there is ample biblical warrant!), why not also implement the old adage that "the best defense is a good offense"? (We understand "offense" primarily in the sense of mission and evangelism, not polemics, as such.) All too easily, orthodoxy allows itself to be maneuvered into a purely defensive position with its resultant siege or fortress mentality. Changing the metaphor somewhat, one does well to recall that the biblical picture of "a little leaven" is used of the aggressive dynamic of the Gospel as well as of the insidious power of darkness!
24. Even today one might ask what would *really* be lost if we no longer had the antilegomena. (Not even the ordination of women would be easier to defend; the most uncompromising passage appears in I Corinthians!) With only slightly greater difficulty, one could assert the same thing if we again accepted the apocrypha. A stimulating study of the issue appears in A. C. Sundberg's *The Old Testament of the Early Church* (Harvard, 1964) followed by more programmatic and controversial essays in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 1966, pp. 194-203 and 1968, pp. 143-55.
25. Cf. also Schlink, *op. cit.*, Chap. I ("Scripture and Confession"). E. g., p. 1, n. 1: "—the absence of a special article on Scripture must not blind us to the fact that the very silence of the Confessions on this point amounts to a doctrinal declaration. Furthermore, in the actual use of Scripture by the Confessions there is implicit not only a doctrine of Scripture, but also principles of interpretation, and even important hermeneutical rules for the exegesis of the Old Testament." See also esp. p. 9. Cf. also A. C. Piepkorn, "The Position of the Church and Her Symbols," *CTM*, XXV,

- (10/54) esp. p. 740 (speaking of the principals in the Reformation discussions): "If there was one point of universal agreement among all of these, aside from the nude assertions of the Ecumenical Creeds, it was the authority, the inspiration, and the inerrancy of the Sacred Scriptures. It is not surprising, therefore, that we do not have an explicit article on the Sacred Scriptures in the Lutheran Symbols."
26. Cf. our discussion of Old Testament issues below. The Old Testament is, in effect, decanonized on other theoretical bases too, of course, but the facility with which the entire Bultmannian tradition has dismissed it on an alleged "Law-Gospel" basis as well as the extent to which Old Testament scholars (Baumgärtel, Hesse) in the Lutheran-oriented Erlangen context have tended to reduce it severely in existentialist bases, illustrate, I think, how vulnerable especially Lutheranism is along these lines. In American Lutheranism the recent swing away from the Old Testament has scarcely even had that much theological profundity; it has been much more a matter of unreflectingly flying with every latest wind that blows—and as clear an illustration as any of the extent to which it is something other than confessional concerns which is usually calling the shots! The extent to which the Old Testament has come to be considered subcanonical (often—in practice—in even more conservative circles) may be illustrated in two recent experiences of my own. Some have expressed surprise that it was an Old Testament scholar like myself who protested the current tide of non-confessionalism, and I would not care to deny that professional as well as theological reasons were intertwined. The position of the Old Testament has long been marginal enough in Protestantism as is, without a secularistic fanaticism that threatens to sweep aside all the potential gains registered in the previous "biblical theology" movement. Secondly, from Protestants who wondered how Notre Dame could "risk" having a Lutheran in its theology department, I repeatedly heard the suggestion that since it was *only* the Old Testament that was involved, there couldn't be much at stake anyway!
 27. Especially in his *Jesus Means Freedom* (published in English translation by Fortress press!), but also throughout his prolific work, especially in the footnotes, which teem with sarcasm and ridicule of traditional positions. I think that anyone who checks will readily discover that his position or a version of it is virtual *de facto* dogma in much of the LCA today, where also some of Käsemann's greatest American champions are to be found. One thinks also of the LCUSA popular study on the ordination of women which evinced no scruples about criticizing some parts of the New Testament for allegedly showing sub-evangelical signs of a "code-book" mentality, where again one has to ask just what or who is the norm? Hence, as I can testify personally, if one ventures to defend almost any thesis on scriptural grounds he is, in effect, immediately accused of personal prejudice or of an imperialism of his own subjective judgments; if only he would follow x's theology in the Bible instead of y's, he would soon discover a contrary thesis, of course! No doubt, personal and cultural blind spots do easily bedevil our exegesis, but the danger is infinitely less if hermeneutically one regards the Bible as essentially harmonious. The extent to which such radical notions are increasingly beginning to appear in Roman Catholic contexts is exemplified in the recent work of John Charlot: *New Testament Disunity: Its Significance for Christianity Today* (Dutton, 1970), where the New Testament's disunity is again considered a simple fact and no longer a problem, and where—not surprisingly—as a result a pluralistic theology based on creative human freedom and subjectivity (allegedly like the New Testament's!) is proposed. Furthermore, if the dogma of the canon and its essential unity are really only the (false!) creation of the later church's insecurity, there certainly is no reason why it should not all be debunked, as argued by, e.g., Robert Wilken, *The Myth of Christian Beginnings* (Doubleday, 1970); cf. Martin Marty's favorable review in *Lutheran Forum*, 2/71, p. 34.
 28. I am not interested in turning this article into any *apologia pro vita mea*, but any earlier misunderstandings and/or misrepresentations arose from

some of the same out of hand rejection of nearly any and all historical perspectives and the corresponding absolutization of earlier versions of the term which this paper tries to correct. Of course, once one is labelled a "liberal," gossip, imagination, if not simple slander, easily attribute to a person all sorts of positions which do not have the remotest basis in fact. In this respect I could react favorably to at least the surface meaning of point 1 of the Bertwin Frey-sponsored "A Declaration of Determination" if it were reasonably clear on all sides that only different *understandings* of inerrancy were at stake and if outside limits were clearly spelled out. Certainly, as already indicated, in American Lutheranism as a whole, it has often long since ceased to be merely a matter of inerrancy or of verbal inspiration, but of inspiration and of objective biblical authority in any traditional sense. Hence, the Declaration's strong ecumenical stance, theoretically laudable enough, seems either inconsistent or uninformed.

29. As I wrote this I noted in *Christianity Today*, Jan. 15, 1971, pp. 28-29, that a recent "Latin America Congress on Evangelism" in Bogota, after finding basic agreement in all areas except this one, finally dropped "inerrancy" and agreed on "problems."
30. Many illustrations of both have recently been gathered in A. von Rohr Sauer's, "The Meaning of Archaeology for the Exegetical Task," *CTM*, XLI/9 (Oct., 1970), pp. 519-41.