

A PROJECT
IN
BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

Edited by
Richard Jungkuntz

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

History of the Project

Acting favorably on a recommendation of its Commission on Theology and Church Relations the 1965 convention of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod instructed the commission to “conduct a comprehensive study of Biblical hermeneutics” and for this purpose authorized the commission “to engage sufficient full-time personnel” and “to make provision for leaves of absence for men appointed to participate in the study, in order to expedite the study.” (1965 *Proceedings*, p. 95)

Various circumstances precluded the engaging of full-time personnel as had been authorized. However, the commission did appoint the following men to serve as a core group for carrying out the Synod’s assignment: Walter Bartling, Robert Bertram, Martin Franzmann, Heino Kadai, H. Armin Moellering, Robert Preus, Walter Roehrs, and Raymond Surburg. Richard Jungkuntz, executive secretary of the commission, was appointed convener and ex officio member of the core committee. Since January 1966 this committee has held 12 meetings, usually of 2 days each.

As a starting point for its work the committee accepted the “Prospectus” which the Commission on Theology and Church Relations had adopted (May 1965), outlining the study as recommended to the Synod. While further specification was found desirable at some points, this original plan of the commission still provides the basic framework and direction for the committee’s work. It appears below, pages 7—10.

A “primary and basic” part of the whole inquiry, the “Prospectus” declares, should be a study of the hermeneutics of the Lutheran Confessions, particularly at the hand of Article IV of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession. The committee was in full agreement with this directive and for the reason stated: “If our Confessions are in fact what we believe and declare them to be — a true and correct exposition of the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures — then the hermeneutical principles according to which these Confessions expound that doctrine deserve our most careful analysis and demonstration.” Dr. Bertram accepted the assignment to undertake this foundational portion of the work. From his study so far the committee has had the benefit of reading and discussing three detailed chapters of what will finally be a six-chapter work. A summary appears on pages 124—126.

The need for an inductive approach to certain aspects of the hermeneutical question had already been cited by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations in its first report, “A Study Document on Revelation, Inspiration, Inerrancy” issued in 1964. This need was reiterated by the “Prospectus” at several points. As one of its first tasks, therefore, the core group undertook the joint study of a selected pericope, Matt. 21:33-46, with individual members investigating particular aspects of the passage. As a consequence of this group study and the discussion that it prompted a statement was drafted formulating some of the specific hermeneutical questions and concerns that had emerged. With these questions and concerns in mind the committee again addressed itself to Scriptural data, this time to a pair of pericopes, one from the Old Testament (Gen. 28: 10-22) and one from the New Testament (Matt. 4:1-11 and parallels).

In the meantime other lines of approach to the task were also pursued. In order to prevent any needless misunderstanding from arising in the discussion of moot points and so as to establish a secure and common base from which the joint work could move forward, a brief summary of axiomatic presuppositions (*Vorverständnis*) for the study of Biblical hermeneutics was drafted and unanimously accepted (see below, page 10). The committee also reviewed a summary of hermeneutical principles enunciated by C. F. W. Walther under Thesis XVI of his essay "The True Visible Church" and unanimously acknowledged their continuing validity. The present task, in the committee's view, is to explicate the significance and concrete application of these same principles with reference to specific contemporary issues in Biblical interpretation. Walther's statement together with the committee's note appears below, pages 10—11.

In this connection it should be added that the committee has had the advantage of doing its work within the framework of guidelines adopted by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, particularly "A Statement on the Inspiration of the Scriptures," "A Statement on the Inerrancy of the Scriptures," and the summary statements of its report on "A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Biblical Studies." These documents appear below, pages 11—18.

A review of the original "Prospectus" in the light of the work done thus far led to a more detailed and concrete programing of the project for individual members. Specific assignments were made as follows:

Bartling, "Hermeneutics and Pauline Parenesis"

Bertram, "The Hermeneutical Significance of Apology IV"

Franzmann, "The Hermeneutics of Fulfillment: Is. 7:14 and Matt. 1:23"

Kadai, "Revelation and History"

Moellering, "Recent Roman Catholic Thought on Biblical Inspiration"

Preus, "Prophecy and Fulfillment in Post-Reformation Theology: A Presage of Modern Biblical Hermeneutics"

Roehrs, "The Typological Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament"

Surburg, "Form Criticism and Its Implications for the Interpretation of the Old Testament"

Four of these studies have now been completed and are herewith being published together with summaries of the others, which are in the latter stages of preparation. While the Commission on Theology and Church Relations has authorized this publication, the materials do not necessarily represent positions of the commission as such. Rather the studies are being shared with the church in the hope that they may both stimulate and contribute to our joint Christian effort to move together toward a better common understanding of the hermeneutical task.

The committee spent considerable time discussing the four completed studies in detail, especially in the light of brief written responses prepared by other members of the core group. These responses sought to underscore whatever points seemed to be especially significant or valuable, at the same time pointing up whatever weaknesses of argument or unmet difficulties were still felt to remain in the presentations, to which further attention must therefore be given. Selected portions of the responses are printed after the essays to which they refer.

As the members of the committee reviewed their work for this publication, they took occasion once more to try to analyze the nature of the hermeneutical

problem as it seems to confront The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod particularly. At the same time they ventured to prepare an appraisal of the significance of their own study up to this point. This analysis and appraisal appears on pages 134—137.

The committee is fully convinced that the basic hermeneutical issues which seem to be the source of tension and confusion in our church today are not uniquely a problem of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod and that their solution or removal from the area of Christian concern will not be achieved by our unique contribution alone. But the committee also believes that the action of the Synod in authorizing this comprehensive study and the work that has so far been done on it furnish our church with an opportunity for growth in Biblical understanding and mutual edification which would now be abandoned only at great loss to ourselves — loss of courage, loss of freedom, loss of trust in the power of God's Word to overcome our darkness with His light.

PROSPECTUS

INTRODUCTION

Since all genuine theology is, in the pregnant phrase of our fathers, a "practical capacity" (*habitus practicus*), the study of Biblical hermeneutics too is an enterprise of believing men that must be shaped and informed by the practical end for which the Bible itself has been given — the proclamation of God's good news and the edification of the gathered people of God.

The proposed comprehensive study does not aim at merely satisfying intellectual or philosophical curiosity, however legitimate and valid may be the intellectual and philosophical questions that must be dealt with. But the study outlined below, if undertaken at all, should be consciously and honestly oriented to the church's primary task of proclamation. Biblical interpretation is not a matter of solo performances by a number of virtuosi, nor does it take place in isolation, cut off and divorced from the faithful hearing and faithful proclamation of the Scriptural Word that has long since been going on in the church and still goes on today. Rather the believing, confessing church of past and present alike provides the proper locus for authentic Biblical interpretation.

Within this framework and from this posture the Commission on Theology and Church Relations is proposing to conduct a comprehensive hermeneutical study according to the plan outlined below. This prospectus is designed to indicate the purpose and scope of the proposed study. It should be understood that the men chosen to carry out the study are to be *guided* rather than *bound* by it if the church is to get the full benefit of their labors.

I. The Hermeneutics of the Lutheran Confessions

This part of the inquiry is primary and basic to all the rest. If our Confessions are in fact what we believe and declare them to be — a true and correct exposition of the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures — then the hermeneutical principles according to which these Confessions expound that doctrine deserve our most careful analysis and demonstration.

We propose to carry out this analysis particularly at the hand of a lengthy and crucial chapter in the Confessions: Article IV of the Apology. The reasons for this choice as well as a detailed outline of this part of the investigation are given in an appendix below.

It is our intention that the men assigned to research in the other areas of the

study should have the advantage of prior acquaintance with the results of this foundational work.

II. Basic Hermeneutical Questions

We are agreed that the hermeneutics of the Confessions, if valid at all, are still valid today. But the issues in Biblical interpretation are not the same today, or at least the form in which they meet the interpreter is different from that of the 16th century. Therefore a review, historical and analytical, of the shifting modes of posing the hermeneutical issues is in place at this point in order to put into perspective the confrontation of current questions and our confessional hermeneutic. Such a review, pointed to our specific concerns, would constitute a study in itself.

Among the questions that seem to loom especially large in our time, each deserving individual treatment and study, are these:

1. Revelation — its place in the whole structure of theology: Does it stand above, below, or on a par with the Biblical concept “Word” of God (*locutio Dei*)? Is it an accident of history or a significant fact that the Lutheran Confessions (e. g., no entry “*Offenbarung*” in index of *Jubiläumsausgabe*) deal so fully with the Word of God and so scantily with revelation? Is the notion of revelation as divine *self*-disclosure entirely Biblical? Can the Law-Gospel distinction be adequately maintained under this overarching concept? How does one’s doctrine of man affect the concept of revelation (general and special)? Relation of revelation to inspiration; revelation and Scripture.

2. Inspiration and Inerrancy: Continue the study along the lines laid down in the commission’s “Revision of the Study Document [on Revelation, Inspiration, and Inerrancy]” as presented to the [1965] convention.

3. Canonicity: inspiration and authorship — the criteria of authority — “the canon within the canon” — the *Vorverständnis*.

4. Language: forms (literary genres) — meaning and understanding (epistemology) — role of reason.

5. History and Historicism: historical(-critical) method — historical understanding — Biblical history writing as proclamation.

III. Special Questions of Old Testament Hermeneutics

That for His saving purpose God selected one family out of all the families of the ancient world and of this one family created a particular nation, people, and culture lays upon the Biblical interpreter the obligation to know this people both in its uniqueness and also in its relatedness to other nations, peoples, and cultures.

This calls for an appreciative and sympathetic study of the Hebrew genius in language, literary forms, thought world, and the like. More specifically, such a study must test and appraise from within the Biblical material itself the various methodological tools that have been fashioned for dealing with the sacred text.

Beyond this, however, the Scripture itself invites the interpreter to give attention to the “many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets” as preliminary to the eschatological word He now has spoken in Christ (Heb. 1:1). This means that a key hermeneutical concern must be to appraise correctly the “not-yet” character of the Old Testament in its tension with the same Testament’s forward thrust.

IV. Special Questions of New Testament Hermeneutics

In addition to the more or less formal problems connected with setting the New Testament documents in their proper historical context of the Judaeo-Greco-Roman world, the interpretation of the New Testament must proceed from principles that do justice to the richness and variety of the organic connection between the New Testament and the Old Testament.

For example, the promise-fulfillment pattern needs working out in a way that does full justice to the native sense of the text without losing sight of the basic fact that "all the promises of God find their yes" in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:19). The problems of typology and of typological exegesis demand disciplined investigation. Above all, the Law-Gospel distinction in its bearing on the relation of the Testaments requires a more structured treatment than we have so far given it.

Finally, the questions of methodology and the legitimacy or illegitimacy of various "critical" techniques must be dealt with in a sober, objective way that does not cheat either in regard to the Biblical data nor in regard to the believing interpreter's unqualified submission to the divine authority of the Word he handles.

V. Exegesis and Proclamation

Our hermeneutical research would be incomplete without a careful setting forth of the service that is rendered to proclamation by what we may call "self-conscious" exegesis, which endeavors to deal with the text by appropriate linguistic and historical tools and methods. It needs to be shown both in principle and by examples not only what value for today's proclamation inheres in a due respect for both the particular and the total Biblical context but also how recognition of the particularity and peculiarity of a given text serves as a guide to its contemporary application.

Finally, the commission feels that this study may serve the church's present needs most advantageously if it is presented in various forms for maximum utility. The following possibilities suggest themselves:

- a. A position paper for presentation to the Synod as a whole;
- b. A popular hermeneutical guide requiring no knowledge of Greek or Hebrew, designed for instructors in the church's schools at various levels;
- c. A scholarly hermeneutical text for professional use.

APPENDIX

Hermeneutics of the Lutheran Confessions

Of all the confessional documents the one best sample for our purpose is Article IV of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession. It is a long enough piece to provide its own checks on its interpreters. Not only is it rich in hermeneutical implications, but its sustained exegetical character makes it a working demonstration of its own hermeneutics. Our need is for an intensive analysis of the confessional literature, not just another survey; hence this restriction to a single confessional document. However, significant comparisons and cross references to other confessional books would be incorporated where they are called for to avoid the impression that the whole Book of Concord has precisely the same hermeneutic as Apology IV.

A. Traditional hermeneutical rubrics take on a character of their own in Apology IV, and this character of theirs needs to be specified if we are going to avoid vague generalities. Each of the following familiar and accepted principles must be reexamined by asking the question: How does this general hermeneutical rubric take specific shape in Apology IV?

1. Scripture its own interpreter ("rule of faith")
2. Unity of Scripture
3. Distinction of Law and Gospel
4. Scripture and tradition (canonicity)
5. Continuity and discontinuity between O. T. and N. T.
6. Literal-historical meaning (inerrancy)
7. "Reason" and the circle of faith

B. Apology IV illustrates vividly that formal hermeneutical questions are inseparable from substantive theological questions—in this case justification by faith—

and that systematics and exegesis interpenetrate each other at every point. The evidence for this dual claim can be set forth only by carefully exposing the delicate nerve system of Melancthon's argument in Apology IV, without which exposure his writing looks like a loose congeries of exegetical forays without pastoral rhyme or systematic reason.

C. Four telltale terms in Apology IV:

1. To "add": it is unbiblical and unevangelical to "add" something to a given passage if the addition in question is like that of the Romanists: the *opinio legis*, but there are many passages in Scripture — the Law passages which do not mention Christ — which do indeed require "addition" to them.

2. The complex of terms involving "clear" and "dark," "illumine" and "obscure," etc.

3. "Use" and "make use of" Christ.

4. "Need," "necessary," and "necessity."

D. Are there unique features in the hermeneutics of Apology IV which no longer apply to our hermeneutical problems today? If so, which are they, and why do they no longer apply? And which are those constants which still do apply?

(Adopted by the CTCR May 11, 1965)

"VORVERSTÄNDNIS"

The *Vorverständnis* with which I approach the Scriptures:

A. I approach individual portions of the Scriptures in the faith-conviction that through the united witness of the Scriptures, living and functioning in the church, God has told me that —

- 1) I am under the wrath of God because of sin and subject to death as the wages of sin: (Law)
- 2) I have been restored to life with God through the unmerited grace of God in His Son Jesus Christ: (Gospel)
- 3) I can know this truth only because God Himself has made it known to me: (Revelation, Word of God, Prophetic and Apostolic Word)
- 4) I can rely on the humanly mediated words of Scripture as the living Word of God: (Inspiration, Infallibility, Inerrancy)
- 5) I have no other source and norm for faith and life besides the Scriptures: (Sola Scriptura, Canon)

B. This faith-conviction has been produced in me by my baptism, conferred on me by the church on the authority of the Scriptures, and the witness of the Lutheran Confessions to the central intention and the essential content of the Scriptures as God's revelation of Law and Gospel. The Confessions witness to —

- 1) the distinction of purpose of these two cardinal teachings; and
- 2) my need of both in their distinct functions.

(Adopted by the committee April 7, 1967)

WALTHER'S HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES

THESIS XVI. The Evangelical Lutheran Church accepts God's Word *as it interprets itself*.

A. The Evangelical Lutheran Church leaves the decision solely to the *original text*.

B. The Evangelical Lutheran Church, in its interpretation of words and sentences, adheres to the *linguistic usage*.

C. The Evangelical Lutheran Church recognizes only the *literal sense* as the true meaning.

D. The Evangelical Lutheran Church maintains that there is but *one literal sense*.

E. The Evangelical Lutheran Church is guided in its interpretation by the *context and purpose*.

F. The Evangelical Lutheran Church recognizes that the *literal sense may be either the improper or the proper one*; however, it does not deviate from the proper meaning of a word or sentence unless Scripture itself forces it to do so, namely, by either the textual circumstances, a parallel passage, or the analogy of faith.

G. The Evangelical Lutheran Church interprets the *obscure passages in the light of the clear*.

H. The Evangelical Lutheran Church takes *the articles of faith from those passages in which they are expressly taught*, and judges according to these all incidental expressions regarding them.

I. The Evangelical Lutheran Church rejects from the very outset every interpretation which does not agree with the *analogy of faith*. (Rom. 12:6)

(From C. F. W. Walther, *The True Visible Church*, trans. John Theodore Mueller [St. Louis, 1961], pp. 66—90; italics added)

Note on the Continuing Validity and Usefulness of Thesis XVI

Our appreciation of Thesis XVI is more than a formal, respectful bow in the direction of a venerable document from the past. We appreciate it as a serviceable living instrument which we are minded to use. We shall be *using* it, not if we make our hermeneutical-exegetical work a mere repetition of the work done in the past but by carrying the principles and power of this document into the present.

For example, the present is history-minded to a degree that our past was not, and this will affect the application of the old principles. We shall continue to "accept God's Word as it interprets itself," recognizing the unique sanctity of the Sacred Scriptures and bowing before it. But that Word itself makes plain on every page that the story of the people of God, of the Son of God, and of the church of God is not something "done in a corner." The story unrolls amid the noisy and changing progression of cultures and kingdoms, sharing cultural idioms with them, affected by their rise and fall, speaking God's no to them and in the process taking color from them.

The inspired Scriptures themselves point to the historical soil on which they grew; and we are following the guidance of the Spirit, not introducing alien and misleading elements, when we scan both the Bible and the world round about the Bible for materials to elucidate the meaning of the *original text* (A), *linguistic usage* (B), the one *literal sense* imposed by the historical uniqueness of a Biblical document (C, D); to use all history (Israel's *and* that of the nations, Jesus' and Paul's and John's *and* that of the Graeco-Roman world) to help establish the *context and purpose* (E) of a document (e. g., the Book of Revelation).

A heightened sense of history leads, or at least should and can lead, to a quickened and more sensitive literary sense. We shall be perhaps less gingerly in recognizing the "improper" sense (F) in the plastic and pictorial character of Hebrew or in the powerful and persuasive poetry of the prophets and take them seriously for just that reason: God the Poet is speaking in the language that is designed to move men — woe to us if we remain unmoved!

A STATEMENT ON THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

A. Inspiration Is the Work of God the Holy Spirit

1. What is inspiration? The Scriptures use the word "inspired" in only one passage (2 Tim. 3:16); they do not analyze the process; they say simply that men who are inspired speak or write "*in the Spirit*" (Matt. 22:43; Rev. 1:10), as men "*filled*"

with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:67; Micah 3:8), or as men "moved [or impelled] by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). The Scriptures are speaking clearly when they speak in this way, for they are speaking to people who know (or can find out) from the rest of the Scriptures what the power, work, and blessing of the Holy Spirit is; from that knowledge they can get an idea what it means to be *in, filled with, or moved by* the Spirit. Paul uses the phrase "in Christ" and can count on being understood because his readers know the power, the work, and the blessing of Christ. If we want to understand inspiration more fully, we therefore turn to what the Scriptures say about the power, work, and blessing of the Holy Spirit in general and apply the knowledge gained in this way to our understanding of inspiration. This is letting Scripture interpret Scripture. The Nicene Creed is operating in this way when it places the statement on inspiration ("Who spake by the prophets") in series and in connection with its other descriptions of the power and works of the Holy Spirit.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, *who spake by the prophets*. And I believe one holy Christian and apostolic church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. And I look for the resurrection of the dead; and the life of the world to come.

B. The Holy Spirit Is the Spirit of Power

2. The Nicene Creed calls the Spirit "the Lord and Giver of Life." The Creed is thereby ascribing to the Spirit the highest power; there is no greater power than the power to create life. The Scriptures speak of the Spirit as having and exercising this creative power (Ps. 104:30; Gen. 1:2). As at the beginning of the world, so at the end of this age it is the power of the Spirit which will create the new world of God, the world to come (Is. 11:2, 6-9; 32:15; 44:3-4). The creative power of the Spirit will restore the dead to life (Rom. 8:11; cf. Ezek. 37:1-14). The new, immortal body of the resurrected dead will be a body renewed by the Spirit. (1 Cor. 15:44)

3. This creative power lived and worked in prophets and apostles. The prophet Micah says: "As for me [in contrast with false prophets], I am filled with *power*, with the *Spirit* of the Lord, and with justice, and might" (Micah 3:8); and he connects this Spirit of power directly with his word when he goes on to say: "to *declare* to Jacob his transgressions and to Israel his sin." The apostle Paul says: "My *speech* and my *message* were not in plausible words of wisdom but in demonstration of the *Spirit* and *power*, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the *power of God*" (1 Cor. 2:4; cp. 2:13). And again: "Christ has wrought through me . . . by Word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the *power of the Holy Spirit*, so that . . . I have fully *preached* the Gospel of Christ." (Rom. 15:18-19)

4. What does this mean for our understanding and teaching of the inspiration of the Scriptures? It means that we recognize that the Spirit of power was at work in the apostles and prophets when they wrote the words of the Holy Scriptures. We also recognize that the Spirit of power is at work in and through these words now when they are read, spoken, preached, or sung. We know that the inspired Word is a divinely created Word, not a word produced by men but a word given by God. We know the inspired Word as a divinely creative Word, a Word with a power that no merely human word has. We therefore stand in awe of this Word. We know that we dare not deal with this Word according to our own ideas (2 Peter 1:20), toy with it, or even resist it. If we do, we shall be destroyed by it. For those who believe it and obey it it will be "a lamp shining in a dark place" (2 Peter 1:19), the light of God's new world shining even now in this dark world of sin and death, the light of heaven on earth.

C. The Holy Spirit Is the Power in History

5. The Spirit is the "Lord and Giver of Life"; He is active and powerful in creation and re-creation. The Spirit, "who proceedeth from the Father and the Son," is active

also in the history that runs from creation to re-creation. In the power of the Spirit of God the great leaders of Israel do their work for God and God's people: Moses (Num. 11:25; Is. 63:10-14), Joshua (Deut. 34:9), the judges (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19), kings (1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 11:6; 1 Sam. 16:13). The Spirit is *the* decisive power in the history of the people of God (Zech. 4:6; Hag. 2:5). The Spirit is *the* decisive power in the history of all nations; *He*, not the massive military power of man, has the last word and the final victory. (Is. 31:3)

6. Through His prophet God promises that the Messiah shall establish His righteous reign on earth and bring back the peace of Paradise in the power of the Spirit of the Lord (Is. 11:3-10). According to the promise, the Servant of the Lord shall be "a covenant to the people, a light to the nations" in the power of the Spirit (Is. 42:1-7). As it was promised, so it came to pass. The history of Jesus the Servant Messiah is marked throughout by the presence and power of the Spirit. The Spirit's presence and power is seen in the record of Jesus' conception (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:35), His baptism (Matt. 3:16-17), His temptation (Matt. 4:1), His victory over demons (Matt. 12:28), His words (John 3:33-34; 6:63; Acts 1:2), His whole Servant ministry (Matt. 12:18; Luke 4:14-21), including the cross. (Heb. 9:14)

7. When Jesus returns to the Father, He continues His work in history through His apostles by the Spirit. The Spirit equips the apostles for their task of witness; the Spirit teaches and reminds them of all they have seen and heard. He witnesses to and glorifies the Christ and so leads them into all truth (John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15). Because the Spirit speaks in the apostles, their witness to Jesus Christ is not a mere report about Him; rather their witness confronts the world with Christ and through Him convicts the world of sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11). Their word forgives and retains sin with divine authority. (John 20:21-23)

8. Working by the Word and sacraments through men in the history of this world, the Spirit produces that which is not of this world. The Spirit gathers the church. The old order, where "sin reigned in death" (Rom. 5:21), is overcome; "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" sets men free from the old "law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). "By one Spirit" all men are "baptized into one body" (the church), and all are "made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). Thus there is created the new, eternal people of God, who confess with Paul: "Through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness" (Gal. 5:5). The presence and power of the Spirit in the church now is "the guarantee of our inheritance"; His powerful presence is a foretaste and pledge of the new heavens and the new earth which we shall inherit at the end of this world. (Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Heb. 6:4-5)

9. What does this mean for our understanding and teaching of the inspiration of the Scriptures? As we keep this connection between the Spirit and history firmly in mind, we see by faith that the historical character of the Scriptures is evidence of their inspiration; for the Spirit of God works in history through inspired words uttered at particular times and places for particular needs of the people of God. We see both the oneness of all the divine words, as creations of the one Spirit, and the particular quality of each word spoken in the power of the Spirit at a certain point in history. We shall therefore avoid the danger of trying to make each word say everything.

10. We see also that the divine control of the apostle or prophet is not limited to the moment of the inspired writing but involves also God's governance of the man's whole previous history. The Spirit working in and through prophet and apostle takes the whole man, with all that his history has given him and made of him, into His service and moves him to speak "from God" (2 Peter 1:21). The word of God spoken or written by inspired men at God's command has on it the impress of the personality, character, and style of the historical individual. This should put an end to all talk of mechanical inspiration.

11. We see also that the Scriptures, precisely in their historical character, are *Holy* Scriptures, since they are the product of the Spirit who produces in history that which is not of this world. We shall remember that we cannot treat an inspired document as just one more historical document, that we cannot take "laws of history" derived from documents that are wholly of this world and simply apply them to an inspired document.

D. The Holy Spirit Is the Spirit of Revelation

12. St. Paul calls the Holy Spirit the "Spirit of . . . revelation" (Eph. 1:17). "God," he says, "has revealed . . . through the Spirit" what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no heart of man has conceived (1 Cor. 2:9-10). "By the Spirit" the mystery of Christ has been revealed to apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:5). St. John "was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" when "the revelation of Jesus Christ" was made known to him (Rev. 1:10; 1:1). The Old Testament, too, connects the Spirit with the divine revelation given through the prophets. The prophet is called "a man of the Spirit" (Hos. 9:7); he is "filled . . . with the Spirit of the Lord . . . to declare to Jacob his transgression" (Micah 3:8). The Spirit of the Lord falls upon the prophet and enables him to say, "Thus says the Lord" (Ezek. 11:5). When Ezra looks back over the history of God's people, he confesses: "Thou . . . didst warn them by Thy Spirit through the prophets" (Neh. 9:30; cf. 9:20: "Thou gavest Thy good Spirit to instruct them").

13. It is difficult to draw a sharp line between inspiration and revelation. The inspired prophetic and apostolic Word, the Scripture inspired by God, is the Word by which God's revelation reaches man, for through this Word God makes known His will to man and makes His will count in the life of man. That is why this Word is "profitable" (2 Tim. 3:16) as is no human word, no matter how good and wise it may be. It does for man what man cannot do for himself. It is profitable "for teaching"; it brings man into the presence of God, makes known to him the work and will of God. It is useful "for reproof"; it brings sinful man low, it makes him bow before the holy God; it works repentance. It is useful for "correction" ("restoration"); it raises man up and lets him stand before his God. It is useful for "training"; it takes the life of man in hand, lays on him the kindly yoke of the Son of God, and makes man a servant of God "equipped for every good work." It works sanctification (2 Tim. 3:16). The inspired Word does what only the Spirit of God can do; it makes man "wise unto salvation." (2 Tim. 3:15)

E. The Spirit of God and the Word of God

14. The Spirit gives the revealing Word, and He works through the revealing Word. Inspiration is verbal inspiration. In this connection it is worth noting that many references to a word of God in the Scriptures are, at bottom, a witness to inspiration; for the Scriptures again and again say of the Word of God just what they say of the Spirit of God; "Word" and "Spirit" are pictured as doing the same work of God. According to the Scriptures the Spirit is active in the creation of the world; so is the Word (Gen. 1:2; cf. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, etc.; Ps. 33:9; 148:5). The Spirit of God works the new creation; so does the Word: When Jesus *proclaims* "the acceptable year of the Lord," the year of jubilee begins. It is there. "Today," Jesus tells His hearers "this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:18-21). The Spirit of God is the source of the prophet's power; so is God's Word. Ezekiel, for example, says that the Spirit of the Lord "fell upon" him, and so he could say: "Thus says the Lord" (Ezek. 11:5). Jeremiah says, "The word of the Lord came to me"; thus he was enabled to say, "Thus says the Lord" (Jer. 1:1-2). Both prophets are describing the same act of God.

So in the New Testament also. The angel Gabriel says concerning John the Baptist: "He will be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:15); St. Luke says, "The word of the Lord came to John." They are both saying: John is "the prophet of the Most

High" (Luke 1:76); through John God gives "knowledge of salvation to His people in the forgiveness of their sins" (Luke 1:77). When Paul calls his apostolic preaching the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13), he is saying the same thing as when he says that he has received the Spirit and speaks in words taught by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12-13). "Word" and "Spirit" are closely linked in the thought and language of the Scriptures. The combination of "verbal" and "inspiration" is a fitting and natural one.

15. The inspired words of the Holy Scriptures are all in the service of the one Word of God, the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us; they are all refractions and reflections of the one Light of the world. The one great task of the Spirit is to glorify the Christ. By the power of the Spirit working in words we can hear the incarnate Word; we can confess and proclaim: "Jesus is Lord."

(Adopted by the CTCR May 11, 1965)

A STATEMENT ON THE INERRANCY OF THE SCRIPTURES

1. God in the Holy Scriptures speaks to us in many and various ways. His written Word uses many forms of human speech, from sober straightforward narrative to the picture language of poetry and the symbolism of numbers. He speaks of the glories of the world to come in the language and images of this world, language and images that we can grasp. He graciously comes down to our level and speaks of Himself in terms of our human life and experience. In defining the inerrancy of the Scriptures we must therefore keep the definition broad enough to cover all this variety of divine speech in human form.

2. The Lutheran Symbols confess the inerrancy of the Scriptures with simple and forceful words: "They will not lie to you" (Large Catechism, V, 76, in *The Book of Concord*, ed. Tappert, p. 455; compare also the Formula of Concord, Epitome, VIII, 13, ed. Tappert, p. 483; Large Catechism, IV, Baptism, 57, ed. Tappert, p. 444). When we make that confession our own, our faith, a faith created by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures themselves, expresses the conviction that the witness of Scripture in all its parts in their intended sense is true and wholly reliable. These words of the Scriptures are inerrant because they are inspired by God — words taught by the Holy Spirit, written by men moved by the Holy Spirit. These inspired words in all their various forms are the Word of God. They are true and will not lead astray but will accomplish the purpose for which God gave them. In them the church hears the very voice of the God of her salvation.

3. Certain aspects of inerrancy need further study. We should study the inspired, inerrant Scriptures with the question in mind: Just *how* does the Holy Spirit make use of the various forms of language and literature in order to do His work, to make men "wise unto salvation"? Further study of the inerrancy of the Scriptures should include an examination of the various forms of language and literature employed by the inspired authors. This involves a more comprehensive study of hermeneutics, or principles of interpretation. The Commission on Theology and Church Relations is proposing such a larger study to the Detroit convention. Cf. *Convention Workbook (Reports and Overtures)* for the 1965 convention, pp. 35—36, Recommendations 37 and 38.

4. Such a study should be made in the spirit of our brethren of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, who have in their "Theses on Scripture and Inspiration" (p. 22) dealt with the question of inerrancy in exemplary fashion; they *confess* the inerrancy of the Scriptures. They *believe* it as a truth which "cannot be seen with human eyes nor . . . proved to human reason."

With the whole true Church of God we confess the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God. This inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures cannot be seen with human eyes, nor can

it be proved to human reason; it is an article of faith, a belief in something that is hidden and not obvious. We believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God and therefore inerrant. The term "inerrancy" has no reference to the variant readings found in the extant textual sources because of copyists' errors or deliberate alterations; neither does it imply an absolute verbal accuracy in quotations and in parallel accounts, such absolute uniformity evidently not having been part of God's design. We believe that the holy writers, whom God used, retained the distinctive features of their personalities (language and terminology, literary methods, conditions of life, knowledge of nature and history as apart from direct revelation and prophecy). God made use of them in such a manner that even that which human reason might call a deficiency in Holy Scripture must serve the divine purpose. Furthermore, it pleased the Holy Ghost to employ authors possessing various gifts for writing on the same subject. How in such cases it is possible that differing accounts of the same event or the same saying are the true and inerrant report of one and the same fact cannot and need not always be shown by rational harmonization. We must believe it until "that which is in part shall be done away" and "that which is perfect is come" (1 Cor. 13:10). We reject the attempts of modern religious liberalism to make man the judge of the Word of God. None of the natural limitations which belong to the human mind even when under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost can impair the authority of the Bible or the inerrancy of the Word of God; for Holy Scripture is the book of divine truth which transcends everything called truth by the wise men of this world (1 Cor. 1:17 ff., 27; Col. 2:8) and is therefore able to make us "wise unto salvation." (2 Tim. 3:15)

(Adopted by the CTCR May 11, 1965)

A LUTHERAN STANCE TOWARD CONTEMPORARY BIBLICAL STUDIES

Summary Statements

From . . . [the] vantage point of the Gospel, Lutheran theologians view every question of Biblical interpretation. Also concerning any given methodology of interpretation they ask above all: How does it relate to the understanding and proclamation of the Gospel?

Mindful, then, of the basic theological principles and the historical background sketched in Part I, we offer to the church the following guidelines for developing a soundly Scriptural and Lutheran stance toward contemporary Biblical studies.

A. OUR PRESUPPOSITIONS

1. As Christians we come to the interpretation of Holy Scripture in the assurance of our Baptism as the event from which we derive our new nature and perspective. Hence our Biblical study can be properly begun and carried through only as we continually make our own the grateful confession: "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, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. . . ." (Cp. also Large Catechism, IV [Baptism], 49: "God has sanctified many who have been thus baptized and has given them the Holy Spirit. Even today there are not a few whose doctrine and life attest that they have the Holy Spirit. Similarly by God's grace we have been given the power to interpret the Scriptures and to know Christ, which is impossible without the Holy Spirit.")

2. In the joy of this faith and with praise to God we affirm our unconditional loyalty and commitment to the inspired Scriptures as the written Word of God.

3. We pray that the Lord who has preserved among us a reverent attitude toward the Sacred Scriptures will continually enable us to stand with trembling awe and holy

joy before the God who addresses us in both judgment and mercy through the Biblical Word.

4. We express our praise to Almighty God for all new information and fresh insights into Scripture that have been made available to the church through the intensive investigations and research of Biblical scholarship in recent times as well as throughout her history.

5. Since the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired source and norm of all Christian preaching and teaching, we hold ourselves committed to the diligent and unremitting study of the written Word through the responsible use of every appropriate means and method that God has provided as an aid to our understanding of the Scriptures.

6. In hearty agreement with the Lutheran Confessions we affirm that the right understanding of the Gospel (including the proper distinction of Law and Gospel as grounded in the article of Justification) is the key that finally unlocks the meaning of Sacred Scripture (Apology, IV, 2-5, German; FC, SD, V, 1). We therefore hold that all theological questions raised by any interpretation must be posed and answered with reference to this central concern of the Scriptures. We also hold that those technical questions involved in interpretation which neither aid nor impair the right understanding of the Gospel (in its full sense) ought not become a matter of controversy in the church (cp. Apology, VII, 20 f.; FC, SD, Summary, 15). Not that technical questions as such may be dismissed in advance as trivial. On the contrary, the Christian interpreter is bound to deal seriously and soberly with all questions that arise in connection with the interpretation of any and every part of the Scriptures, precisely to enable him to judge correctly whether they aid, impair, or are irrelevant to the right understanding of the Gospel. (Cp. the CTCR's "A Response . . .," point C, 6, LCMS *Proceedings*, 1965, page 297.)

B. THE HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD

We consider the following to be basic and legitimate elements of the so-called historical-critical method (cp. "Guiding Principles for the Interpretation of the Bible" as accepted by the Ecumenical Study Conference, Oxford, 1949):

1. Establishing the text.

This entails the sensitive use of both external and internal criteria (i. e., the evidence of manuscripts, ancient versions, lectionaries, patristic quotations; and the evidence of style, language, thought) for detecting any alterations which the text may have suffered through the process of transmission by human hands, and thus to determine the original reading as accurately as possible.

2. Ascertaining the literary form of the passage.

This entails, as an aid to better comprehension, analyzing the Biblical passage in terms of its formal structure and character at the hand of such questions as these: Is it prose or poetry? Is it an address, a prayer, a monologue, a treaty, an edict, a letter? Is it an oracular saying, an invective, a lament, a liturgy, a proverb, a parable, a creed, a hymn? and so on.

3. Determining the historical situation.

This entails discovering, so far as possible, the original setting — in time and place and circumstances — of the document, its author, and its readers.

4. Apprehending the meaning which the words had for the original author and hearer or reader.

This entails careful investigation of the actual linguistic usage and idiom (together with their overtones conditioned by the social context in which they appear) of the author and his contemporaries in the light of the Biblical data and also of such extra-Biblical literature as may belong to the same social context.

5. Understanding the passage in the light of its total context and of the background out of which it emerged.

This entails consideration not only of the text's antecedent and contemporary circumstances — religious, cultural, historical — but also of the full range of the Biblical witness in both the Old and New Testaments.

C. NECESSARY CONTROLS

As legitimate as these methodological principles are, we regard them as being subject always to the following measures of control:

1. The authoritative Word for the church today is the canonical Word, not pre-canonical sources, forms, or traditions — however useful the investigation of these possibilities may on occasion be for a clearer understanding of what the canonical text intends to say.

2. The "literary form" of the text — even when it can be ascertained with reasonable certainty — is only a clue to understanding, not a criterion of truth. Moreover, the Christian interpreter reckons with the fact that God in His revelation may both modify conventional literary modes, even radically, and also create unique modes without analogy in other literature.

3. The problem of "history" needs to be handled with extraordinary sensitivity by the Christian interpreter. He cannot adopt uncritically the presuppositions and canons of the secular historian. In his use of historical techniques the interpreter will be guided by the presuppositions of his faith in the Lord of history. It is indeed true that Christian faith rightly sees in the historicalness of God's redemptive work (His entry into and participation in our *saeculum*) a divine warrant for the use of "secular" means and methods in the study of His Word, including linguistic, literary, and historical analysis of the texts. But at the same time faith recognizes that there is more to history than can ever be adequately measured by "laws" derived exclusively from empirical data and rational observation. In other words, the Christian interpreter must continually take into account "that the Scriptures, precisely in their historical character, are *Holy* Scriptures since they are the product of the Spirit who produces in history that which is not of this world" (cf. CTCR Statement on Inspiration, LCMS *Proceedings*, 1965, page 293).

4. The undeniably necessary effort to hear a text of Scripture first of all in its particularity, its meaning "then and there," must be balanced by an equal effort to hear the text both in its integral relation to all the rest of Scripture and in its meaningfulness for all who hear it today. This effort does not require an arbitrary flattening out of the rich variety of the Biblical witness into a dull one-dimensional uniformity. But it does entail above all a firm grasp of the essential unity of both Testaments, Old and New, and of their common witness to the one Truth that is as relevant now as when it was first proclaimed.

5. Whatever cognizance needs to be taken — as indeed it must — of the connection between Biblical materials and their background in the whole complex of social, cultural, political, economic, and religious factors of their day, a clear distinction must nevertheless be maintained between the unique, divine, and revelatory character of Scripture and the sheer human and contingent character of Scripture's earthly milieu. Parallelisms between extra-Biblical materials and the form or substance of Scripture do not as such constitute causal or substantive relations. This is not in the least to deny the genuinely human and earthly dimension of Scripture itself. It is only to say that there is a qualitative difference between the inspired witness of Holy Scripture in all its parts and words and the witness, explicit or implicit, of every other form of human expression.

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CHAPTER II

The Hermeneutics of Fulfillment: Is. 7:14 and Matt. 1:23

MARTIN H. FRANZMANN

Presuppositions

1. The Old Testament and the New Testament in their canonical form are inspired, the product and the instrument of the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son. This means that the interpretation of each Testament and of both Testaments in their relationship to each other is Trinitarian in its inception and throughout its execution. The question is not whether the two Testaments are positively related to each other but how.

2. The inspired authors of the New Testament, though their free and varied use of the Old Testament may present problems to the modern analytical mind, have understood and interpreted the Old Testament in a way that is exemplary and normative for Christian exegetical scholarship. Over against the tacit *hybris* of 20th-century Biblical scholarship the reminder is in place: The massive historical-critical apparatus of our exegesis *may* not be so much a mark of our advancement beyond first-century limitations as an indication of our native weakness and a token of God's compassion with our epigonic frailty.

I. Fulfillment and History

The term "fulfill," as used in the New Testament concerning the connection between an Old Testament word and a New Testament event, involves and implies a conception of history common to both Testaments. A knowledge of and a congeniality with this conception of history are therefore essential to a theological-exegetical understanding of fulfillment. This knowledge and this congeniality (on the theological, not merely the aesthetic-literary level) are produced in the interpreter by the Spirit who is creatively active in the Sacred Scriptures. Here as elsewhere in the interpretation of the Scriptures, an understanding encounter with the Word of God as Law and Gospel, however technical it may become, remains a charismatic act.

The difficulty which the idea of fulfillment presents for modern historical thinking is well illustrated by R. B. Y. Scott's remark on the Immanuel sign of Is. 7:14. "The sign is thus firmly anchored to the historical situation in which it was given. Its use as evidence of a prophetic expectation of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is based on a mistranslation of v. 14 and on a mystical or allegorical interpretation which divorces it from history."¹ If our secular conception of history, with its emphasis on verifiable immanent causal continuity, is accepted as exclusively normative, then this difficulty is real and is insoluble; there is no link between the eighth-century incident in the history of the kingdom of Judah and the birth of Jesus. One might well ask: "What is this Child to Ahaz, or Ahaz to Him?" 734 B. C. and 4 B. C. are 730 years apart, and an interpretation of the Immanuel oracle which ignores those 730 years does indeed "divorce it from history." But *is* our conception of "history" and "historical" normative for the interpretation of the Scriptures? It is misleading to impose on any document a frame of

reference alien to the document itself. In the case of Sacred Scriptures it is worse than misleading; it is fatal to a true understanding.² If we are to hear the Scriptures out on their terms concerning the crucial idea of "fulfillment," we must work, in faith, with a Biblical conception of "history," that is, with a conception of history given us by the inspired writings themselves.

A. THE CHIEF SUBSTANTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BIBLICAL CONCEPTION OF HISTORY³

1. *Thetic Statement*

a. God is the *Lord of history*: "From Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). This sole and universal Lordship is often emphasized by implicit or explicit reference to the all-embracing authority and sovereignty of the Creator.

God, the Lord of history, *wills to communicate with man, His creature*; man is therefore not left to puzzle out God's actions in history as best he can. God's Word initiates historical action, interprets it, and by continual recall and rehearsal fixes it in man's memory as a still-living force. History is God's dialog with His people — and through that people ultimately with mankind. The inspired documents that record and interpret this converse of God are an integral part of the history of this action of God.

c. History is *God's movement toward His goal*: the restoration, by judgment and grace, of His creature, man, to communion with Himself. His conversation with His people is "the *goal-directed* conversation of the Lord of the future with His people" (H. W. Wolff). The historical question is therefore not the question of causality but of teleology, and that not a teleology of immanent forces or natural processes but of the purposeful working of God.

d. History, as the Bible knows and tells it, is *universal in perspective and purview*. The story of God's people, God's Son, and God's church begins with creation and the beginnings of all mankind and eventuates in the critical impact of the Gospel on all nations and the consummation of all. The drama of God's redemptive dealing with mankind through one people and one Person is played on the stage of history, where the nations are in view and are involved, to the end that "the kingdom of the world" may "become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He . . . reign forever and ever." (Rev. 11:15)

To document these thetic statements fully would be to write a Biblical theology of considerable format. For the purpose of indicating the connection between history and fulfillment, it may suffice to show how this Biblical conception of history informs both the original Old Testament situation and the New Testament situation of fulfillment in one case: the Immanuel prophecy of Is. 7:14 and its fulfillment in Matt. 1:23.

2. *Commentary on the Substantive Characteristics*

God the Lord of History

The history of Isaiah 7 is anything but mythical, detached from time and place and from humanity; it is of the earth, earthy. It moves in the framework of datable kings and datable events. There are highly mundane political coalitions, campaigns, a threatened siege, projected dethronements and enthronements, human panic fear at foreseeable contingencies, human calculations of political profit and loss in dealing with world powers and lesser powers. The place, too, is specific and

concretely spelled out: Isaiah meets Ahaz in this time of political crisis, 734 B. C., "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field" (v. 3), and his word to Ahaz deals with definable geographic entities: kingdoms and capitals. And the passage bristles with patronymic designations; men are enmeshed in the historical-biological causalities of generation, conception, and birth.

And yet neither the times nor the geography nor the sons of men dictate the course of the history being enacted and projected here. God is Lord over this history. If the prophet says: "The head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. . . . And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah" (vv. 8-9), the ear of faith can hear the conclusion: "The head of Judah is Jerusalem, and the Head of Jerusalem is the LORD" — He and He alone is in charge. He sends His prophet and the incarnated prophecy of the prophet's son named Shear-jashub. Kings, however strong and terrifying they may be to man, are really what they are in His eyes, "smoldering stumps of firebrands" (v. 4). With the offer of the Sign He opens up a future that to man's eyes is a hopeless blank; He offers a Sign that evokes memories of the holy war in which the LORD goes forth to do battle for His people, where man must be quiet, cease from fear, and believe and so "be established." He bestrides the world and will whistle for the Egyptian fly and the Assyrian bee to do His judgmental work upon an apostate dynasty and people; He shaves the captives doomed by His judgment "with a razor which is hired beyond the River — with the King of Assyria" (v. 20). Nations, even the most distant and the mightiest, must serve Him as surely as all creation must and does serve Him. The Creator, no less, is here at work in history: if Ahaz fails and the house of David falls, His creative power will raise up not another David but a new David out of the night of His people's doom (Is. 9), out of wreckage of the line of Jesse (Is. 11).

The history which is the setting of the fulfillment in Matt. 1:23 is of a piece with that of Is. 7. Here as there, God is sovereignly in charge. The Old Testament history recapitulated in the genealogy⁴ came to Matthew and his readers as already-interpreted history. They knew Abraham, David, the Captivity, and the Christ (the key points of the history) as instances of God's sole and royal governance of history. *God* called Abraham when he was but one, and blessed him, and made him many (Is. 51:2). *God* chose David over his strapping brothers, endowed him with His Spirit, and solemnly engaged to build David an everlasting house, in an "everlasting covenant ordered in all things and secure" (2 Sam. 23:5). *God* threatened His people with the Captivity as His judgment upon their apostasy, and He executed the judgment; Jerusalem "received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins" (Is. 40:2). The Christ, that Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, is no product of a historical process; there shall be an end of the rod of the oppressor and an everlasting bonfire of warrior's boots and garments rolled in blood and a reign of peace and righteousness on the throne of David because "the zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this" (Is. 9:7). The grace of God overrode the sins of Judah (Tamar!) and David (the wife of Uriah!) as omnipotently as it overrode the sin of Ahaz and the failure of the house of David and set the sky ablaze with a new Great Light at the birth of the promised Child.

Matthew underscores this divinely total control of history by the symmetry (three times 14 generations) of the genealogy: "The rhythm of number becomes, for Matthew, the token of God's all-pervasive governance" (Schlatter). The very title of his work,⁵ *biblos geneleos*, recalls the Creator who is in charge of all history

from Creation onward to its close (cf. Gen. 2:4; 5:1). If we take the three 14s of the genealogy as referring to the periods of the waxing and waning of the moon, this would be another link between the Creator and the Lord of history.

The New Testament history, too, is God's "work," as Isaiah called it (5:19). The Messianic Child is firmly anchored in His people and in the Davidic line; but the decisive thing about this Seed of Abraham and Son of David is that He is "of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:18, 20); "Spirit" marks the creative, history-shaping presence of God. That presence is marked again and again in the early chapters of Matthew; the Angel of the LORD disrupts the planning of Joseph, the son of David, and impels him to go the way of the God who made a covenant with David. And though the fulfillments of the prophecies of Micah, Hosea, and Isaiah have in them more than a geographical interest, they *do* say that God moves and acts where He wills. Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, the wilderness, Galilee are not historical accidents; God picks His spots.

History as God's Dialog with His People

If God is the Lord of history, the Word is the instrument of His regency. The narrative of Isaiah 7 is under the rubric of Isaiah 6:9, "Go, and say to this people"; it is the first recorded working-out of the LORD's command of obduration. And the designation of Ahaz and his entourage as "house of David" (vv. 2, 13) recalls an earlier word of promise (2 Sam. 7:8-16), a word which shall not fail, however pitifully Ahaz may fail. Not the intelligence report (what the house of David "was told," v. 2) but what the LORD said to Isaiah and through the prophet to Ahaz determines the history of Ahaz and his people and his father's house (vv. 4, 17). Not what Syria and Ephraim say but what the LORD says shall stand and come to pass (vv. 5-7). Only if the house of David will "believe," that is, hold to the promise of God as Abraham once held to it, will the house of David be established (v. 9). Immanuel, the sign given as a promise to repentance and faith and as a threat to unbelief, as yet lives only in the Word. This is God in dialog with His people, and it is deadly serious dialog: Ahaz is confronted, challenged, and invited to respond; when he will not answer in any meaningful sense, he is held accountable for it. He dare no longer call God "his" God (v. 13; cp. v. 10).

The Matthean history in which the Old Testament Word finds its fulfillment is a history dominated by the Word of God. The frugal recital of the genealogy records no speaking of God, of course; but no Jew or Jewish Christian could fail to be reminded of the speaking God when he heard of Creation, when God spoke and it was done; when he heard of Abraham, whose story begins, "Now the LORD *said* to Abraham" (Gen. 12:1), whose life is a continual being addressed by God — even the formula used to describe the prophet's converse with God is used of him: "The word of the LORD, came to Abraham" (Gen. 15:1). King David's history, too, is a history dominated by the Word and crowned by the divine Word of promise. David inquires of the LORD, step by step in his career, and lives by the LORD's reply. The king has the prophet as his vis-à-vis; and Matthew alludes lightly ("by the wife of Uriah," 1:6) to the occasion when the Word of God in the mouth of Nathan unmasked and punished the calculated adultery of the king. The Captivity was an operation of the Word, which became a fire in the prophet's mouth and devoured the dry wood of an apostate people (Jer. 5:14). In the birth narrative the angel of the Lord appears only as bearer of the Word of God to Joseph; and his most significant utterance concerning the Messianic Child

is the giving of His eloquent name. The Magi are set in motion by the star, but they find the King whom they sought by the Word spoken through Micah and are preserved for God's further purposes by the voice of God in a dream.

History as God's Movement Toward His Goal

Translators employ 22 or more future tenses in rendering the 25 verses of Is. 7 into English. This fact, occurring as it does in an account of a conversation between prophet and king, does not necessarily prove anything. But it does call attention to a basic characteristic of the Biblical conception of history, one that is prominent in the prophets but is germinally present in Israel's oldest traditions.⁶ History is characteristically known and interpreted in the light of the future, in the light of what is to come — or better, since the future is God's, in the light of God's future action.

The future leans over Ahaz' shoulders and speaks urgently into his ear. Rezin and Pekah appear, not as terrifying invading powers of the present but in their future impotence, as "smoldering stumps of firebands." Shear-jashub means "a remnant *shall return*"; an as-yet unknown and undefined core of penitents in Judah is the future people of God. The king of Assyria appears, not in the light of the present as an ally who will help Judah prevail against Syria and Ephraim but in his future role as the instrument of God's judgment upon Judah.⁷ The Immanuel sign opens up the future, God's future, a future more distant and less calculable than Ahaz probably cares to reckon with; he needs help *now*, within weeks or months, and cannot wait for a child to be conceived and born and to grow up.

This emphasis on the future does not reduce the past to insignificance; rather it is just God's movement toward His future goal that recalls and points up the significance of the past. The memories of holy war evoked by the speaking name "Immanuel" and the injunctions "Be quiet, do not fear,"⁸ the recall of God's ancient promise to David and his house in the way Ahaz is spoken of and is addressed ("house of David"),⁹ the comparison of God's future judgment with the catastrophe of the divided kingdom, "the day that Ephraim departed from Judah" — all these bring home to king and people that the Lord of the future is the Lord whose love, fidelity, and inexorable righteousness they have experienced in the past. There is a continuity between past and future because the one and sole Lord is active in both. Therefore the present is not emptied by this accent on the future either. The present becomes *the* time when man must in repentance and faith await, hope for, and act on the future action of God.

In Matthew the forward, purposive thrust of history is documented in two ways. First, all past history is depicted as moving toward the present of the Incarnation; the prophetic word from the past is introduced by a purpose clause.¹⁰ The nexus with creation indicated by *biblos geneseos* is another indication of this forward thrust, for "the idea of creation is here [in the Old Testament] itself a historical one; it answers the question: *To what end and whither?* — not primarily the question: *Whence* is the world and *why* is it thus and not something different? Therefore the answer is neither mythical cosmogony nor a scientific explanation but is first and foremost *eschatological-historical*; or to put it in another way: the question of origin is in the last analysis identical with the question of the *telos*; because God is Lord, He is Creator, just as He is Consummator."¹¹ The key figures, Abraham and David, are men whose lives are charged with the future; their history is big with things to come. And the pointed reference to the Cap-

tivity as a key point in this history (the "deportation to Babylon" is mentioned three times) makes clear that this future is God's future. Why continue the story beyond this grim dénouement, this history of a people without land, city, or temple, its royal line represented by a fettered, eyeless king? The only answer is: Because the Lord of the future has promised His people "a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:10-11), because *He* has told weeping Rachel: "There is hope for your future." (Jer. 30:17)

Second, the present time of the Immanuel fulfillment points beyond itself to a greater fulfillment: The Messianic Child, by God's command, bears the name Jesus, whose meaning is a compendium of the history of the covenant God's (Yahweh's) dealings with His people and a promise of the consummation of the work of His right hand: "He will save His people from their sins." The covenant God, present in this Child, shall deal radically and eschatologically with sin and so establish the new, eternal covenant: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer. 31:34)

The Universal Perspective and Purview of History

In Is. 7 the kingdom of Judah is seen as a skiff whirled about in the maelstrom of world politics. Syria, Ephraim, and the world power Assyria are in view. These things are not being done in a corner. When the house of David is too little in faith to see the greatness of the God who offers him a sign as deep as Sheol or as high as the heavens, then the greatness of God looms up in terrifying splendor. The God who has power to whistle in the fly of Egypt and the bee of Assyria will on His own initiative give a sign; when Ahaz fails, He will raise up a new Deliverer to wage the holy war that shall deliver the remnant.¹² But He is so great, this Deliverer who is God's sufficient answer to the panic fear of man quailing before the kingdoms of this world — so great that His work cannot stop there. One cannot separate Immanuel from the new *Fiat Lux* and the Child of Is. 9 nor from the Righteous Ruler sprung from the judged and ruined line of Jesse who appears in Is. 11. The Immanuel sign points to a reign of cosmic range and universal import. The peace of paradise shall return, the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the LORD, and the nations shall seek Him who is set as an Ensign to the peoples (Is. 11:6-10). The orientation of history toward the future and its universal perspective are closely related. "In prophecy interest in universal history is aroused because the *coming* God of Israel is recognized as the sole Lord of all reality."¹³

The first chapter of Matthew shares with Is. 7 the envisaging of the world power as playing a significant judgmental role in God's sovereign rule over history; the deportation to Babylon is in the history that runs from Abraham to Jesus Christ. As in Isaiah, there is a strong emphasis on David and David's house. And God's wondrous universalistic reconstruction of the promise to David, intimated in the prophecies concerning Immanuel, the Child, and the Righteous Ruler, the root of Jesse, emerges in full eschatological clarity here. The story of the birth of Jesus is preceded by the mention of *Gentile* women in the genealogy of the Messiah and is followed by the story of the coming of the Gentile Magi who come seeking the King of the Jews. The more-than-Davidic nature of this King of the Jews is marked by the twice-repeated statement that He is conceived by the Holy Ghost. He is not a product of Israel but is in the strictest sense God's gift to Israel, and so, like all God's gifts to Israel, He signifies great things for all mankind. The universalistic

line begun with the mention of the Gentile women in Jesus' ancestry and the confession that He was conceived by the Spirit runs on in Matthew through the stories of the Magi, the centurion, the Canaanite woman, the predicted witness of the apostles before governors and kings, to the "all nations" of the Great Commission. And if Jesus is to save His people *from their sins*, then all that has frustrated the achievement of God's purposes through Israel is at length overcome; the blessing of Abraham will break forth upon all the families of the earth, and the last-days pilgrimage of the nations to Mount Zion can begin. Sin is the deep disease not only of Israel but of all mankind. If Israel is healed, there will be healing for the Gentiles too.

B. CHIEF FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS

The chief formal characteristics of this conception of history are as follows:

a. The recording of this history is *rigorously selective*, always for its own purposes. Vast areas of the history of mankind (such as the genesis, flowering, and decline of whole civilizations, brilliant and historically significant) are either passed over in silence or noticed only as they impinge upon the history of God's people and God's Son. And even within the narrow sector which is the special scope of this history, significant areas (such as the economic and military history of Israel or the "formative influences" in the early years of Jesus) are either scantily noticed or ignored.

b. This history is *discontinuous*, that is, its unity and continuity is not established by noting an unbroken series of immanent causalities between event and event but is found in the persistent purpose of the Lord of history, the *Deus loquens et agens*, to carry on His dialog with man.

c. This history is *prophetically interpreted history*. In it the event and its interpretation are inseparable. The Holy Spirit, active in history (both as experienced event and as recorded and remembered event), is the only Guarantor of the reality of this history and the only Interpreter of its significance.

d. This *prophetically interpreted history is to ordinary, secular, "normal" history as the miracle is to the causally explicable event*, for "the real miracle means that in the astonishing experience of the event the current system of cause and effect becomes, as it were, transparent and permits a glimpse of the sphere in which a sole power, not restricted by any other, is at work. To live with the miracle means to recognize this power on every given occasion as the effecting one" (Martin Buber).¹⁴ For the Christian, history so conceived is the only "normal" history; all other interpretation of history suffer from the frustrateness of the fallen world and partake of its tainted, provisional, tentative, and transitory character.

The form of Biblical history seems strange to us; but it seems strange largely because we have made it strange, because we have settled for a definition of "normal history" that thinks of history as concerned only with the surface reality of the causal-analogical connections observable in the contacts and collisions between man and man, nation and nation, culture and culture, past and present. From this point of view the selectivity, discontinuity, and the inextricable interlacing of historical data and their interpretation found in Biblical history must appear strange and arbitrary, and they necessarily arouse the suspicion that it is an inaccurate and untrustworthy sort of history. But to the theologian and believer the idea that our current conception of history is somehow normal and normative

appears to be a pure assumption.¹⁵ It is not normal to leave God out of account — or to relegate Him to the corner of man's subjective convictions — in this way. And once God is in the picture, faith is involved. Hellmuth Frey, in a perceptive comment on Gen. 15:6, says that when a man believes, when he is justified by faith, he becomes "normal": "Abraham's soul is set in order; it has returned to man's primeval attitude toward God; it has found its way home."¹⁶ Biblical history is normal because it is written from faith to faith, written by normal men, men of faith who have been taught to "live with the miracle." For them, and for those who have in faith learned of them, these formal characteristics of selectivity, discontinuity, and the formation of the facts by their interpretation are nothing strange and exceptional. They are normal and natural, indeed inevitable. Form follows function, and "function" here is the functioning of faith.

History as God wants it written and remembered is selective. Faith can behold the whipping garments of God as He moves toward His universal goal on one path only, the illumined path that runs through His selected people. And God seems to take a perverse delight in choosing the most unlikely path and in working with slight and unpromising materials.

How odd
Of God
To choose
The Jews!

The story of Ahaz' decision as told in Is. 7 (even if we fill in the background from 2 Kings 16) and the story of Joseph and Mary in Matthew are both told in a highly selective way¹⁷ and are both inadequate history in every respect but one; but that is the one respect that matters for faith. They both illumine the miracle of God's guidance of history (Is. 28:29; 29:14) toward this universal goal. Faith lives with this miracle and of this miracle. And faith lives before the God who does "wonderful and marvelous" things in fear and obedience; faith cannot demand the miracle. The miracle is vouchsafed, *ubi et quando visum est Deo*. Faith never expects omniscience, not even historical omniscience. To faith is promised and to faith is given light to walk by, not the perfect light of God's great Day; not all truth, but the truth that makes men free. And this light and this truth faith gets in abundance from this history, for what Hoskyns and Davey said of the New Testament history holds (due allowance being made for the difference between the Testaments) of all Biblical history: "Each fragment is seen not only to be part of the whole, but to contain the whole; or to put it differently . . . each fragment of it not only rests upon a common background, but expresses it."¹⁸

From the holy war of Israel's early days in Canaan (to which "Immanuel" alludes),¹⁹ from David to Ahaz, from Ahaz to Immanuel, from the promise of the Immanuel sign to Jesus — these are great leaps; the gaps are centuries wide. And not all the riches of the rest of Biblical history are sufficient to bridge these gaps in such a way that a rationally intelligible and demonstrable continuum emerges. This history is discontinuous (the Germans have an elegant word for it: *sprunghaft*); fallow centuries lie between the fields on which God plows and sows and reaps. But there is a continuity for faith nevertheless, the continuity of the threatening and promising Word of God. And this is for faith the decisive continuity. Faith can cross the dark river of the present to the unseen bank of the future on stepping stones as well as on a bridge; for faith, resting in the Word, knows: "The Lord, who is Lord of both present and future, is holding me by the hand."

Faith lives and walks by the Word; it is therefore wholly natural that Biblical history should be highly interpreted history. Even faith cannot make anything of the *bruta facta* of history; the *bruta facta* reveal only the *Deus absconditus*. The picture of Habakkuk climbing his tower and looking forth to see what the Lord "will say" to him is a luminous illustration of that. The brute fact of the Chaldean conquest (the sight of that remorseless international fisherman who drags out all nations with his net and sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his seine) is to Habakkuk, for all his faith, an intolerable enigma (Hab. 1:12-17; 2:1). The brute fact of Rezin and Pekah in league against Jerusalem — only the Word can reveal these sputtering faggots for what they are. The brute fact of the birth of a child of dubious paternity — only the Word can show that this Child is conceived by the Holy Ghost, is the Savior from sin, is the promised Immanuel and the dawn of the new, last age.

It is therefore gravely misleading to speak, as Oskar Cullmann for instance does, of this history as history interlaced with *myth* and to see the historian's task as the "extremely difficult" one of disentangling the historical from the mythical. Myth always suggests irreality, a flight from fact; and this selective, discontinuous, interpreted history is not flight from fact. It is factual history because it envisages, understands, and records the fact that counts: the sole Lordship of the Creator God, who is also the Coming God, moving with His illumining and resistless Word into the future for the attainment of His universal purpose. This history, being of faith, is normal. It is by just this sort of history that faith knows itself to be addressed.²⁰

C. HISTORY AND REPENTANCE

History as experienced event is God, Creator and Lord, at work, in word and deed working out His purposes for all mankind, personally addressing man as *Deus loquens et agens*; history as remembered event is structured in a form that makes clear God's sole working and is so interpreted as to make obvious its relevance for man. History therefore signifies: *Tua res agitur*. History says: "Repent!"²¹ At the last-days climax of this history, when God comes in the Person of His Son and Servant to seek, call, and serve man, this causal connection between history and repentance which has marked all previous history is formulated with particular and trenchant clarity by Jesus Himself: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near" (Matt. 4:17). The climax of history is also the climax of the call to repentance.

Biblical history is normal, written by normal men in order to keep men normal, that is, in faith and obedience under the royal reign of God. It therefore serves to restore men to normality when they have lapsed therefrom; it creates repentance. H.-D. Wendland has stated this repentance-creating function with unusual trenchancy. He is commenting on Mark 1:15 ("The time [*kairos*] is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; *repent*, and believe in the Gospel"):

Man is to take up the *kairos* of God into his heart, will, and life; he is to put himself under the decision which God has made and be obedient to it alone. To repent means to draw the inferences from the deed of God which is being done for man. To speak one's Yea to this *kairos* of God means taking one's place upon the way which God wills to go from the Now of the time of decision to the end. . . . This Yea to God involves a Nay to all forces and powers which impede His coming, a Nay to the active malice of the human heart, the renunciation of all demonic powers and the dominion of Satan.

This repentance [*Umkehr*, reversal], without which neither the Yea or the

Nay is possible, is the real root of the historical and churchly self-consciousness of early Christianity. Christians looked upon themselves as men made partakers in God's redemptive deed, men invited into His royal reign.²²

What is true of the supreme *kairos* of the Incarnation holds also to a degree for all previous *kairoi* in history. Wolff, speaking of the so-called Deuteronomic History (Deut. — 2 Kings), which he calls the "first fruit of the prophetic understanding of history," sums up the purpose of that monumental historical work thus:

The goal of this history is not to make the present intelligible to the readers as God's judgment, much less to explain it as the final termination of salvation history. If this were the goal, it would be impossible to understand why again and again times of apostasy, of judgment, and of the continuation of salvation history are presented according to new ordinances [Setzungen] of Yahweh (cf. especially Judg. 2:11-22; 1 Sam. 12:6-25). Rather, we can discern the intention of *bringing the contemporary generation to return to the word of God*, which had long since been proclaimed and was now [at the time of the Exile] substantiated through history. At all decisive turning points of the course of history this intention is apparent. In this connection it is to be noted . . . that the main catchword "repent" occurs over and over again in 1 Sam. 7:3; 2 Kings 17:13; 23:25, above all, in direct address to the exilic generation in 1 Kings 8:46 ff.; Deut. 30:1-10; 4:30 f.²³

The history recorded in Is. 7 has before it the key signature of "Shear-jashub," "a remnant shall return"; "return" is the characteristic term for repentance in the Old Testament.²⁴ The thematic word of the pericope, v. 9, on faith, is the unfolding of the positive aspect of "return," the turn in trust to God. Matthew's genealogy, with its mention of sinful and Gentile women in the royal line and its stress on the failures and disasters in Israel's history, speaks to Jewry of repentance in unmistakable terms: "Shed your pride of blood, your pride in preeminent righteousness, and turn to the God whose royal reign comes in the gratuity of grace. Turn to Him whose forgiving love and fidelity is documented in your history, and go the way which He is going from the Now of the birth of David's saving Son to the End!" One may therefore add to the points of congruence between Is. 7 and Matt. 1, between the Old Testament and the New, this dominant accent on repentance — but hardly as just one more point in series with others; rather this is the point of crystallization for them all.

II. The Meaning of "Fulfill"

It is on the basis of this understanding of history, recorded and interpreted in the normality of faith and addressing man with a summons to repentance, that the New Testament use of the term (and the idea, even where the term does not occur) of "fulfillment" is to be understood and appreciated. Thus understood, the idea is of great significance both for the understanding of the way in which the New Testament employs and interprets the Old Testament and also for the understanding and interpretation of the Old Testament in the contemporary church.

A

Delling's definition of "fulfillment" takes due cognizance of the close and organic connection between the Biblical conception of history and the idea of fulfillment: "The New Testament idea of the fulfillment of the Word of God gets its specific characteristic from its eschatological content; this distinguishes it decisively from rabbinical proof-from-Scripture. Fulfillment means: In the New

Testament present God's redemption-creating will reaches its full measure in the Christ event. The New Testament idea of fulfillment is summed up and comprehended in the person of Jesus."²⁵

In view of the deep and pervasive congruity between Isaiah and Matthew in their conception of history, their theological affinity in this most important respect, one may well question the widespread opinion that Matthew's use of Is. 7:14 is artificial and arbitrary, one that imposes a new and essentially alien meaning on the Old Testament text, a use "based on a mystical or allegorical interpretation which divorces it from history,"²⁶ an example of an "atomising proof-from-prophecy which cuts away the original context" and therefore an exegetical procedure that we in our day cannot repeat.²⁷

Matthew, to judge from what he has written, was more interested in the theological than the biological aspect of the Virgin Birth. His accent falls on "conceived by the Holy Ghost" rather than on "born of the *Virgin Mary*." He twice mentions the creative operation of the Spirit in the "genesis" of Jesus, once in his own narrative and once in the solemnity of the angel of the Lord (vv. 18, 20). He is interested in the Savior significance of the name Jesus (v. 21). When he comes to comment on the quotation from Isaiah, he wastes not a syllable on what is supposedly the key word in the quotation for him, the term *parthenos*; he confines himself to the theologically more significant "Immanuel . . . God with us" (v. 23). Moreover, Matthew nowhere in his narrative refers to Mary as *parthenos*, although he no doubt thought of her as such, as Luke did (1:27).²⁸ Matthew is of course proclaiming the Virgin Birth confessed in our Creeds; but there seems to be no clear indication that the *parthenos* of the LXX was indispensable to his purpose; that purpose is theological, and if the LXX translators had used *neanis* in Is. 7:14, as they did elsewhere, Matthew could have used it in that form.

The exegesis of Matt. 1:23 has suffered from the too-ready assumption that Matthew's interest centered in the *parthenos* of the LXX text. One may ask whether the exegesis of Is. 7:14 has not likewise suffered from the assumption that the young woman and her child can be somehow identified as merely eighth-century figures. The number and the bewildering variety of conjectures as to the identity of the young woman and her child as it might appear to Ahaz and his court²⁹ would seem to indicate that the mysteriously oracular, obscurely hinting character of the prophetic utterance concerning them has not been sufficiently respected. One can sympathize with Wolff's tart remark: "The attempts at identification pretend to a greater knowledge than the prophet himself had."³⁰ Certainly the Immanuel sign is "firmly anchored in history"; there is no doubt about that. But whether we can or should even attempt to fill in the indistinct outlines of this sign with eighth-century possibilities is another question. The clearest and most distinct feature of the sign remains the name of the Child, Immanuel, with its ancient connotations of divine, miraculous help in the holy war.³¹

There is much about the Immanuel sign and its contemporary relevance that remains unclear to us; and we must reckon with the possibility that it never was wholly "clear" to the prophet and his contemporaries.³² We must even reckon with the possibility that we may be mistaken in our passion for clarity — "Andeutung zählt in der Prophetie immer mehr als Deutlichkeit."³³ The poetically mysterious has more power to impel and propel than the crystalline syllogism. At any rate, what Is. 7 says theologically, what it says to man's heart and hope, is clear enough. It is a call to repentance, a summons and invitation to faith, and a threat

to impenitence and unbelief, and that too with a particular emphasis on this last element; the promise is so overlaid with threat as to be almost obscured by it. The heavy air of obduration that oppresses the reader of Is. 6 is the atmosphere of Is. 7 too. Consequently the promise of Immanuel makes its summons to faith in a rigorous form; the house of David, the people of David, the returning remnant are asked to believe in God's future at a point where all possibilities of believing have apparently been cut off, in the face of opposing powers that have "success" inscribed on their brows. The sign given to faith points into a brighter future through a ravaged land where thorns and briars grow, where agriculture has ceased and curds and honey are the only available food, through a land which belongs to Immanuel, for the first, only by promise; for the first, the waters of the River overwhelm it, and the outspread wings of the Assyrian eagle overshadow it (Is. 8:6-8). That is the bleak foreground; in the far background lies the fulfillment of the promise given to David (and forfeited by Ahaz), the victory in the holy war which "Immanuel" assures. Man is being summoned to go the way which God is going, the unpromising way of little things ("child!"), to put his future into the hand of God, whose kingdom comes in a way that is wholly other than the way of the kingdoms of the world.

What use does Matthew make of this? How does he see the redemption-creating will of God as expressed in Isaiah 7 reaching its full measure now, in the latter days? "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet" (1:22). Here, and here alone,³⁴ Matthew uses this "all" to call attention to a fulfillment: God has been watching over His Word to bring it to fullness, to its ultimate utterance, in all that pertains to the "genesis" of His Anointed, in the creative working of the Spirit in that genesis, in the giving of the promised Son to a reluctant son of David, in the giving of the significant name which promises a deliverance greater than Ahaz and the mass of his contemporaries could envisage — here is a Sign deeper than Sheol and higher than the heavens indeed!

Here, as usual,³⁵ Matthew uses the punctiliar *aorist* passive to recall God's earlier utterance. Far from ignoring the original, historical particularity of the prophetic Word, he seems in fact to be calling attention to that particularity. And the particular emphasis of Is. 1 lives on in the Matthean fulfillment; the somber colors of the genealogy, the doubts and hesitation of Joseph, the son of David, the scandalous liability to misinterpretation that besets the birth of Immanuel — all this points up the fact that Immanuel, in the first century as in the eighth, is the contradicted Sign of the redeeming action of God, that His greatness and goodness are visible only to the eyes of faith, that man must therefore *turn* from his own ways and conceiving and submit wholly to God's way; that there will therefore be another cleavage in Israel, greater than that of 922, greater than that of 734, that the ways of men will divide before this Child and there will be a fearful judgment on unbelief. The question which confronted Ahaz and his people in 734 is now confronting Israel with eschatological intensity.

Are we reading things into Matthew? Are we overinterpreting him? Only the words of Matthew can answer; they are the witnesses who live and can tell. The most congenial of Matthew's interpreters in our times, Adolf Schlatter, is fond of pointing up what he calls the *Bussernst* (the penitential seriousness, or gravity) of the first evangelist; there is nothing improbable, a priori, in the idea that he should have taken up the word of Isaiah in the somber sense and with the critical thrust suggested by its original setting.

Moreover, the six other Matthean quotations from the Old Testament which constitute the framework of the prelude to Jesus' first public proclamation of the Kingdom and the attendant call to repentance (Matt. 2:6, 15, 17, 23; 3:3; 4:15-16) have a similar motif. There is the same antithesis to the powers of this world as that found in Is. 7. The major world powers with which Israel had to do in the course of her history are present by implication in five of them.³⁶ In each case the promise and hope for the future lies in the Word of God that opposes these powers. And it is promise in its purest form, promise against all human probabilities. The word from Micah sets little Bethlehem over against the power of Assyria (even Jerusalem, the residence of Israel's king and the focus of her political strength, is eliminated) (Matt. 2:5-6). The word from Hosea pits the call of God against Pharaoh and his armies (Matt. 2:15). The word from Jeremiah with its divine promise to Rachel, the weeping mother of the race, bids men believe that the Voice of God is more potent than the Assyrian captor who has carried off Rachel's sons (Matt. 2:18); the Isaianic word concerning the Voice in the wilderness proclaims the triumphant royal progress of God in the face of the still-unshaken massivity of the Babylonian empire (Matt. 3:3); the opening words of Isaiah 9 concerning the great light of a new creation that breaks upon a people sitting in the land and shadow of death is spoken over against the conquering power that has made Assyrian provinces of large tracts of the Promised Land. To top it all, the Great Deliverer of the last days is a Nazarene, buried in the obscurest of obscure villages; this too is part of the prophetic promise, pure promise: the Deliverer comes from Nothingsville, He is a light shining out of darkness (Matt. 2:23). Matthew's quotations from the Old Testament in the opening section of his Gospel all seem designed to prepare for and to undergird Jesus' opening proclamation: "*Repent*, for the *kingdom* of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). All of them assert the coming of God's kingdom in strange and hidden guise; all bid men turn and go God's way in radical faith, resolved to live solely by the promise of God, which is now reaching its fullness in the last days. In the insistence on *this* way, to the exclusion of every other, there is implicit a threat to impenitence and unbelief.

This threat becomes explicit later in Matthew's Gospel, particularly in chapters 11 to 13, where Matthew shows how the Servant Messiah and the unspectacular Kingdom arouse contradiction in men who will not go God's way in repentance but seek rather to impose their will on Him. In this section, significantly, Jesus is shown quoting Isaiah 6 (Matt. 13:14-15), and here Israel is warned against going the way of an Ahaz, that striking and frightening example of a man who "had" and yet "had not" (Matt. 13:12) and so lost even what he had.³⁷

To sum up: Matthew is quoting Is. 7:14 with full consciousness of its original setting and the original Isaianic theological accent. Matt. 1:23 is not an atomistic proof-text for the Virgin Birth but a profoundly theological interpretation of the Incarnation. All mankind, all Israel, the whole royal line has failed; only God's Word has not failed — it comes to fullness. The "fulfillment" is a genuinely theological fulfillment in the sense of Delling's definition. The Old Testament Word achieves its ultimate, its real utterance in speaking of Christ, as it was designed to do by God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Once the nature of the tie that binds the Testaments together is recognized in its fullness, the question whether the Immanuel oracle is to be classed as a Messianic prophecy loses some of its acuteness. H. W. Wolff, in his fine study, *Immanuel, das Zeichen dem widersprochen wird*, answers the question with a cautious

negative (pp. 42 ff.). A Messianic figure in the strict sense, he maintains, should possess three characteristics: (1) The Messiah is a *royal* figure; (2) He brings *salvation*; and (3) He ushers in the *end-time*. Wolff finds all three characteristics to be, at best, very indistinct in Immanuel; and he deprecates the idea of drawing in the Messianic figure of Is. 9 and Is. 11 as methodologically dubious. This last looks like an extreme case of methodological purism — are we to abandon all exploitation of the larger context in prophetic books just because they are apparently rather loosely knit collections of prophetic utterances and not close-knit unified compositions? Is there not a unity of the prophetic person, a unifying context of person and that person's history? However that may be, Immanuel is, in a sense at least, a royal figure. If, as Wolff himself says, the thrust of the oracle is that the LORD will raise up a leader in the holy war, when Ahaz fails and refuses, does not Immanuel step mysteriously into the royal line? And is not Immanuel's very name a promise of salvation (however large judgment may loom in the foreground), a salvation we can hardly divorce from His Person? And as for His ushering in the end-time: The arrow of God flies darkling here, but there is no mistaking its direction. The house of David is under judgment; the old covenant with David seems to have ended in nothingness and hopelessness. If there can still be such a thing as God-with-us for a remnant of David's people, there must come into being a new ultimate order of things which shall both supersede and consummate the old. This is at least hinted at in Is. 7; and this is what Is. 9 and Is. 11 spell out more fully and more clearly.

One might, in conclusion, note also how the Old Testament Word opens out toward its New Testament fulfillment. The father of the promised child is not mentioned in Is. 7 (just as the paternity of the promised Ruler from Bethlehem is wrapped in mystery in the word of Isaiah's contemporary, Micah 5:1), and that too in a chapter where practically every other male figure is identified by his connection with a father (Is. 7:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 17). Also, Immanuel is singularly inactive for a Deliverer; what does He *do*? This is due in part to the character of the holy war, where the LORD fights for His people and even the divinely appointed human deliverer is told to "be quiet" (cf. Is. 7:4). But also, as we can see from the vantage point of fulfillment, there is an almost Johannine emphasis on who and what the Deliverer *is*: the divine Deliverance in Person, "whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:30)

B

The significance of the idea of "fulfillment" for contemporary interpretation of the old Testament in the church is this: The church (which includes the church's scholars) reads the Old Testament as the Word of God on the way toward its fullness. The New Testament constitutes the indispensable last-days context of the Old, the ultimate norm for the interpretation of and the key to an understanding of the Old Testament just *as Old Testament*.⁸⁸

* * * * *

EPILOG

The Hermeneutics of Fulfillment and the Lutheran Confessional Stance

1. Lutherans pledge themselves to the Scripture as "the *prophetic* and *apostolic* writings of the Old and New Testaments as the pure and clear fountains of Israel."

The whole Old Testament is heard as a prophetic Word. The function of the prophetic Word is "to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10). The whole New Testament is heard as an apostolic Word, a Word which is "to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life" (2 Cor. 2:16) and as such calls on all men "to repent and turn to God and perform deeds worthy of their repentance" (Acts 26:20). The keynote of Luther's First Thesis is heard throughout the Lutheran Confessions.

2. Since "repentance" (in the full Biblical sense of the word) is the motivating cause of Law-Gospel preaching, a genuinely historical approach to the idea of fulfillment renews in the Lutheran interpreter the conviction that the Lutheran Confessions, with their Law-Gospel orientation, take him to the beating heart and the interpretive center of the Scriptures. The historical approach will preserve the interpreter (and proclaimer) from a dry, schematic use of Law and Gospel and will help him to deal with them as the live and personal action of the living God dealing with men where they live, in history.

NOTES

1. *Interpreter's Bible*, vol. V, p. 217. The question whether Matthew's interest is primarily in the "virgin birth" and consequently whether the LXX "mistranslation" is essential to his purpose, will be dealt with later.
2. Nietzsche called the New Testament use of the Old Testament "an unparalleled philological farce."
3. For this section the author is particularly indebted to Heinz-Dietrich Wendland, *Geschichtsanschauung und Geschichtsbewusstsein im Neuen Testament* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1938). See especially pp. 12—23. For a more recent treatment, with abundant references to more recent literature and a polemical confrontation with the Bultmannian position, see Oskar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).
4. To see in the genealogy merely "proof of Davidic descent" is hardly adequate. For one thing, it is difficult to see why Matthew should have begun with Abraham if his aim was to establish Jesus' Davidic descent; for another, such "proof" of descent does not prove much—to prove that a man is a son of David is not to establish him as *the* predicted and expected Son of David who shall be great to the ends of the earth.
5. One finds it difficult to believe that the term so heavily freighted with associations from Genesis should be merely the heading of the genealogy, or the genealogy and the birth story. It is more probably the title of Matthew's whole work, the new Genesis.
6. "Already in the ancient Credo there are intimations of the goal-directed nature of history. Yahweh's actions do not take place in the course of the natural year, but they are an irreversible sequence in the free field of history. . . . Thus there are at least hints of the finality of the prophetic understanding of history in the early traditions." H. W. Wolff, "The Understanding of History in the Old Testament Prophets," in Claus Westermann, ed., *Essays in Old Testament Interpretation* (London: S. C. M. Press, 1963), p. 349, n. 17. K. R. Crim, the translator, used "finality" to render the German "Finalität," by which Wolff means the purposive or goal-directed character of history. He elsewhere uses the term "Intentionalität."
7. Cf. Wolff, pp. 337—45.
8. H. W. Wolff, *Immanuel, das Zeichen dem widersprochen wird* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1959).
9. Note also the echo of 2 Sam. 7:16: "Your throne shall be *established* forever," in Is. 7:9: "If you will not believe, surely you shall not be *established*."
10. Cf. *Th. W.* III, 324; VI, 295.
11. Wendland, p. 16; emphases in the original; translation my own.
12. Cf. H. W. Wolff, "Hauptprobleme Alttestamentlicher Prophetie," in *Gesammelte Studien*

- zum *Alten Testament*. (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1964), p. 227, and the work cited in note 8.
13. Wolff, "The Understanding of History," etc., p. 348; see also p. 349: "Such interest in history is, as it were, a by-product of the prophetic proclamation of the coming God. . . . They [the prophets] proclaim that no hearer can understand their God if he does not at the same time understand reality as history determined by him and directed to him, as his conversation, first with Israel, but *finally drawing in the whole world of the nations.*" (Emphasis mine)
 14. *Moses, the Revelation and the Covenant* (Harper Torch Books edition. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 77.
 15. For another treatment of the question of what constitutes "normal" history, see the author's "The Hermeneutical Dilemma" in *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXXVI (1965), 502—33.
 16. *Das Buch des Glaubens*, vol. 2 of *Die Botschaft des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1950), p. 54.
 17. For example, the account of Isaiah says nothing of Ahaz' trouble with Edom (2 Kings 16:6), and even 2 Kings 16 passes over "the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did" with a cross-reference (2 Kings 16:19). Matthew tells the story of Joseph and Mary so succinctly that harmonization with the Lucan account proves difficult: there is, for example, no mention of Joseph and Mary residing at Nazareth.
 18. *The Riddle of the New Testament* (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), p. 172.
 19. Cf. Wolff, *op. cit.* (note 8), pp. 34—35, and *passim*. Wolff's whole interpretation of the Immanuel oracle works with the motif of holy war.
 20. *Heil als Geschichte* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1965), pp. 117 ff. (Part 3, ch. 1). Cullmann uses *Mythos* in the neutral sense of "not verifiable historically." But the term is unfortunate, nevertheless, because of its connotations. Theologians should never have allowed themselves to be maneuvered into using this dubious term. On the impropriety of the term "myth," see G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts (Studies in Biblical Theology No. 8)*. London: S. C. M. Press, 1952), pp. 118 ff.
 21. "Repent" is used in the full prophetic-Biblical sense of man's total turning from self and sin to God, a "turning" which God Himself produces.
 22. *Op. cit.* (cf. note 3), p. 12.
 23. Wolff, "The Understanding of History," etc., pp. 349—50, n. 18. Wolff has subsequently dealt with this topic extensively in his essay "Das Kerygma des Deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks," now available in his *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1964), pp. 308—24.
 24. Cf. *Th. W.* IV, 980, 4 ff.
 25. *Th. W.* VI, 295, 11—16. Translation my own.
 26. R. B. Y. Scott, quoted above: See note 1.
 27. Wolff, *Immanuel, das Zeichen, dem widersprochen wird*, p. 44.
 28. The term *parthenos* did get into Matt. 1:16 in the course of transmission, but the attestation of this reading is not so strong as to suggest that it is the original one; neither is it intrinsically very probable that an original *parthenos* would have been lost or dropped in the major manuscript traditions.
 29. For a brief summary and a balanced estimate of these conjectures, see C. R. North in *IDB*, vol. II, pp. 685—88.
 30. *Op. cit.* (Note 27), p. 33. Translation my own.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
 32. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
 33. H. W. Wolff, "Das Geschichtsverständnis der Alttestamentlichen Prophetie," in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, p. 302. The translator of the essay in Westermann's *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation* has rendered the sentence, not too happily, with: "Intimation is always of more value in prophecy than a clear statement." (P. 349)
 34. Matt. 26:56 may be a second case.
 35. Matthew has a special fondness for *pleroo*: the word occurs 13 times in his Gospel (14 if

we include *anapleroo*, in 13:14), 12 times in Matthew's own statements, as compared with 1 time in Mark, 2 times in Luke, 3 times in Acts, and 5 times in John. Matthew shares with John the tendency to introduce the idea of fulfillment with a purpose clause (*hina plerothe*).

Matthew strongly favors the use of the *aorist* in referring to what was written aforetime (11 times out of 12). That the will and Word of God becomes full, reaches full measure, in the history of the Christ does not erase or make irrelevant its primal historical particularity.

Matthew uses the purposive-fulfillment idea to interpret history of the Christ particularly at those points where that history is a *skandalon*: the obscurity and ambiguity of His birth and early years (1:23; 2:15; 2:17, 23; 4:14); the deceptive appearance of His Servanthood (8:17; 12:17 ff.); the unroyal conclusion of His career on the cross (21:4; 26:54, 56; 27:9). Matthew is concerned to show and proclaim that just here and just in this way the redemption-creating will disclosed in the Old Testament words and deeds of God is reaching its full measure.

36. If one can accept the idea that there is a connection by word-play between the *Nazoraios* of 2:23 and the *nezer* of Is. 11:1, then the Assyrian power is in the picture there too, and all the quotations have in them the same antithesis to the world-power. But the connection seems dubious to me. — It is assumed here that the passages are quoted with a consciousness of their context and are designed to recall it. The validity of that assumption is proved or disproved by the theological picture that emerges as one works with it; if that picture is valid and consistent, then the assumption is validated. There is no way of proving or disproving its validity independently.
37. For a fuller treatment of this theme in Matthew, see the author's *Follow Me* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), pp. 98—125.
38. The best study known to me in this area is H. W. Wolff's "The Hermeneutics of the Old Testament," in *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation*, pp. 160 ff.

RESPONSES

The treatment of fulfillment in the broad context of the Biblical view of history is exciting and liberating. The interpreter is encouraged to search the total historical situation into which the Old Testament Word was spoken for correspondences into that situation which the New Testament Word discloses as its fulfillment. In the test case of Is. 7:14 and Matt. 1:23 this approach is richly justified by the resulting interpretation. It rises far above the aridities of more formal approaches to the relation between prophecy and fulfillment.

Yet it is not quite clear precisely in what that relation consists. The first half of the paper presents a schema of the Biblical view of history and amply demonstrates that that view is fully shared by the spokesmen of both the prophetic and the apostolic words. Now, if the schema does indeed adequately represent the Biblical view of history, then the various elements of this view could presumably be elicited from any two passages chosen at random from the two Testaments. What is the nexus that binds precisely these passages together as prophecy and fulfillment? This must be something more specific than their common view of history. If the nexus lies in a certain commonality in the events, then it is difficult to see what distinguishes this treatment of "fulfillment" from Dr. Roehrs' treatment of "typology." We are evidently dealing with two very closely related phenomena whose middle ground lies somewhere within the Biblical history. . . .

* * *

. . . If a response like the present one, so as not to appear altogether uncritical, ought to torment the essay with a question or two, my question would be this: Does the category "history" — meaning by this now God's history, "God's dialog with His people," Heilsgeschichte — threaten to become a new monism, obscuring the distinction between Law and promise? Is it enough to emphasize merely that this history includes both Law and promises, that "there is a continuity for faith . . . the continuity of the threatening and promising Word of God," and that "this is for faith the decisive

continuity" (p. 26)? Doesn't that — "the threatening and promising" — conceal precisely the decisive discontinuity? Ought that discontinuity — the threatening versus the promising — to be blurred even by such an admittedly overarching umbrella as the "work of God," which of course "the threatening and the promising" both are? Doesn't the umbrella also work, alas, as an insidious leveler and flattener, obscuring how different is the "promising" from the "threatening," how distinctive is that new history, that new creation, that new age which is the promissio?

True, both Law and promise do have this in common that they are both alike "history," just as they are both alike Word of God and both alike revelation and both alike inspired and both alike inerrant. But we all know, I trust, how these common denominators which Law and promise admittedly share have so often predominated (demonically, I would say) that we well-nigh lost that still more decisive truth which alone makes Scripture and the Confessions the revolutionary thing they are: the distinctiveness of the Gospel. Without that drastic distinctiveness by which the one Lord of history saves us, not merely from our own history or from "the kingdom of this world" but from His own other kingdom and history — without that distinctiveness, as we have learned to our hurt, churches quickly become reactionary, and hermeneutics becomes "Jewish and philosophical." . . .

* * *

It is hard to overestimate the value of this essay. The scholarly argument is so wedded to evangelical proclamation that the reader finds more than enough reward in apprehending chiefly or even only the latter. Yet the argument too wants to be heard, not indeed so much for its own sake as rather for the sake of the proclamation it aims to serve and in great part rests on.

This last point, that the argument of the essay rests largely on the proclamation it aims to serve, suggests that the author declines (knowingly, I feel) to seek an escape from the famous "hermeneutical circle" in which the kerygmatic word depends on historical facts whose ultimate sanction is the kerygmatic word. Since I share this commitment of the author, I cannot quarrel in the least with the way in which his essay brings this faith understanding to rich and effective expression. Nevertheless, there is an aspect of this study that arouses a vague sense of discomfort, because it seems to me to run against the basic grain of the presentation. The source of my uneasiness lies, I think, in what strikes me as an inconsistent use and understanding of the term history. It is quite clear that the essayist is vigorously protesting the theologians' feckless submission to the current tyranny of "our secular conception of history." In this protest he is surely right, and yet — . Perhaps I can best indicate the reason for my uneasiness by asking a few questions at the hand of the text itself.

On page 19 we read: "If our secular conception of history, with its emphasis on verifiable immanent causal continuity, is accepted as exclusively normative, then this difficulty is real and is insoluble." With this statement the author has laid his finger squarely on the modern problem in handling the Biblical idea of fulfillment. But it seems to me that unintentionally he has at the very outset begun to hedge his bets by introducing the little qualifier "exclusively." It is not entirely clear whether he means this important adverb to be taken in a strict sense or not — a few lines later in a similar context he drops it. If, however, it is indeed meant to be taken strictly, then he seems to be granting that the secular conception of history is after all normative in some sense or in some degree — even though not "exclusively." But then the question at once arises: By what criterion do we discover when to suspend this ordinarily normative role of the secular conception of history? Is it only in the interpretation of the Scriptures? And if that is the case, is it in regard to any and every part of the Scriptures so that the operation of immanent causality is given no consideration whatever? Conversely, do we concede such a normative role of the secular conception of history in

regard to extra-Biblical data? If so, does this not rule out the possibility of the miraculous in "ordinary," that is, non-Biblical history? Or if also outside the Bible the secular concept of history is not to be regarded as *exclusively* normative, even though normative in some sense or degree, how can we possibly identify the limits of its applicability in this area? . . .

* * *

. . . *Is the pejorative definition of myth ("Myth always suggests irreality, a flight from fact") to be understood in reference to purported Biblical myth or to myth generally? If the latter, what is one to make of Plato's observation concerning his own myth: "Now it would not be fitting for a man of sense to maintain that all this is just as I have described it, but that this or something like it is true concerning our souls and their abodes, since the soul is shown to be immortal, I think he may properly and worthily venture to believe; for the venture is well worth while." (Phaedo, 114 D)*

And what of the essayist's own statement (p. 29): "The poetically mysterious has more power to impel and propel than the crystalline syllogism"?

Friedlaender commenting on the Phaedo: "Only the language of myth can speak about that which is beyond the limit."

Michael Grant: "Plato, for all his hostility to degrading traditional tales, told poetic myths to convey difficult truths beyond the range of the logical process." Is myth, then, "a flight from fact" or an attempt to interpret fact and reality? (This is not to suggest that I consider the essayist's statement about the power of the "poetically mysterious" an unconscious admission of a principle justifying the contention that there may be myth in Scripture. I am simply asking whether a deeper probing here might not be helpful in understanding how Biblical language may be different. Friedlaender also says: Plato "never leaves any doubt that the myth is a mixture of truth and poetic fancy. This fading into uncertainty belongs to the very nature of the myth." If true, does this description necessarily preclude the use of myth in the Bible?)

* * *

. . . 1. I found myself asking the question whether the *setting* of Is. 7:14 and its *subsequent history* determine its *intrinsic meaning* as a word of promise (Gospel) as well as a word of judgment (Law).

a. There is no doubt that God resorted to acts of judgment on Ahaz, Israel, and the nations to fulfill the Gospel promise "to save His people from their sins" through the Immanuel.

b. It is also axiomatic that repentance is necessary in appropriating the promise of Is. 7:14 and its fulfillment lest it be a fragrance to death rather than to life, as this is true of the entire Gospel messages.

c. It is also true that the judgments that God executed in order to achieve the fulfillment of the promise are and remain a call to repentance.

d. If the "six other Matthean quotations" from the Old Testament (spoken in a similar setting as Is. 7:14) are "promise in its purest form," "promise and hope for the future" in spite of the opposition of "the world powers in the course of history" (p. 31), should not the content of this quotation also be pure Gospel?

In other words, I am puzzled by an apparent lack of distinction between the intent of Is. 7:14 and Matt. 2:22-23 as Gospel promise as such and the fact that God's judgments were a part of God's way of fulfilling it as well as the fact that men at all times who do not by repentance and faith accept the Immanuel, born as prophesied "to save His people from their sins," remain exposed to the same threat of judgment.

2. It was not clear to me from the presentation whether Is. 7:14 is:

a) a "direct" prophecy, designed to point only to the fulfillment in the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ;

b) a "typological" prophecy with intermediate fulfillment(s), climaxed by an ultimate and "once for all" fulfillment in Mary's Son;

c) a combination of *a* and *b*.

The author correctly rejects the "assumption that the young woman and her child can be somehow identified as merely eighth-century figures" (p. 29). The typological interpretation would agree in objecting to the adverb "merely" but would also suggest that the natural birth of a child at Ahaz' time, while it had contemporary significance as a promise of deliverance, was a fulfillment by type, designed to point forward prophetically to the antitype, *the Redeemer*. There appear to be statements in the essay which suggest intermediate fulfillments or at least make allowance for them (pp. 28, 29, 30).

3. The deemphasizing of the meaning of the term "virgin" may be necessary to counteract "the too-ready assumption that Matthew's interest centered in the *parthenos* of the LXX text" (p. 29). It certainly is not the only key to the understanding of the passage. At the same time the distinction between "a virgin shall conceive . . . of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 2:23-26) and "born of the Virgin Mary" (p. 29) seems a bit contrived.

CHAPTER III

The Typological Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament

WALTER R. ROEHRS

Introduction

The manner in which the New Testament links itself with the Old Testament has become one of the great issues in recent times.

Typology involves a number of basic hermeneutical questions:

1. The meaning of the Old Testament references in their Old Testament context.
2. The historicity of the Old Testament accounts.
3. The meaning of *Heilsgeschichte*.
4. The historical framework of New Testament apocalyptic references.
5. The validity of the New Testament use of the Old Testament.

Typology proceeds from basic presuppositions:

1. Faith in Christ is the only hope of salvation.
2. The God of the Old Testament is the Father of Jesus Christ.
3. In Jesus Christ the promises of God in the Old Testament receive their Yea and Amen.
4. What faith in Christ appropriates is a present possession but is also a faith in the final consummation of salvation (already — not yet).

Typology is one way in which the New Testament links itself with the Old Testament; others are designated:

1. Scripture proof (*Schriftbeweis*): the quotation of the words of Old Testament passages are fulfilled in the New Testament.
2. Allegory (?). See the exposition of Galatians 4, pp. 48—50.

What is meant by typology will be developed first of all inductively on the basis of selected passages in the Pauline corpus.

I. The Basic Elements in the Structure and Thought Pattern of Typology as Derived from 1 Cor. 10:1-13; Romans 5:12-19; Romans 4

These passages have been chosen because the word *typos* (*typikos*) occurs in the first two to establish a connection with the Old Testament.

Paul uses this term in other instances (Rom. 6:17; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:7; 2 Thess. 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:16; 2 Tim. 1:13), but only here in this unique meaning (the RSV translation in 1 Cor. 10: "warnings," "as a warning," is weak).

In Rom. 4 the word "type" does not occur. But if this pericope is similar in its structure, intent, and development of thought, it may serve as an indication of a more general or even characteristic use of typology in the Pauline corpus (and the New Testament as a whole), i. e., also in instances where the term "type" (or a synonym) does not occur or where the typological link with the Old Testament is not so fully developed as in these passages.

A. All three passages *relate happenings* in the Old Testament to the New Testament counterpart.

Paul refers to three different events in the Old Testament.

1 Cor. 10:1-13

God's dealing with Israel at the time of the exodus.

Rom. 5:12-19

The fall of Adam and its consequences.

Rom. 4

God's promises to Abraham and the latter's response to them.

B. All three passages refer to the Old Testament *in the same way*.

The Old Testament accounts are *not quoted formally*. The happenings there are alluded to merely in a general and summary fashion (in contrast to the *Schriftbeweis*, in which the words of the Old Testament are of central concern).

That Paul is referring to the account of the events of the Exodus in the O. T. is apparent from the general agreement in phraseology and from the one quotation in v. 7 of Ex. 32:6: "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play."

Besides the account in Exodus, Paul may include other O. T. references:

"Our fathers were all under the cloud" (v. 1) recalls the formulation of Ps. 105:39: "He [God] spread a cloud for a covering."

"They were overthrown" (v. 5), "destroyed" (vv. 9, 10) recalls Ps. 78:31: "The anger of God rose against them, and He slew the strongest of them."

"Put the Lord to the test" (v. 9) is reminiscent of Ps. 78:18: "They tested God in their heart by demanding . . . food" and Ps. 95:9: "When your fathers tempted Me."

The sequence of events up to v. 4 seems to coincide with that of Neh. 9:9-20 but without explicit allusions to literal parallels.

Without being quoted expressly, Gen. 3 clearly is the source of the conclusions drawn by Paul.

That "death spread to all men" is a fact supplied by the chapters following Gen. 3 and the entire O. T. It is implicit in the fact that Adam, mortal after the fall, is the father of mortal mankind and begets children "in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen. 5:5). The origin of the death of all men is a part of rabbinic teaching, drawn from the O. T.

In this letter (as well as elsewhere) Paul is not intent on giving a review of O. T. history as such or in outline form. Without observing even the sequence of events he draws on the account of Abraham first (ch. 4) and then the much earlier event of the fall (ch. 5).

Paul does not recount the O. T. story of Abraham. There are isolated quotations, taken at random from the O. T. account and other descriptions of God's word action and Abraham's response to them so that it is clear that Paul is basing his argumentation on the historical events recorded in Genesis.

Only such references are made to the O. T. account as enable Paul to establish the basis of Abraham's relationship to God through faith in the promises of God.

C. In these pericopes Paul establishes an analogy of correlation between man's relationship to God, as it is portrayed in the three Old Testament accounts, and the relationship to God as it pertains to the New Testament believer.

1. The analogy is expressed *formally*:

kathos (vv. 7, 8), *kathaper* (v. 10) = *hemas* (v. 6), *hemon* (v. 11); *typoi* (v. 6), *typikos* (v. 10)

hosper = *houtos* (v. 12); *hos* = *houtos* (vv. 18, 19); *typos tou mellontos* (v. 14)

ou[k] . . . *monon* = *alla kai* (vv. 16, 23)

2. The analogy is expressed *substantively*:

God's judgments will strike the Corinthians as they did Israel, if God's grace is abused.	What the first Adam and the Second Adam did affects the destiny of all men.	Abraham's faith (without works, without circumcision, contrary to outward appearances, trusting God's promise) has the same characteristics as the faith of the N. T. believer in Christ.
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3. The analogy has as its common and unifying element *the dynamic Word and sovereign doing of God* in all instances.

These happenings do not come about as the result of an immanent principle of cause and effect. They are not the inevitable or inexorable revolving of the wheel of history in cyclical rotation. History is not an independent, impersonal force. It does not shape itself, nor is it controlled by man.

Events happen when God speaks and sits in judgment or when He acts in mercy to establish a salutary relationship between man and God.

"God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness" by God (v. 5). They "were destroyed by the <i>Destroyer</i> " (v. 10). "These things . . . were written" at God's impulse (v. 11; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16). The relationship with God is broken if "they"—"we" "tempt" God, who acts in judgment upon all who abuse His goodness ("they" in the wilderness; "we" at the Lord's table — cf. vv. 14-22).	God's "judgment . . . brought condemnation" (v. 16; cf. Rom. 1:8: "The wrath of God is revealed"). "The Law was given" by God (v. 13) "Sin is not counted" by God (v. 13). ". . . the free gift of righteousness" given by God (v. 17). ". . . leads to acquittal and life" bestowed by God (v. 18).	"It was reckoned to him as righteousness" by God (vv. 3, 22). "It will be reckoned to us" by God (v. 24). "This blessing . . . is pronounced" by God "on the circumcised . . . and uncircumcised" (vv. 9-12). "All who believe . . . have righteousness reckoned to them" by God. (v. 11). "The promise came" by God's speaking "to Abraham" (v. 13). "The words . . . were written" at God's behest (v. 23) that men might know that they "are blessed with Abraham" (Gal. 3:8-9).
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D. There is an analogy *only to a certain point* between the happenings recorded in the Old Testament and those of the New Testament. In both instances God is intent on bringing man into a blessed relationship with Himself — something indeed that man sorely needed but could not achieve himself — it is received as a gift in response to God's promise.

But what happened in the Old Testament is not merely an illustration of how God acts consistently in certain or similar circumstances and at various times.

The analogy is bound up in the determinate counsel of God, conceived before the foundations of the world and carried out in the course of time. What happened in the fullness of time in Christ Jesus was the climactic goal and fulfillment of everything that God said and did in the Old Testament. His words and actions (of judgment and of mercy) were preliminary steps toward the final, decisive, and once-for-all realization of His plan for man's salvation.

In the Old Testament rebellious man was not consumed by divine wrath if and because he committed himself to God's *anoché*; in Christ Jesus all sin is atoned and removed as the cause of death and condemnation.

What happened in the New Testament therefore, while analogous to the happenings of the Old Testament and prefigured and defined there, is *always greater* in the proportions of promise and fulfillment, of type and antitype.

This "greater than" the type has positive and negative, or antithetic, aspects.

1. The positive "greater than":

Israel under the old covenant sinned against God's preliminary acts of redemption (vv. 6-10); the Corinthians are those "upon whom the end of the ages has come" (v. 11) and therefore are in danger of breaking "the new covenant," which surpasses the old (next chapter, v. 25, and 2 Cor. 3:4-12). What happened to Israel when they rejected God's provisional "means of grace (*typoi*)" determines what He will do (*typikos*) if the Corinthians sin against the means of grace established in the blood of Christ (cf. the verses following this pericope and the next chapter). If God punished Israel of old, He has all the more reason to be displeased with those who at "the end of the ages" have experienced the fulfillment of everything promised to Israel.

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The effect of grace proceeding from the Adam who was to come exceeds the effect of the transgression of the first Adam. What the final Adam did not only neutralizes the sin of the first Adam but eliminates its evil consequences once and for all by offering an "excess of grace" (*ten perisseian tes charitos* — v. 17) and "leads to acquittal and life for all men" (v. 18).

The faith of Abraham is similar in nature to that of the Romans (vv. 18-24). He trusted the *promises* of what God would do. But "those who share the faith of Abraham" now "believe in Him that *raised* from the dead Jesus our Lord, who *was put* to death for our trespasses and *raised* for our justification" (vv. 24-25). God has done greater things than He did at the time of Abraham. He has fulfilled His promise.

2. The negative, or antithetic, "greater than":

The Corinthians no longer are "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" and no longer "eat the supernatural food" and drink "the supernatural drink" that God provided in the wilderness, but those "upon whom the end of the ages has come" have the means of grace of the fulfillment: they are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:29) and eat and drink the body and blood of Christ (cf. 10:14 ff.).

V. 15: The positive effect of grace is greater than the negative result of sin.

Circumcision is no longer a part of the New Testament dispensation of grace (vv. 9 ff.; cf. Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:16 f.). Now the "blessing" is "pronounced . . . upon the circumcised" and "upon the uncircumcised" (v. 9).

E. The greater-than-the type consists not only in the finality and once-for-all nature of the Christ event in the fullness of time, appropriated in the now of the eschatological present, but is itself the "guarantee" and "seal" of the *not-yet greater things to come* after this life and in the eschatological consummation of Christ's second coming.

Upon the Corinthians has come *ta tele ton aionon*. They live in the *aion* in which Christ is the *telos* of all that God determined to do in eternity and promised in the O. T. It is *to pleroma tou chronou* in which Christ, the *telos nomou* (Rom. 10:4), was born under the Law to redeem them from the curse of the Law and to give them the adoption of sons (Gal. 4:4).

But although "they have been set free from sin," they are not yet immune to the same temptations that beset the Israelites of old and still must look forward to *telos zoes aioniou* (Rom. 6:18, 22).

At the same time they have the assurance that God "will also provide the way of escape" (v. 13) and will sustain them *heos telous*, "the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, as they await His revealing" (1 Cor. 1:7-8). For He "has delivered them from the present evil age" (Gal. 1:4) and has subdued all forces *ou monon en to aioni touto alla kai en to mellonti* (Eph. 1:21). Hence they are encouraged to be steadfast and look forward to the time when the "end comes": *en te parousia* of Christ. When He "delivers the kingdom of God the Father," they will reign with Him. (1 Cor. 15:24)

The evil effects of the first Adam have been reversed by the Adam who was to come. Through Him there is a *full* restoral of life; nothing more needs to be done so that *all* "who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift" brought by Him "reign in life" (v. 17).

But the grace, received from Christ, effects not only a life "in the flesh" (Gal. 2:20), but it also "reigns through righteousness to eternal life" (v. 21). "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ," the *eschatos Adam* "shall all men be made alive" when "the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable" (1 Cor. 15:22, 45, 52).

All "who share the faith of Abraham" (v. 16) lack nothing in righteousness if they "believe in Him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (vv. 24-25).

But while they *now* "have peace with God" and have "*now* received reconciliation," they also "rejoice in the *hope* of sharing the glory of God," and this hope "does not disappoint" (vv. 1-11 of the next chapter), for it is "a hope laid up . . . in heaven" (Col. 1:5), the "hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

F. Typology does not reason on the basis of rational proof. It simply expresses the conviction that the happenings of the Old Testament have a predetermined link with the New Testament. It makes sense only to those who have *faith in the Triune God* and believe that —

- 1) God's reaction to man's dire need was the initiation of His eternal plan of salvation in a process of historical events that culminate in the New Testament;
- 2) through the Holy Spirit's working, Old Testament events were recorded for the instruction of New Testament believers;
- 3) in Jesus Christ came the Yea and Amen to everything prefigured and promised in the Old Testament and that through Him the veil is lifted to reveal the God-intended meaning of the Old Testament.

The events that occurred in the desert "were written" for the "instruction" of the Corinthians, who now are tempted to abuse the means of grace of the new covenant established by the blood of Christ. What is "folly" and a "stumbling block" in the wisdom of the world becomes "wisdom of God" to those "who believe" (1 Cor. 1:18-30).

The reign of death from Adam to all men (O. T. Scripture) comes to an end for those who (through faith) "receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness" — they will "reign in life through the one Man Jesus Christ" (v. 17) "to eternal life through Jesus Christ" (v. 21).

That Abraham received promises and that his faith was "reckoned to him as righteousness" is "written" in the "Scripture," inspired by God. The righteousness, "pronounced" on Abraham, will be reckoned to those who follow "his example (*ichnesin* = *typos*?) of faith," "share" his faith, "and believe ["through the Holy Spirit" — ch. 5:5] in Him that raised from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (vv. 23-25).

II. The Structure of Paul's Exposition of These Three Passages

In order to instruct his readers "for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus," Paul —

- refers to happenings in the O. T. (A),
- without quoting the O. T. accounts verbatim (B),
- in order to establish an analogy between man's relationship to God as it is portrayed in the O. T. and as it pertains to his readers (C).

This correlation is presented —

- formally (1),
- substantively (2),
- as resulting from the dynamic Word and the sovereign doing of God (3).

The N. T. situations and happenings, while analogous to those of the O. T., are characterized by a "greater-than" in Christ Jesus (D) which is expressed —

- positively (1),
- negatively, or antithetically (2).

The redemption through Jesus Christ, who was to come (O. T.) and did come (N. T.), restores a blessed relationship between God and man now in time and hereafter in eternal life (E).

The connection between the O. T. (as promise) and the N. T. (as fulfillment) is grasped only by faith in the triune God (F), who —

- sent His Son (1),
- inspired the Scriptures (2),
- was made man (3).

III. Observations on the Typological Exposition of the Old Testament in the Above Three Passages

1. Paul's exposition in the first two passages (1 Cor. 10 and Rom. 5) radiates from the word *typos*, by means of which he establishes a connection between the

two Testaments. Because of the kind of interpretation that is developed by the use of this key term, it has been called "typology."

To avoid a promiscuous or confusing application of this terminology, it is necessary to bear in mind the structure and development of thought of this interpretation as it emerged from the study of these passages. Only when a mode of linking the New Testament with the Old Testament has the essential features, as outlined above, can it be properly designated typological.

Typology, for example, must not be confused with allegory. Primarily the latter lacks one of the basic ingredients of typology: it is not grounded on events in history. Intent on finding a second meaning in words or concepts over and above their literal and historical sense, it is not concerned with demonstrating how God was active in history to carry out His determinate counsel and plan of salvation in order that it might reach its goal with finality in the redemption in Christ Jesus. Whether Paul also uses allegory in his interpretation of the Old Testament is not the point at issue at this juncture.

2. Typology also involves more than a reference to the Old Testament for the purpose of illustrating a general axiom of God's acting in judgment or mercy which is applicable in a similar way and under similar circumstances in the New Testament.

3. From the passages studied it also becomes evident that typology is not strictly speaking the application of a hermeneutical rule or technique that is or must be employed according to established principles of interpretation. Paul no doubt knew the 13 hermeneutical Middoth (rules) which Hillel, the grandfather of his teacher Gamaliel, had drawn up. By means of a typological exposition Paul simply expresses his faith that in Jesus Christ God "made full" what He did and said in the Old Testament. It is interpretation only in the sense that he expresses this conviction at the hand of some examples. What happened in the Old Testament, while parallel to some degree with the happenings in the New Testament and to that extent prefiguring them, is proclaimed as evidence that God was under way in doing what He had resolved and promised to do for man's redemption. In an ingenuous and rather unsystematic manner Paul simply points to the historical happenings, recorded in the Old Testament, as a preliminary stage of God's involvement in the salvation of man.

4. It is furthermore evident that Paul does not set out to furnish a chapter-by-chapter commentary on the entire Old Testament. In his typological exposition of the Old Testament he selects those portions which serve his immediate need of instructing his readers in the nature and meaning of their faith in Christ Jesus. On the basis of pertinent parts of the Old Testament he teaches that the relationship of man to God is essentially the same at all times. Only the circumstances of his readers are different. They live at a time when the promises of God have been fulfilled. But the fulfillment must be accepted by the same kind of faith that made the Old Testament believer in the promises of God acceptable to Him.

5. In the third passage (Rom. 4) the term *typos* does not occur.

The review of this pericope, however, revealed that it exhibits the same basic structure and thought pattern that is found in 1 Cor. 10 and Rom. 5, where the word does occur.

It is a valid inference therefore that Paul interprets the Old Testament typologically also where he does not expressly call the Old Testament happening a type in order to establish the relationship of promise to fulfillment.

The absence of the term *type* in Rom. 4 furthermore gives additional support to the observation that typology is not, strictly speaking, the application of a hermeneutical canon of interpretation. Actually no established heuristic technique is involved. Paul again simply sets forth his conviction that in Jesus Christ God had in fact done what He set out to do in order to reconcile the world to Himself. The coming of Jesus Christ is the *Yea and Amen* to God's promises, the validation of Abraham's faith in a merciful and forgiving God. He was counted righteous by the same kind of faith in the promise of God that makes Paul's hearers righteous in His sight. They must believe as did the father of believers. The difference again is merely the historical circumstances; Abraham: before God fulfilled His promises in Christ Jesus; the Romans: after it all happened. The blood of Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, atoned for all sins — those committed before as well as after Good Friday.

IV. Typological Exposition in Other Pauline Pericopes

A. 1 COR. 15:20-22, 44-49

This pericope will be scrutinized to determine whether Paul here links the two Testaments in the same structure and thought pattern that emerged from the examination of the three previous passages. Its typological features will be briefly isolated and enumerated in the same order that was followed above.

A. Paul refers to the O. T. account of Adam's creation and his subjection to death as the result of his fall into sin.

B. The Genesis account is not quoted verbatim, with exception of a part of Genesis 2:7 in v. 45: "Thus it is written: 'The first Adam became a living being.'"

C. Paul establishes analogies between Adam and Christ:

- as by a man (Adam) came — by a man (Christ) has come (v. 21);
- as in Adam — so in Christ (v. 22);
- the first Adam — the last Adam (v. 45).

D. The analogy is not merely a collation of similarities between Adam and Christ. The comparison rises to a typological "greater-than" of the "second" or "last Adam" as compared with the "first man Adam" (particularly in the effects resulting from each).

1. This "greater-than" rests on positive facts:

- the first . . . from the earth — the second . . . from heaven (v. 47);
- the image of the man of dust . . . the image of the man of heaven (v. 49);
- those who are of the dust — those who are of heaven (v. 48);
- a physical body — a spiritual body (v. 44);

2. The typological "greater-than" is primarily antithetic in what accrues from the two Adams. As a result of the sin of the first Adam, those born in his sinful image are, like him, subject to death; as a result of the dying and rising again of the second Adam, eternal life is assured to all who "belong to" Him.

- As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive (v. 22).
- Those who "belong to Christ" (v. 23), although they "have borne the image of the man of dust," shall also "bear the image of the man of heaven" (v. 49) "at His coming."
- "As by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead" (v. 21).

E. What was lost in the first Adam is restored *with finality* because the second Adam is also the *eschatos Adam*, the last Adam. No other "Adam" is necessary. Eternal life is assured once and for all and for all men who have hope in Christ because He "died for our sins" and "was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (v. 3).

F. What the last Adam did is an eschatological possession already in this life. Those who are "in Christ" are now a *kaine ktisis*; "the old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

But they have hope in Christ not only in this life. They will "bear the image of the man of heaven" when the "eschatological trumpet" will sound and the dead will be raised "imperishable," "in glory," "in power."

G. The Adam-Christ typology is not human speculation (a hope for the return of an ideal *Urmensch*), nor is it a rational conclusion of a logical reasoning process. It is a "given" of Scripture which, however, makes sense only to the new man of faith,

- 1) who is "created after the likeness of God" (Eph. 4:24) as He lets "light shine out of darkness" (2 Cor. 4:6);
- 2) who accepts the Spirit-given Scriptures;
- 3) who believes "that Christ died for our sins" and "was raised on the third day" (vv. 3-4).

Conclusion: This pericope exhibits the same features which also emerged from the study of the three previous passages. It may therefore serve as another example of Paul's typological exposition of the O. T. although he does not use the term *typos*, as he does in the Adam-Christ typology in Romans 5.

B. COLOSSIANS 2:16-17

Paul's purpose is again to instruct his readers in their faith life — "as therefore you have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so live in Him" (v. 6).

Having "come to fullness of life in Him" (v. 10), having been "buried with Him in Baptism" and "raised with Him through faith" (v. 12), they are not to live as if they "still belonged to the world" (v. 20). They will "put off the old nature with its practices" (3:9) such as "immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness" (3:5; also the remainder of ch. 3 and the first verses of ch. 4).

But for the very reason that they believe that Christ has come, "a mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to His saints" (1:26), they are no longer bound to observe what God enacted provisionally for His people of the O. T., that is, merely as "a shadow of what is to come." Since the "substance" of those things "belongs to Christ" and their preliminary purpose in the economy of God has been achieved, they no longer constitute a requirement for the obedience of faith in Him for those coming they were merely a preparatory — and therefore also a passing — dispensation of God.

Paul's exposition differs here in some respects from those considered previously.

There is no doubt, however, that the equation *skia* — *soma* expresses the same "greater-than" (of what now is in comparison with what once was) that he demonstrates in the other instances by the use of the term *typos*. His typological exposition therefore is not limited to a single word. Other terms or figures of speech are pressed into service that help to drive home his axiom of faith: In Christ

Jesus, God brought about what He had planned from eternity and what He promised and set in motion in the O. T. Here he speaks “*skia*-logically” — to coin a new word — rather than “*typo*-logically.” But the burden of his message is the same.

This is the case also even though he does not elaborate the type-and-antitype comparison at length as he does in other passages. He has no need to quote the O. T. His readers know all too well to what laws of Israel (food, drink, festivals, new moons, Sabbaths) he is referring. That Christ is the substance of these shadows is simply stated as a fact. Why this is so is developed in the first part of this epistle as well as in his other letters (cf., e. g., 2 Cor. 3:4-18, where he demonstrates the “surpassing splendor” of the new and permanent covenant in contrast to the splendor of what “faded away” — the Mosaic covenant, of which the ceremonial laws, mentioned here, were an integral part).

Paul expects his readers to understand and accept his instructions, based on typology, “through faith” (v. 12). This faith life has benefits now. But living in Christ also assures them that they “will appear with Him in glory” (3:4).

Conclusion: This short passage has the basic features of a typological exposition of the O. T. Paul invests the term “shadow” with the same meaning that he develops with (or without) the use of the word “type.”

C. GALATIANS 4:21-30

This passage is pertinent to the discussion because Paul draws on the O. T. for the sake of comparisons and analogies. In doing so, it is commonly held, he employs the allegorical method of interpretation (other examples are said to be 1 Cor. 5:6-8; 9:8-10; 10:1-11).

Both the KJV and the RSV translate the Greek passive participle as a noun: “This is an *allegory*.” It may be significant, however, that Paul does not use the noun *allegoria*. The latter does not occur in the entire N. T., and the verb *allegorein* is found only in this passage. A more literal translation would read: These (things) are *said* (not necessarily *interpreted*) in a different way, i. e., figuratively, or metaphorically.

This figurative speaking, however, differs from the comparison or analogy that allegory establishes. Quite in contrast with a basic feature of allegory, Paul does not establish a figurative relationship that is inherent in the words themselves as symbols of concepts or ideas over and above the literal meaning which they have in the context. In keeping with his typological use of the O. T., Paul does not set aside the literal and historical meaning of the O. T. account and volatilize flesh-and-blood people into personifications of virtues or vices (cf. Philo). But basing his instruction on the historical data in the actual life situations of O. T. people, Paul calls attention to the facts of life that determined their relationship to God that still — this is the “allegory” — remain decisive in the lives of his readers centuries later. The unalterable fact is that a blessed relationship to God, then as well as now, does not come about by natural descent from a patriarch nor by what man can do by innate powers to keep the Law. Unless men accept by faith what God promises to do and alone can do, they remain under the curse of the Law.

Hagar, the slave, and her son, Ishmael, born into slavery by the natural process of procreation, remained slaves. All who depend on the capacities that they receive by natural birth, likewise — this is the “allegory” — cannot change their slave status under the Law. If they “desire to be under the Law” as it was promulgated

on Mount Sinai and as in "the present Jerusalem" of Judaism it was proclaimed as the way of salvation, they will share the fate of Hagar and Ishmael: they will remain slaves and will be cast out from the promised inheritance. As Ishmael, born "according to the flesh" (even the flesh of Abraham), was "flesh" (John 3:6), so the Galatians by natural birth are "flesh," an "Israel after the flesh" (1 Cor. 10:18). And Paul had just told them that "by the Law shall no flesh be justified" (2:16).

Isaac, on the other hand, became the son and heir of Abraham by more than a natural birth "according to the flesh." He was born "through promise" (God's promise beyond human experience and expectation) to Sarah, the "barren one" (v. 27; Is. 54:1) and to Abraham, "whose body was as good as dead" (Rom. 4:19). In the same way Paul's readers are "children of promise" — and this is the "allegory" — not by their physical birth as Jews but only because "they are begotten in Christ Jesus through the Gospel" which Paul preached as the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and to his seed (1 Cor. 4:15). Paul is again "in travail" with them (v. 19; cf. what Paul says without "allegory" in Romans 9:6, 8: "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. . . . It is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise"). Birth to a sonship, free from the slavery of the Law, is brought about by the procreative power of the Gospel of promise. "He is a Jew inwardly" (Rom. 2:28) who believes (as did Abraham and Sarah) that he is dependent on what God promises to give them as an inheritance. "For if the inheritance is by the Law, it is no longer by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise" (3:18).

To make his "allegorical" point, Paul becomes involved in a double metaphor. The free children of promise are not only begotten as Isaac was of Sarah; they have a common maternity also in the "Jerusalem above," which is "our mother."

This shift to Jerusalem as a figure of a mother may seem abrupt. But it occurred to Paul, in talking about offspring, that the O. T. metaphorically assigned maternal functions also to Jerusalem and Israel. These are represented as the mother of the people of the old covenant (cf. Is. 50:1; Jer. 50:12; Hosea 2:5). In fact Paul explicitly refers to this figurative use of Jerusalem by quoting Is. 54:1.

The children of the "now Jerusalem" are Israel, "born according to the flesh," relying on the status of their natural birth, and intent on being regarded as heirs not "by promise" but by remaining "under the Law." They are not free as are the children of the "Jerusalem above." Since Paul is giving instructions for the present faith life of the Galatians, he is not primarily referring to the heavenly Jerusalem of Rev. 21:2, 10. This mother has children *now*. But as in the case of the "barren one" (Sarah), her offspring are begotten "according to the Spirit," by a birth "above" the natural process of procreation, by the creative working of faith, when God "sends the Spirit of His Son into our hearts" (4:6). The children of this mother are "brethren" (v. 31) because, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, they are "all the sons of God through faith"; being "baptized into Christ," they "are all one in Christ." This mother is the "free woman" whose children, created after the likeness of God, "are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (3:25-29). This city-mother bears children by proclaiming that "Christ came that we might be justified by faith" (3:24) and thus making them "fellow citizens (*sympolitai*) with the saints," including those who "were alienated from the commonwealth (*politeia*) of Israel" (Eph. 2:12-19), all of whom also have "a commonwealth (*politeuma*) in heaven" (Phil. 3:20).

The sum of it all then is: What the religion of those in Judaism (the Jerusalem below) teaches makes people slaves like Hagar's son Ishmael; what the Gospel of the community of believers in Jesus Christ (the Jerusalem above) proclaims makes men free like Sarah's son Isaac.

Although Paul gives his instruction to the Galatians in a manner that he calls "allegorically speaking," it approximates true allegory only in some similarities of form. In its basic thrust his procedure is typological as defined above. It differs from the allegorical method particularly in his adherence to the historical facts in the case. The points of comparison and the antithetic results of Law and promise are based on factual realities as they affect real-life situations.

The typological "greater-than" is also apparent in the context: in fulfilling His promise of a son to a barren woman, God created the Israelites, of which race His own Son, according to the flesh, was to come — and now did come as promised (v. 4). Through Him all who believe in Him (not only the descendants of the patriarch) are "sons of Abraham," receive "adoption as sons" (v. 4), and become heirs of an inheritance which is "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (1 Peter 1:4).

In verse 25a, however, Paul veers into a characteristic feature of allegorical interpretation. In establishing a correspondence between Hagar and Mount Sinai in Arabia, he apparently finds a meaning in these nouns which they do not have in their literal or historical sense. The identity is based on the observation that these words are related etymologically. They are interchangeable because they sound alike; their similar phonetic components also give them a similar meaning. This method of attaching an artificial or contrived meaning to words, which they do not actually have in their context, was commonly employed by Philo as well as by Palestinian interpreters.

It remains uncertain, however, whether Paul is actually calling attention to the etymological similarity of Hagar and Mount Sinai.

In the first place, the text of this part of the verse is not uniformly attested. The RSV calls attention to it in the footnote: "Other ancient authorities read: For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia."

Nor has a clear parallel been found in rabbinic lore in which Hagar is equated etymologically with Mount Sinai. In haggadic literature *hagar* is said to have the connotation of "beautiful." In one instance it is explained as being related to *agra*: "wage." There may be some evidence that the Arabs, among whom Paul spent some time, referred to Mount Sinai with a word that resembles Hagar phonetically.

It should also be noted that if Hagar is a part of the accepted text of 25a and Paul is referring to its etymology, he may be following the example of the O. T. Here the meaning of the names of people and places is not uncommonly explained by an etymological significance which is based on phonetic similarity between the two words rather than on a strict letter-for-letter identity.

It has also been suggested that Paul's identification of Hagar and Mount Sinai rests on gematria. By this interpretive device each letter of words or phrases is given a predetermined numerical value. If their arithmetic totals amount to an equal sum, they are considered to have also a common meaning and therefore to be interchangeable as in a mathematical equation.

Conclusion: Whether or not Paul's exegesis here has some affinities with allegory, it remains true that in the main his exposition has the essential features of typology as defined above.

Summation

1. Some pericopes of the Pauline corpus have been examined in order to arrive at a workable definition of the term "typology." Since it is used loosely at times and in a variety of meanings, it was necessary to determine to what specific kind of N. T. exposition of the O. T. is to be applied.

The procedure was inductive. Selected passages were examined in order to identify and extrapolate the features that are characteristic of the kind of interpretation of the O. T. that is meant when it is designated as typological.

2. Distinguishable features of typology were found in pericopes in which the term "type" occurred as a key word.

3. It also became evident that the same basic features were exhibited in —

a) a pericope in which a different term was used to signal the same kind of correlation with the O. T. that the word "type" indicated;

b) pericopes in which the term "type" or a synonym was not expressly used to establish an O. T. analogy.

4. All the texts justify the observation that typology is not so much the application of a hermeneutical rule in the technical sense as the expression of a point of view: a hermeneutic. It is not so much a heuristic methodology as the calling attention to events and establishing their relationship to one another.

5. The events are regarded as actual historical data. But they are not a collection of haphazard or unrelated happenings. Typology views them as forming an unbroken chain, forged and unified on the anvil of God's sovereign will. Typology links them in a sequence in which each has its place and contributes at its time and in its way to bring about the realization of a divine plan.

6. The situations and events, recorded in the O. T. were designed by God to implement His eternal and determinate counsel.

7. But for the very reason that they are the means to an end and not in themselves the final goal, typology insists on their teleological nature. They do not come to rest in themselves. As they came to pass, they indeed served their immediate purpose. But at the same time they bore in them the promise and witness of greater things to come. God let them happen that they might also prefigure and foreshadow the end product of what He set in motion through them.

This is likewise true of some temporary ordinances that God established for His people in the O. T. As a part of His plan and in His sovereign will, they were designed to provide Himself with the kind of people that would serve His purpose. Nothing derogatory attaches to them. But when the fullness of time had come, they had served their provisional purpose. They were merely a means to an end and therefore no longer mandatory.

8. Typology does not merely declare that God was at work teleologically in the O. T. It announces that God has achieved in Jesus Christ what He had set out to do. In Him all that He had promised and set in motion in the O. T. reached its goal with a never-to-be-repeated finality.

9. Typology simply asserts this connection of the O. T. with Jesus Christ. What typology proclaims cannot be demonstrated by some logical process of reasoning; it can only be believed. Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ because faith accepts Him as such. Typology proceeds from faith to faith: from faith in Christ,

who was to come, to faith in Christ who has come to do for man's salvation what He had set out to do in the O. T.

10. By his typological reference to the O. T. Paul is not out to display his exegetical virtuosity. He draws on the O. T. and its typological relationship to the antitype for very practical reasons. His aim is to instruct his readers in the nature and meaning of faith in Christ Jesus. Belonging to Christ requires a faith that essentially is of the same kind that made man acceptable in God's sight before the fullness of time had come: it recognizes that man, by nature under the wrath of God through sin, can do nothing to restore a peaceful relationship with God; it can only trust in the forgiving mercy of God. But it has also been, and still must be, in the nature of faith that acceptance of the grace of God produces an obedience of faith, a desire to do God's will.

The coming of Jesus Christ has not changed the basis on which man is justified in God's sight. In the O. T. it was by faith in what God promised; now it is by faith in what God has done as promised. The perversion of such a faith was and is a constant temptation. The same dangers beset such a faith life then and now.

Why is the O. T. a part — and a very much needed part — of the Christian canon? Paul gives the answer in part by his typological use of the O. T. On the basis of only the few passages treated above, the following conclusions become evident:

The O. T. is not a collection of ancient writings propounding a "non-Christian" and therefore superseded religion. Pre-Christian in point of time, it has a timely message nevertheless in "the fullness of time." Paul did not discard or repudiate the "Scriptures" after his Damascus experience. It removed from his eyes "the veil" that had obscured their true meaning for him. Jesus "opened the Scriptures" also to him (cf. Luke 24). The Christian Paul draws on them not merely for some incidental or inconsequential illustrations from the past. What is central and decisive in the relationship of the O. T. believers to God, he insists, applies also to the faith life of his Christian readers.

The usefulness of the O. T., however, did not come to an end in the service that it rendered the first-century Christians. The kind of instruction Paul gives his readers on the basis of the O. T. meets the perennial need of those who want to know — and need to know — what it means to be reunited with God by faith in Christ Jesus. Paul draws on the O. T. to answer the question who Jesus of Nazareth is, what He is, what He came to do, what faith in Him involves, what life in Him entails. These facts, rooted in the O. T., remain the unmastered lessons of each new day. They must be proclaimed today and to the end of time if men are to be brought to faith in Christ; they are needed for instruction "for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"; they still are indispensable "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training . . . that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16).

P. S. Much more needs to be done to complete this assignment.

First of all, other passages in the Pauline corpus should be scrutinized. If Paul in the above passages goes to some length to establish typology as axiomatic for the relationship between the two Testaments, it should not surprise us to find this basic viewpoint underlying also other statements in which the correlation of type and antitype is not expressly developed.

The remainder of the N. T., particularly the Gospels and the Epistle to the Hebrews, should likewise be explored for the same purpose. The Book of Revelation deserves special attention from this viewpoint.

* * * * *

RESPONSES

As I reviewed the paper, several emphases impressed themselves on me as wholesome antidotes to attitudes in Old Testament interpretation which might be caricatured as Christian totalitarianism, historical reductionism, and unimaginative literalism.

a. Christian totalitarianism, in effect, claims the O. T. as a footnote, rather than as the prelude or preface, to the N. T. and reduces its kerygmatic value to the level of illustration for N. T. realities. Typology respects the integrity of the O. T. revelation and takes seriously the kerygmatic value of the O. T. message in its original historical setting.

b. Historical reductionism is practiced by an exclusively "scientific" criticism that makes the O. T. an embarrassment or an irrelevance for the N. T. and disregards its kerygmatic value in the setting of either Testament. Typology claims continuity and teleological direction in God's revelatory action from Testament to Testament and takes seriously the kerygmatic value of the O. T. message, both in its original setting and in the new situation revealed by Christ.

c. Unimaginative literalism makes a shambles of the continuous and purposeful revelation by focusing on isolated texts to the neglect of the sweeping patterns of God's revelatory action. Typology takes a long view of the O. T. text and looks beyond the words to the Speaker, beyond the recorded act to the still active Agent.

My major query might attach to the underlying concern expressed on the first page of the essay regarding the validity of Paul's typological approach to the O. T. As I understand it, the question is not asked in the interest of a possible censure of Paul from the point of view of contemporary exegetical method. The phenomenon of typology is simply a datum of the text and needs, in the first instance, to be understood in the dynamics of Paul's total thought. Thus the essay under discussion is primarily a description of Paul's method as this emerges from a patient examination of the text.

The question of validity, it seems to me, has to do rather with the relevance or adaptability of Paul's method to contemporary interpretation of the O. T. text. Is Paul to be imitated? Can the method — if such it is — which emerges from a description of Paul's approach be elevated to the status of a hermeneutical tool or principle? If the answer is yes, then the validity of this conclusion must be demonstrated more convincingly than has heretofore been the case with typological interpreters of the O. T. (e. g., Vischer). If the answer is negative, then typology is merely a convenient label for certain observed phenomena of certain Pauline passages. It may be a helpful key for continued study of these and related passages and perhaps of Paul's Biblical piety in general. But the significance of typology for the wider task of interpretation and for the hermeneutical task of this committee is marginal.

A way out of this apparent cul-de-sac may be suggested by the paper. Dr. Roehrs observes on several occasions that Paul does not himself have a theoretical understanding of typology as a rigid hermeneutical grid to be placed over the O. T. text. It is merely one rather fluid device among others which Paul employs to give voice to his underlying conviction of the purposeful continuity of the revelation that culminates in Christ. Typology would thus be a prime indicator of the cruciality of the *Vorverständnis*. If in this at least we are still at one with Paul, then the *motive*, if not the method of typology, is of central hermeneutical significance.

* * *

. . . It is my impression — and how half-baked this impression is, Roehrs will surely be able to expose — that he has synthesized a Pauline “typology” by eliminating an offensive element from Paul’s notion of typos and then retaining what is left of that notion by wedging it to some heilsgeschichtliche elements from elsewhere in Paul’s theology. Let me hasten to explain, in seeing the matter this way it is no intention of mine to pass judgment. For all I know, this procedure of Roehrs’s (assuming I am reading it correctly) may well be what hermeneutics today needs. Whether it does or not, my own purpose is merely to think aloud what Roehrs seems to me to be doing, so as to gain a little more clarity for my own present muddle.

The anachronistic element in Paul’s notion of typos which, it seems to me, is here soft-pedaled is the element of proof by hindsight, if I may call it that, or better, proof from precedent. At least in the two pericopic selections that contain the term typos (1 Cor. 10:1-13 and Rom. 5:12-19, but also in Gal. 4:21-30) this element of proof from precedent does seem to be prominent. It is as if former events were made to happen in the wondrous way they did so that in the future they could be invoked to prove, from analogy, that later events of the same wondrous type could therefore also occur. The proof for the later event, the antitype — which seems usually to be the one term in the pair that needs proof or at least confirmation — is that a similar event (the type) has happened before, whose very purpose for happening the first time is, in part at least, just this: to be on record someday as proof that such an event could happen again.

In this type-antitype relationship the former event is important to the later event but not merely in the sense that the former event enables the latter event to happen. Actually in Paul’s typology the antitype, for its mere occurrence, does not need the type at all. In order for the Corinthians to be punished for their ingratitude, they do not first need some Israelites who had been punished like that before. Though the two events are related as before-and-after, they are not related as antecedent to consequent. Still the former event, just because of its resemblance to the latter event, does enable us to prove thereby that the later event can happen too. The “fathers” in the wilderness, for all their advantages, could still suffer the divine displeasure. So, as this proves, could the Corinthians. That at least is the function of typos for Paul.

Of course, where a former event is but a means to a later event’s merely happening, there we have the much more modest sort of teleology that is still quite congenial to most modern historiography. First Caesar has to cross the Rubicon, only after that can he return to Rome. Saul’s experience on the Damascus road is the prerequisite means. The end, the telos — his becoming Paul — follows only later. Here the happenedness of the former event is not a precedent for proving the happenedness of the later event. And understandably so, for in this more modest teleology the former event does not share the essential resemblance, likeness, structural analogy with the later event, such as Paul finds between his type and antitype.

As we said, this more modest teleology is prominent in much modern, also much Biblical understanding of history and of course is essential to what we nowadays mean by Heilsgeschichte. Here former relates to later merely as precondition to outcome.

But it is precisely this more modest teleology which, so far as I can tell, is nowhere entailed by Paul’s notion of typos. Does it entail some kind of teleology? Yes, indeed, an almost embarrassingly ambitious one. That the type is later evidence for the antitype is not by coincidence but by design. It is as if God arranged for Adam to be one-for-the-many, in part at least, so that this precedent would later be available as proof of a similar arrangement in Christ. But this may be more purposiveness than the modern historical mind can take. Still, once this ambitious element in Paul’s typology is bypassed, there is no falling back on some lesser teleology of the Rubicon-Rome variety — not, that is, as an original ingredient in Paul’s meaning of typos.

For example, Adam’s sin and death did not spread to his descendants in order

to enable Christ's righteousness and life to spread to his. The fall did not have the atonement as its purpose. Even if some theologies of election should want to argue for such a teleology, they could hardly infer that from Paul's reference here to Adam as the *typos* of Christ. But Paul does invoke Adam as evidence for Christ, apparently as pre-arranged evidence: to prove that if the one-for-the-many could happen with Adam then it could likewise happen (and with "much more" reason) with Christ.

Similarly the Israelites' apostasy, while it is now a means for warning the Corinthians against a like apostasy, was not a means to the Corinthians' apostasy itself. Of course not. On the other hand, the Israelites' apostasy was recorded, "written down." And that writing event did serve a future purpose, "for our instruction" — what we have been calling, perhaps a bit loosely, "proof." But even then it is not those two events — the former writing down and the consequent instruction — which are the type and its antitype. Here type and antitype are rather the fathers' actual downfall on the one hand and the Corinthians' incipient downfall on the other. "Now these things," says Paul of those tragic events in the wilderness, "were types of us." But these two stories, the lapse in the wilderness and the lapse in Corinth, are hardly related to each other as Heilsgeschichte antecedent and consequent, hence are not in that sense teleological.

The upshot of all these ramblings, I guess, is this: The only sort of teleology involved in Paul's typology — not of course in his Heilsgeschichte but in his typology — is the sort that sees historical precedent as preplanned proof. Once we eliminate that one kind of teleology from Paul's *typos*, there is no other kind left. We can of course always reintroduce teleological features from Paul's Heilsgeschichte generally. But it makes for unclarity, I believe, to refer then to these features as "typological." . . .

* * *

. . . A similar point — and again, unfortunately, a negative point — might be raised about the present "typologizing" of 1 Cor. 10:1-13. But we ought not labor the point. Suffice it to say that here too, in this 1 Cor. pericope, the common denominator between the wilderness fathers and the Corinthians is not some soteriological constant. Quite the contrary. Rather it is their common liability to the divine displeasure as retribution for their abusing the means of grace. In fact, so unsoteriological, so beset with *Unheil* is the prior event, the *typos*, that Paul's whole kerygmatic purpose is to prevent the Corinthians from repeating it, from becoming its antitype. What structural analogy there is here between type and antitype Paul wishes would *not* be.

That the last three of Walter Roehrs's "basic elements" — the "greater-than," the eschatological, the trinitarian — are also present in this pericope, *somewhere* present in it, he well shows. But these three elements, when and where they are present, seem to have little to do with the type-antitype relationship itself. If anything, they are meant to counter that relationship. They are the *heilsgeschichtliche* constants that should keep the type-antitype relationship from so much as materializing. But with that assist from Paul's *Heilsgeschichte* this pericope turns out to be ultimately contratypological. . . .

* * *

. . . Re point C, p. 40:

Is it really clear that the analogical relationship is intrinsic to the paired events?

1. The formal expressions (as . . . so) do not require intrinsic connection.
2. The "substantial" expressions of Rom. 5 and Rom. 4 do not go beyond formal comparisons.

- Is the first Adam's fall with its consequences intrinsically prophetic of the second Adam's obedience with its consequences?
- Are the characteristics of Abraham's faith intrinsically prophetic of faith in Jesus Christ?

3. *Can the judgment-mercy dialectic as such be prophetic of what God has done in Jesus Christ? That is, can it show that Jesus Christ is really necessary? . . .*

Re point F:

The meaning of "typology" remains clouded. It is not a "rational proof." Does this mean it is not proof at all? Or does it mean that it is not rational, i. e., reasonable? Yet the New Testament writers (at least Paul) on the essayist's own showing seem to aim at proving something by their "typological" appeal. And the essayist's own presentation exhibits a high degree of rationality. . . .

* * *

The paper makes it clear that the literal understanding of an Old Testament text does not exhaust its full intent, that the real meaning of Scripture cannot be identified with and limited to its historical significance. However, as the closing comments indicate, more needs to be investigated. In this further investigation I should like to see directives or guidelines for probing the richer, supraliteral meaning of the Old Testament. It would also seem necessary that some safeguards be set up to secure such a penetration of the Old Testament from arbitrary fantasy.

Questions:

1. How is typology more than merely setting up parallels?

Is such parallelism all that is involved in John 3:14 with its reference to Num. 21:4 ff.?

Does 1 Cor. 5:7 merely parallel Christ and the Passover Lamb?

2. Does the technique of typology indicate more of repetition or fulfillment?

If fulfillment, how does typology specifically differ from predictive prophecy?

3. Does the antithesis, as distinguished from the parallelism between type and antitype, indicate not only a transcendent repetition of the old in the new but in that very repetition a complete fulfillment?

If so, does this mean that a God active in history may no longer be understood as acting in keeping with the pattern established by the type-antitype action? That is, has the significance of the type-antitype been exhausted?

If not, how may the patterns of God's behavior in type-antitype be extended as a means of understanding His acts in history now? Cf. the early Christian claim to be the New Israel.

Since history is still unfulfilled, how can the type be completely fulfilled until the end of history? . . .

CHAPTER IV

Hermeneutics and Pauline Parenesis

WALTER J. BARTLING

Statement of the Problem

Our problem, briefly stated, concerns the principles that govern the transfer from "then" to "now" in the interpretation of New Testament parenesis.¹ English-speaking advocates of the new hermeneutic are affecting the use of the term "translation" for the process; German exegetes would probably speak of "die Vergegenwärtigung der Offenbarung." However we name it, our problem is not new. We can observe the first soundings within the covers of the New Testament itself. When Paul summons a remembered logion of Jesus on divorce to his aid in 1 Cor. 7, only to demur from a strict interpretation as he makes a concession to a new situation, he is in essence a practitioner of the "new hermeneutic." Form criticism has taught us to see that much the same process of contemporary translation accompanied the growth of the entire Gospel tradition.

Yet the precise formulation of the problem is surprisingly recent. A survey of popular textbooks of traditional hermeneutics reveals that the problem is there scarcely recognized. The need of translation between cultures and across centuries, if noted at all, is not regarded as a portion of *explicatio*. It is relegated to *applicatio* and assigned to practical theology, where the Biblical controls on the process of application are notoriously slack. Terry may be regarded as typical. In his book of 782 pages, two brief paragraphs dispose of the entire matter:

There can be no true application, and no profitable taking to ourselves of any lessons of the Bible, unless we first clearly apprehend their original meaning and reference. To build a moral lesson upon an erroneous interpretation of the language of God's word is a reprehensible procedure. But he who clearly discerns the exact grammatico-historical sense of a passage, is the better qualified to give it any legitimate application. . . . To misinterpret the sacred writer is to discredit any application one may make of his words. But when, on the other hand, the preacher first shows, by a valid interpretation, that he thoroughly comprehends that which is written, his various allowable accommodations of the writer's words will have the greater force, in whatever practical application he may give them.²

All this may be useful so far as it goes. It does not, however, go very far. We are not primarily concerned with preacher's fodder: "true application," "legitimate application," "whatever practical application." We are rather concerned with meaning, with primary meaning. What, in terms understandable in our day and our culture, did the apostle actually say when he spoke in terms understood in another day and a different culture? Only thus can one in any meaningful way claim to comprehend "that which is written."

In a germinal article in 1950, Ebeling called the problem of contemporary translation the "basic problem of the theological situation today."³ And precisely also for moral and practical theology: "Above all in practical theology in its teaching on sermon, instruction and pastoral care, the hermeneutic question presents the one central problem underlying all questions of detail, in so far as the *applicatio* must not stand unrelated and all on its own alongside the *explicatio*."⁴

Hermeneutic(s) is here no longer regarded as a mere *ancilla* of critico-histori-

cal exegesis, marshaling rules for the discovery of the *sensus literalis*. There is a current tendency to distinguish exegesis, so understood, as a separate discipline from hermeneutic, the task of which is to bridge the distance between "then" and "now." Stendahl provides an intriguing case study of the conflict (or would "tension" be the better term?) that arises between the reductionist approach to New Testament study as a strictly descriptive historical science and the approach of the new hermeneutic. As a New Testament exegete he is a convincing champion of the former approach; as a confessing and concerned churchman he exemplifies the latter in daring fashion. His classic article on Biblical theology in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* focuses the issue:

The new descriptive theology has raised the hermeneutic question in a new form. The ideal of an empathetic understanding of the first century without borrowing categories from later times has never been an ideal before, nor have the comparative sources been so well analyzed. Never before was there a frontal non-pragmatic, non-apologetic attempt to describe the biblical faith and practice from within its original presuppositions, regardless of its possible ramifications for those who live by the Bible as the Word of God. The translation can no longer be made piecemeal. . . . It is imperative to have the original spelled out with the highest degree of perception in its own terms. This is the nucleus of all biblical theology, and the way from this descriptive task to an answer about the meaning in the present cannot be given in the same breath. It presupposes an extensive competence in the field of hermeneutics. There are three stages required: Respect for the original, due clarification of the hermeneutic principles involved, and then the tentative answers to the question of the meaning of here and now.⁵

The boldness with which Stendahl the churchman can call for a radical translation for the "here and now" is illustrated by his monograph on *The Bible and the Role of Women*:

The correct description of first-century Christianity is not automatically the authoritative and intended standard for the church through the ages. . . . History in the New Testament is not just a typical example from which one can deduce eternally valid principles. . . . When new questions emerge the guidance of the Spirit is counted on. The authority of the biblical sayings, indeed even of the words of Jesus is not blind. They must be applied and interpreted and when we do so, there is naturally a risk of subjective arbitrariness.⁶

One may of course question Stendahl's ideal of a purely descriptive Biblical theology. One cannot deny that with our increasing knowledge of the first century and the accelerated change in our own, the two cultures are, like the cosmic nebulae, racing apart at vertiginous speed, never again to meet in comfortable contiguity.

Frör, who is slightly debunked by J. M. Robinson for "retaining more continuity with traditional hermeneutics,"⁷ finally confronts our issue in a hermeneutical textbook in a special section entitled "Gesetz-Evangelium-Paränese." Involved here too is "Vergegenwärtigung der biblischen Botschaft" and no mere practical application. "Hier steht die Auslegung vor der Aufgabe, die Ermahnungen, die in den Evangelien und Episteln enthalten sind, der Gemeinde in ihrer ursprünglichen Intention zugänglich zu machen."⁸ Just so. Our problem exactly. But how does one, e. g., discover the intention of Paul regarding the status of women from a passage whose immediate purpose is a millinery one? How does one contemporize that intention? And how does one, once one has begun to confront the dilemma, justify the "self-evident conclusion" that Paul's millinery concern is time

bound and has no claim on universal validity? How can one, on strict exegetical principles alone, reach any decision in questions such as these? Why should the subsidiary argument regarding the "subordination" of women be universalized while Paul's real concern in the context is relativized? Self-evident? Not at all so, once one has begun to admit the question.

One cannot remain content with the customary leap from an embarrassing text to alleged underlying principles. A statement by Hunter epitomizes the approach, but rare is the clergyman who will not hear echoes of his own verbal dodges:

Sometimes Paul appears to be a man of his time. . . . The special problems he handles may be temporal and ephemeral; but the principles he lays down for their solution are of abiding value.⁹

What would one do without those convenient "principles"? But by what divining rod does one discover them beneath the surface of the text? Shall we — to venture one answer — leave it to the common sense of the interpreter? Or shall we cover one embarrassment with another by invoking the Spirit?

It may be well to hear the caveat of a Cullmann: "Before all evaluation, all judging, perhaps even prior to all 'being addressed' in 'my understanding of existence,' prior to all believing, simply to be obedient to what the men of the new covenant want to communicate to me as revelation, even if it is quite foreign to me."¹⁰ But then what? It is not necessarily unfaith that asks the question "What about me?" Most of us, uncomfortable about the program to demythologize strictly kerygmatic passages, applaud the thinly disguised polemic in Cullmann's statement. But we all deculturalize parenetic passages quite freely when we feel we must, and we are apparently not conscious of a contradiction in attitude. By what warrant such deculturalization? By what method? And on what principles?

That the solution of the problem is quite beyond my grasp I am beginning to realize with stunning clarity. But perhaps this is what some of us in the church need to learn. There are some questions that need very much to be asked but do not need to be answered — not finally, not completely, not once and for all. The answers come piecemeal in an occasional surmise — and quite by surprise. The anxiety that would force an answer stifles the surmise and blinds the spirit to surprise. I would venture that the endemic anxiety of our church body which has given birth to this committee is of such a stifling sort.

There are no hermeneutical answers, not in the sense that they are sought by some. And the kindest, most loving thing to do will be to say so.

If, by raising the question of "translation" in the theologically tangential area of parenesis, we seem to be suggesting that the same question must be addressed to the theological center before the committee's task is finished, that inference may stand without comment. In directing that the leading study deal with Article IV of the Apology, the steering group planned better than at least one committee member had till now realized.

I. On the Possibility of Translation: Some Inadequate Solutions

At bottom the question we are addressing to the Pauline text is when and how his parenesis is to be employed in contemporary proclamation and pastoral care. When exegesis, functioning with the well-worn tools of traditional hermeneutics, has performed its descriptive task, what in the freshly understood message is universally prescriptive? If we assume a universal applicability for every Pauline

injunction or even for only a carefully circumscribed portion of them, then that assumption must itself be validated by criteria appropriate to the materials and coherent with the inner structure of Pauline thought. An immediate challenge is furnished by two alluringly simplistic interpretations which employ undeniably Pauline motifs to deny any prescriptive force to his parenesis.¹¹

The most compelling of these views is that which claims its warrant in the Pauline *agape* motif. The absolutizing of the law of love in a remorselessly situational ethic has a ring of modernity about it, but it is little more than commentary on Augustine's oft-quoted dictum: *ama et fac quod vis*. The original text for both the modern and the Augustinian elaboration of the theme is Rom. 13:10: "Therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law." The question "What should I do?" the argument runs, is not only impossible to answer in the complexities of actual situations but is in principle needless. From moment to moment love must actualize itself within the demands of the given situation. Or if the focus of decision should be on the agent rather than on the external situation, it is the individual conscience, guided by love, that alone can reach morally responsible decisions. No third person, not even the apostle, can intervene. His parenesis is not regulative but illustrative: it would suggest, not compel. If there should be texts that conflict with the primal ethic of love, interpreted in such radically situational terms, these represent a degeneration from the pure form.¹²

Closely related to this concentration on love is the interpretation of Pauline parenesis which isolates the motif of the Spirit and the freedom He brings. The classic text might be Gal. 5:18-23: "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under Law. . . . Against such there is no law." Here again the theme that underlies all specific exhortations must be the ultimate abrogation of all exhortation. What remains is merely paradigmatic and makes no claim to be universally binding.¹³

We shall return to these motifs at a later point in our discussion. Here we merely note that the presence of so much parenesis in the Pauline letters renders such formal and schematic treatments highly suspect. Not what is affirmed gives one pause, but what is denied. Pauline ethics is indeed informed and controlled by the prime motifs of *agape* and the Spirit. And many of the individual injunctions are best understood as commentary on the law of love as this is implemented in the free life of the Spirit. Nevertheless, can one categorically deny any prescriptive force to all of the Pauline imperatives? And if one refuses to do so, has one necessarily yielded to the *bête noir* of casuistry or legalistic formalism?

In addition to these generalized approaches which deny prescriptive force to Pauline parenesis on theological principle, there are others which, while assigning prescriptive intention to the mind of Paul, nevertheless interpret that intention in such a way that the possibility of a contemporary translation becomes highly problematical. Again, these views are often based on valid insights into certain aspects of Paul's thought and may have a place in a fully articulated interpretation of his theology. But when they are isolated and generalized, they tend to reduce parenesis to a minor footnote or to an appendix, uncomfortably encumbering the major thrust of Paul's thought.

Still prevalent is the view that the individual exhortations are an effect of Paul's gradually diminishing eschatological hope. They represent a compromise with reality in view of the delay of the parousia (*Enteschatologierungsprozess*). The demands of life in the continuing old aeon cooled the ardor of the first period of exuberant expectation when no parenesis was needed.¹⁴

Such a view is manifestly unsatisfactory, for it fails to reckon with the peculiar but consistent nature of Pauline eschatology. Here there is always a double emphasis — on that which is already realized and on the parousia. The Christian life too is lived in this dialectic. It is entirely in keeping with this insight — and totally destructive of the theory we are considering — that recent form-critical analysis has isolated a common parenetic tradition which goes back to the earliest period of Christian communal life and on which Paul freely draws.¹⁵ Paul is not guilty of a half-hearted accommodation to the needs of a new and sorrier day in which the eschaton has receded to a distant horizon. In fact in 1 Thessalonians, his earliest extant epistle, Paul criticizes an enthusiastic ethic based on the nearness of the parousia in terms which do not suggest that he is recreant to his own earlier belief. Moreover, in 1 Cor. 6:1 ff. and 7:29 ff., it is precisely the prospect of the parousia (some would say the *near* prospect) that motivates quite specific parenetic concerns. The view we are considering is thus proved false not only in its conclusion but in its major assumption concerning the negative relation between parenesis and the parousia. Paul may well have undergone some changes in his thought regarding the immanence of the parousia, although attempts to demonstrate this are not always convincing. Yet at all periods of this thought his parenesis is grounded positively in both poles of the eschaton: the baptismal entrance into the new creation and the full redemption of the parousia. One might with Schrage venture an assertion in direct antithesis to the view at hand: "Die konkreten Gebote sind nicht Ersatz sondern Konsequenz der Eschatologie."¹⁶

In the previous interpretation parenesis is the result of a compromise conditioned historically by the delay by the parousia. In a related interpretation, it is not particular history so much that necessitates compromise as the general human condition. Attention is called to an alleged tension in Paul's thought between theory and practice, between the ideal and the real. We meet here for the first time in our discussion a recognition of an antinomy between the Pauline indicatives and imperatives. The indicatives would represent the ideal, the imperatives Paul's compromise with the real. A value judgment is implicit: The indicatives contain Paul's most intimate thought; the imperatives are merely accommodation to practical necessity.¹⁷

But Paul is no idealist, and the new life heralded in the indicative is not an ideal. It is, in Bultmann's language, an "eschatological gift."¹⁸ Certainly the indicatives that describe the life in Christ are not empiric statements. They are faith statements. As such, however, they are not in conflict with reality. They rather interpret the new Christian reality. Neither are they in conflict with the imperatives but, as we shall see, are their basis and presupposition. For the moment we note only that the view we are considering sees Pauline parenesis in terms that are too exclusively negative. The model "imperative versus indicative" is an abstraction, and the suggestion is that the imperative has the negative force of prohibition to compel the real to conform to the ideal. The actual phenomena of Pauline imperatival usage do not support this model. A surprising number of the imperatives are not negative prohibitions at all but positive exhortations that function as enticement and as reinforcement for the motive powers that are already functioning in the reality of the Spirit's fellowship. Rather than witness to a conflict between the ideal and the real, they are evidence that the supposed ideal *is* the real.

In the radical eschatological interpretation parenesis was a relatively late development, following a period of enthusiastic freedom. The vagaries of under-

standing in this matter are such that one is not surprised to find those who maintain precisely the reverse of this: Parenesis in the intention of Paul is a temporary necessity to be followed by progressively increasing freedom. Especially young missions required the assistance of laws to restrain impulses that threatened from a pagan past. Obviously we are once more dealing with the conflict between the ideal and the real, not with the optimistic or even perfectionistic estimate that the real will gradually yield to the ideal.¹⁹

Yet why does Paul never allude to the temporary nature of his parenesis if this analysis is true to his thought? Why does he repeatedly and consistently emphasize basic and obvious matters which go to the rudiments of early Christian moral instruction (*porneia*, for example)? In the negative exhortations the shame often is not that the readers are young in faith and cannot instruct themselves but that they do not walk the path they have long known. Ten times in 1 Corinthians Paul expresses his outrage with a peremptory: "Don't you know?" Of course they know, but to know the good does not (*pace* Socrates) necessarily mean to do it. Paul seems already to have employed the image of Christianity as "the Way" (1 Cor. 12:13). He may also have known the Stoic concept of the *prokoptōn* and of moral advance along the way (Gal. 1:14). Paul, however, knew himself as one who was always only *on* the way, never at the goal (Phil. 3:18); he anticipated nothing more of those whom he summoned to follow in his steps (see especially 1 Cor. 4:17).

Finally and for our purposes most significantly, Pauline parenesis is denied continuing prescriptive force by an interpretation that lays exclusive emphasis on its situational character. Here we are not thinking so much of the doctrinaire approach of *agape*-centered situational ethics but of the common-sense observation that Paul's words were spoken into unique and unrepeatable historic situations. "Wurden die konkreten apostolischen Gebote bisher mehr als Not- oder Übergangslösungen betrachtet," says Schrage, "werden sie nun als prinzipiell und ausschliesslich konkret und aktuell angesehen, nämlich als ganz und gar auf einem einmaligen geschichtlichen Fall bezogen."²⁰ Much of this is self-evident and is given both in the letter form and in the historical nature of Biblical revelation. First Corinthians would be the classic example of parenesis which is, in this sense, situational. Circumstances not only provoke the parenesis but deeply influenced its form of expression. In principle, therefore, much cannot be universalized. But this insight is not to be uncritically universalized either. Must scientific introduction always do its work before Paul's injunctions can be understood and applied? The question does not concern the historical form of all of Paul — be that kerygma, didache, or parenesis. The question is whether Paul consciously and intentionally limited a stated parenetic concern to the given concrete situation. One might conceivably argue the case for much of 1 Corinthians. Who would be audacious enough to do the same, shall we say, with Romans?

Form criticism has demonstrated that the parenetic conclusions of the typical Pauline letter do not have specific but general meaning and application. Moreover, there are free-floating parenetic *topoi*, such as the *Laster- und Tugendkata- loge* and the Tables of Duties, which the interpreter would be well advised to hold aloof from a radically contextual exegesis.²¹ More instructive, in the instance of 1 Corinthians, is to observe how again and again, especially in chapters 5 to 14, general reflections of a parenetic nature grow out of an immediate situational concern. We would be poorer by four long chapters (and, incidentally, impoverished

of most of Paul's reflection on conscience and almost all of his eucharistic theology) if the Corinthians had not asked a question, the continuing existential nature of which has long since ceased to be obvious: "Say, what about meat sacrificed to idols?"

But more. As not all of the imperatives are for a concrete situation, so they are not all concrete. They frequently involve attitudes of mind and heart or subtle nuances of feeling in interpersonal relationships. Further, much parenesis is specifically iterative in form and meaning and is not limited to the day and hour of writing. This is clearly true of the attitudinal parenesis just alluded to but is also true of that parenesis which comes closest in form to casuistic legalism: those instances in which the imperative falls in the apodosis of a conditional sentence. Grammatical terminology itself refutes the rigid situational interpretation if the conditional sentence should happen to be a general condition of the future type!²²

This overview points to an immediate hermeneutical conclusion: all *a priori* approaches to Pauline parenesis should be regarded as suspect. What is required, on the one hand, is careful exegetical labor with individual passages and a hermeneutics that not only controls, but that grows out of the process of study. This study should be conducted at the hand of a great many individual passages without undue anxiety to arrive at general principles. We hope these will emerge in the process of study. An example of such study is a popular investigation of Paul's parenesis on sexuality and marriage in 1 Cor. 6 and 7, published in *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXXIX (June 1968), 355—66. There is conscious attention to the modern hermeneutical concern for cross-cultural interpretation in the preparation of the study. The underlying commitment is to the sanctity of the individual text in the original literary and historical context. Two further presuppositions are then tested against this text: Presupposition Number One: The Biblical statements on marriage and related subjects are not culturally irrelevant and inapplicable to man in his modern psycho-sexual development. Presupposition Number Two: The Biblical statements on marriage and related subjects do not permit a reduction to codification for a program of legalistic church discipline. The degree to which these are proper presuppositions and to which the study bears them out is certainly subject to discussion. The point here is methodological. A great many texts must be studied and a great many hermeneutical questions must be asked and tested before large-scale generalizations will carry conviction.

Another conclusion of hermeneutical significance arises out of our survey. All of these positions suggest that Paul is at least slightly embarrassed with the role of ethical moderator and that in the very need to speak in the imperative mode he consciously falls short of his own highest theology. What is required is an understanding of his thought which anchors parenesis to the bedrock of his faith. There is a growing consensus among students of his thought that parenesis is not an ungainly addendum but is as central almost as the cross itself.

We may for the moment follow Wolfgang Schweitzer's bold attempt to see how ethics is related to the rest of Paul's thought.²³

II. One Man's Solution: Wolfgang Schweitzer

Schweitzer's position comes closest to the two situational approaches outlined above — that which functions with the *agape* motif and that which emphasizes the original historic occasion of each piece of parenesis. The articulation of the posi-

tion, however, is theologically more sophisticated and in its liberating effect opens the way for a fresh assault on the relation of the imperative to the indicative.

Schweitzer addresses himself to two questions: How are ethical statements related to the rest of the New Testament? How can they be made fruitful for present-day proclamation? The second question is the hermeneutical one that stands at the head of our discussion; the first is the question that has been posed by our survey.

The entire New Testament, according to Schweitzer, is to be understood as the witness of faith (*Glaubenszeugnis*) to God's revelation in Christ. As faith necessarily responds to divine grace both in word and in deed, so in faith's inscripturated witness there are both "dogmatic" statements, which demonstrate the verbal response of praise and confession, and "ethical" statements — descriptive, hortatory, admonitory — which testify to the life that faith lives in the world and invite participation. The latter statements are an integral part of faith's witness.

Sie sind Hinweise auf Gottes Offenbarung in Christus wie jene "dogmatischen" Aussagen. Nach der Meinung der Verfasser des neuen Testaments impliziert der Glaube an Jesus Christus eine bestimmte Ausrichtung des Menschen im Leben in dieser Welt, also ein bestimmtes Ethos. Deshalb stehen die ethischen nicht neben den "dogmatischen" Aussagen, sondern sie sind wie jene integrierender Bestandteil des Glaubenszeugnisses.²⁴

In answer to his first question, then, Schweitzer sees ethical statements as implicated somehow in the kerygma itself and the faith it elicits. This fact vastly complicates the task of interpreting the Biblical foundations for ethics. For the ethicist must constantly consider how "ethical" statements are related to the corresponding "dogmatic" interpretation of the kerygma. We shall probe this relationship further by examining more closely the relationship between the imperatives and the indicatives in Paul. But first we shall review Schweitzer's answer to his second question: How are the "ethical" statements to be translated in modern proclamation? The risk of loss inherent in such a translation is heightened if one accepts Schweitzer's understanding of the kerygmatic basis of these statements. The need for translation, however, is given in the very nexus that binds the Biblical witness to life.

All statements of the New Testament are time bound in a threefold sense: They report what has transpired in time (the Christ-event); these reports are addressed to readers in temporally fixed situations; and the reporting witnesses are themselves bound by the conceptions and modes of thought of their time. The first and third aspects are of special importance for the hermeneutics of "dogmatic" statements. The special situation of the readers was, in the original instance, especially crucial for "ethical" statements. The Galatians confronted different ethical dilemmas than the Corinthians and would presumably have required something like a chapter from a modern text in isagogics before they could have understood 1 Corinthians. Yet today the situation is different. As important as the unique situation of the original readers remains for an understanding of the ethical problematics of the New Testament, more vital is the third aspect of temporal contingency: the total thought world of the era. "Während sich die biblische Hermeneutik im Blick auf die Dogmatik an dieser Stelle vor allem für die Unterschiede des Weltbildes und der Denkformen interessiert (siehe Entmythologisierungs-Debatte!), muss es der Ethik vornehmlich darum gehen, die Bedingtheit der neutestamentlichen Aussagen durch die damalige soziologische Situation zu erkennen,

um sinngemässe von unsinnigen Übertragungen in unsere Zeit unterscheiden zu können." ²⁵ (Why not a "deculturizing" debate in parenesis to correspond to the "demythologizing" debate?) It is obvious that for the ethicist, if not for the exegete and the historian, what is common in the situation of the Galatians and the Corinthians is more important for an understanding of the total range of parenesis than the different mode of their ethical questions.

Thereby Schweitzer would seem to rescue the interpreter from fixation on the unique situation of each piece in the parenetic traditions and direct his attention to unifying elements. This impression is underscored when he joins Dibelius and Schrage in ascribing a "predigt-mässige Allgemeingültigkeit" ²⁶ to much Pauline parenesis, an aspect to which we have already called attention. But that rescue is only illusory. For Schweitzer observes that one must carefully distinguish between that which may have been regarded as of universal applicability in the time of Paul and that which would reach over the temporal boundaries of that era and retain its universality into the present. To borrow jargon from the modern linguist, one must admit the possibility that a given bit of parenesis could be *synchronically* universal without necessarily being *diachronically* so. In our introductory paragraphs we alluded to this possibility with the illustration of the veiling of women from 1 Cor. 11. All of the "churches of God" and "nature herself" joined the universal witness — then! But now?

Schweitzer's primary illustration is more jolting. He questions whether one could demonstrate by purely exegetical means that the prohibition against *porneia* in 1 Cor. 5:1 ff. is timeless for us in a different sense than, say, his advice on slavery. In one case Paul seems to have expressed something that still gains nearly universal assent, surely among Christians; in the other not. Could we say that the one area of ethical concern is central, the other more peripheral? Or that the one is essentially a moral concern, the other rather social? If so, how does one determine centrality, and how does one hew the line between the moral and the social? One possible criterion for centrality would be antiquity — retroactive universality one might label it. We would be dealing with ancient and fundamental ethical postulates; "ethische Grundentscheidungen" is Schweitzer's phrase. ²⁷

In passing, we might note that Schweitzer's illustration is not as telling as would at first appear. Only if *porneia* is abstracted from the context and given some generally accepted definition would anything like universal assent be forthcoming even here. Paul appeals to an ethical *communis sensus* in the Hellenistic world to indict the man who is living with his father's wife. Admittedly, we do not know all of the circumstances. But from what the text reveals, could one predict a universal taboo reaction in our time and place to the relationship described? If my memory of *Henry Esmond* is sound, young Henry is joined in happy wedlock to his step-mother in the final chapter, and all of the reader's instinctive romantic reactions assent. (It need scarcely be noted that if the Corinthian's father was still living, Paul would have said so. He was in no mood to spare facts!)

Schweitzer might have chosen his example of *porneia* from 1 Cor. 6:12 ff. Historical exegesis, however, in that case might attempt to demonstrate that the *Sitz im Leben* of that parenesis is the temple harlotry of sacred prostitution. All this would bring us back to our earlier conclusion concerning the relativity even of synchronic universals. Perhaps the safest retreat from the diversionary tactics of exegesis within the limits of 1 Cor. would be the *Lasterkataloge* of 5:11 and 6:9. Here *porneia* stands outside a relativizing context. Here, moreover, we have what

is desired — a witness to ancient and fundamental moral postulates. For the parenetic traditions on which Paul draws in these catalogs are moral commonplaces of the Hellenistic world. We are resting back on the *communis sensus* for moral universals to which Sophocles already had Antigone appeal:

The god's unwritten and unailing laws;
Not now, nor yesterday's, they always live. 11. 455 f.

That the universal moral sense here has the support of the Decalog permits us to rest comfortably with the conclusion: The prohibition against *porneia* is universally valid, synchronically and diachronically.

But how much has been won? Resuming Schweitzer's argument, we note that he explains the continuity in the parenetic tradition concerning *porneia* on sociological grounds. We are dealing with a

Grundentscheidung . . . die auch in verschiedenen kulturellen Situationen durchgehalten werden kann und durchgehalten werden muss, wenn nicht die kleinste menschliche Gemeinschaft, nämlich die Familie, gefährdet werden soll. Der Unterschied in der kulturellen Gesamtsituation der hellenistischen Welt und unserer heutigen Kultur spielen da keine Rolle. Das Unzuchtsverbot wird von uns als zeitlos gültig angesehen, weil trotz der grossen Unterschiede, die sich im Bereich der Familie inzwischen ergeben haben, die mit diesem Verbot abgefangene Gefährdung der Familie unverändert geblieben ist. Zunächst scheint es also nur unter diesem soziologischen Gesichtspunkt verständlich zu werden, wieso es überhaupt ethische Fragen gibt, über deren in der Christenheit seit Jahrhunderten Einmütigkeit herrscht.²⁸

The point of the sociological argument is apparent if we recall the comparison between *porneia* and slavery with which Schweitzer began. The conclusion is equally apparent: Very little parenesis can stand the sociological test for universality. If we take leave of Schweitzer and the sociological front to set up defences behind the bastions of the Decalog, how much more territory have we secured? Much parenesis has no obvious relation to the Decalog. Moreover, the Decalog too is exposed to critical exegesis.²⁹ And the history of Christian pedagogy would probably confirm the suspicion that it is the Decalog *as interpreted* by the superego of each generation that is regarded as the real authority.

All this aside, Schweitzer is surely correct when he notes that the most disturbing moral situations are not those which yield relatively easy decisions, based on a long and consistent parenetic tradition within relatively fixed social patterns. Really confounding are problems which arise out of changing circumstances and changing ideals of human personhood. How can the New Testament help here? If, as we must, we take the situational character of much New Testament parenesis seriously, the best we can often do is to look for analogs and near parallels. Since situations are never *more* than analogous, there is risk in even the most cautious adaptation. Here we can summarize and carry the argument a step further by quoting Schweitzer in English from *Biblical Authority for Today*:

It is agreed that if we are to receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures, we must discover the degree to which our particular situation is similar to that which the Bible presents. It must be remembered that absolute identity of the situation is never found, and therefore the problem of adaptation becomes acute. Nevertheless in each new situation we must allow ourselves to be guided by the Bible to a knowledge of the will of God. . . . It is agreed that in applying the Biblical message to our day, interpreters diverge because of differing doctrinal

and ecclesiastical traditions, differing ethical, political, and cultural outlooks, differing geographical and sociological situations, differing temperaments and gifts. It is, however, an actual experience within the Ecumenical Movement, that when we meet together, with presuppositions of which we may be largely unconscious, and bring these presuppositions to the judgment of Scripture, some of the very difficulties are removed which prevent the Gospel from being heard. Thus the Bible itself leads us back to the living Word of God.³⁰

The two essential points are reiterated in the German article. The first control on parenetic adaptation would be an open statement of the bases for the comparison between the ancient and the modern situations. The second would be an appeal from relativity to fundamental New Testament values (*Grundwertungen*).³¹ But how are these to be distinguished from values more conditioned by time? We thereby come to the final stage of the argument.

We cannot remain content with a universality based on nontheological (e. g., sociological) grounds. Little Biblically grounded parenesis would remain. Further, the integrity of parenesis in its relation to faith and the kerygma would be jeopardized. Since therefore situational parallels lead into a cul-de-sac, we should return to the insight that "ethical" statements too are faith statements. We must look away from the specific injunctions to the controlling heart of the New Testament witness. What — the question should be — coheres with faith in Christ? Once again we quote, and the presence of the italics indicates that we have arrived at what, for Schweitzer, is the core of the matter:

*Wir müssen uns zunächst frei machen von den einzelnen "ethischen" Weisungen und Mahnungen im Neuen Testament. Die dem Neuen Testament entsprechende christliche Ethik für unsere Zeit muss von der Mitte des neutestamentlichen Zeugnisses her gewonnen werden. Es geht darum, dass wir erkennen, was wir im Glauben an den gekreuzigten und auferstandenen Herrn bejahen können (oder müssen) und was wir im gleichen Glauben ablehnen müssen.*³²

The key passage is Rom. 14. Freedom for decision and action (here in the instance of *eidōlothyta*) is won through faith in the universal Lord of the living and the dead (vv. 8 f.). The standard for decision can only be the general rule: "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (v. 23). That this negative rule is not easy to apply and does not render an automatic decision is evident from the fact that in the very case of *eidōlothyta* two Christian brothers might with equal conscientiousness reach opposing conclusions. The positive corollary of this negative rule can be summarized in one word: *agape*. "Glaube und Liebe sollen im Handeln des Christen eins sein, sowohl im Blick auf die nicht zu überschreitenden Grenzen als auch im Blick auf konstruktive Möglichkeiten des Verhaltens."³³

Any attempt to discover situational parallels, without prior and continuing regard for the twin bases of faith and of love, is useless. All that New Testament parenesis can furnish are guidelines — and none which evade the risk of decision in faith and in love. At a minimum level, the individual pareneses are instructive because they illustrate how the apostle and his readers reached faith-ful decisions in their day. At a higher level, they challenge us to decide whether we share their faith and their love. From this common standpoint one might then very well conclude that the same faith and love are active even when the decision might change in an analogous situation between "then" and "now":

Es könnte sich zeigen, dass von der Mitte her gesehen das, was wir im Glauben tun oder lassen müssen, doch dem entspricht (also in Analogie zu dem steht),

was damals entschieden wurde, auch wenn die konkrete Entscheidung unter Umständen von der Sache her gesehen in einer ganz anderen Richtung läuft. Also etwa: dem Annehmen der Sklaverei als eines Faktums, das damals in der Einheit von Glaube und Liebe zu bewältigen war, würde heute die Ablehnung jeder Sklaverei in derselben Einheit von Glaube und Liebe entsprechen. Von der Sache her gesehen liegt das Gegenteil einer Entsprechung vor.³⁴

The key to continued relevance for some portions of parenesis, then, is the frank admission of surface irrelevance. Only when we are willing to confront this are the texts set free to continue their witness.

Here we take leave of Schweitzer. We have used him as a guide over much of the territory we had intended to traverse. In his caution and reverence he can help us over those perilous stretches in Pauline parenesis which are most estranging, those in which the tensions between the "then" and the "now" are most keenly felt. We may be even more willing than he to grant a "predigtmäßige Allgemeingültigkeit"³⁵ to large expanses of Pauline parenesis. How much, for example, of Rom. 12 requires culturo-hermeneutical "translation"? Natural man in all generations will be offended by these positive injunctions to humility and selfless service, but the Christian man in every generation will acknowledge that these injunctions are modeled after the reality of Christ Himself. Where difficulty is most frequently felt is in negative parenesis and in that which seems to be related more to custom and behavior than to morality. How one interprets these difficult passages will be a touchstone of one's ability to deal with parenesis generally.

At this point hermeneutical considerations of the first magnitude emerge. We mention two, each of which may be regarded as generic for a whole species of related conclusions:

1. All *interpretation* of parenetic materials must take seriously their situational character.
2. All *translation* of parenetic materials must be consciously oriented to and guided by the kerygmatic core.

In the next and final section we shall briefly elucidate the second conclusion by addressing ourselves to the relation between the indicative and the imperative.

III. The Relation Between the Indicative and the Imperative

Schweitzer distinguishes between "dogmatic" and "ethical" statements. The contrast is usually drawn between the indicative and the imperative. This contrast has long been a focal point in discussion of Pauline parenesis, and here again interpreters have predicated fundamental disjunctions and discontinuities in Paul's thought. Or if Paul's indicative and imperatival statements are not absolutely contradictory, they have at times been regarded as a rather heedless amalgam of motifs, incompletely assimilated. How can Paul on the one hand assert that his readers are free from the flesh, that they are led by the Spirit and dead to sin, and on the other hand exhort them in words that suggest they are still bound to flesh and to sin? A complete presentation of scholarly opinions would take us over much the same ground which we reconnoitered in the first part of this paper. Here we shall confine ourselves to a few views that confront the issue explicitly in terms of the indicative/imperative polarity.

Thus Windisch entitled his discussion "Das Problem des paulinischen Imperativs."³⁶ His orientation towards *Religionsgeschichte* is evident from his resolution of the issue. There are antinomies in Paul's ethical thought. These do not,

however, arise out of the new realities of the Christian experience. The blame must be laid to Paul's inability to completely harmonize conflicting theological motifs: Judaic, Hellenistic, specifically Christian, and the personally Pauline. Paul's "ureigenste Schöpfung"³⁷ was that of *dikaio syne* through grace. Here the imperative, on the model of idealistic ethical theories, is readily comprehensible as the realization through the will of man within the earthly realm of that which has already transpired in the transcendent realm. But this is only one thrust, the personal Pauline thrust, of the indicative/imperative alternation.

Windisch feels the harshest antinomy in the baptismal context: "You are dead/Now die!" In the Christian tradition, which Paul had received, the motifs of admonition and cleansing were probably found in the sequence imperative/indicative: "Repent/ and be baptized." Paul complicated the somewhat naive juxtaposition by shifting the antecedent "Repent" to a position after "Be baptized." The situation was probably further complicated by influences from the Hellenistic mysteries, where new life was regarded as "substantially" realized in the initiate; i. e., an actual ontological change took place. These various lines of thought then cross and converge in a rather structureless amalgam, in which contradictions between indicatives and imperatives cannot be fully harmonized: "Zu vollem organischen Anschluss kommt es bei ihm nicht. Sie organisch einzufügen, ist ihm nicht gelungen."³⁸

Less complicated but equally uncomplimentary to Paul's ability as an organic thinker are views such as the following:³⁹

For Weinel the indicative emphasis of the justification complex is Paul's intimate Christian conviction; with the imperative he falls back into Jewish legalistic habits of thought.

For Wernlé almost the reverse is true. The indicative assertions of sinlessness are extreme dogmatic statements; in the imperatives Paul engages with reality and speaks his intimate pastoral concerns.

Such views are no longer widely held. Bultmann's essay of 1924 ("Das Problem der Ethik bei Paulus") began a new stage in the discussion.⁴⁰ Windisch's defensive review article, which we have summarized, is merely a death rattle. It is now generally recognized that the acknowledged tension between the indicative and the imperative must be accepted as a material necessity and not just as a formal irregularity. Problematical passages are of too frequent occurrence and the offending imperatives are contextually too intimately associated with the indicatives to render at all convincing those interpretations which posit as an explanation an almost dim-witted heedlessness in the mind of Paul. Rom. 6 is paradigmatic of passages in which Paul utters the imperative in one gasp with the indicative in a closely articulated argument.

Bultmann chooses as his model the pointed paradox of Gal. 5:25: "If we live in the Spirit/ let us also walk in the Spirit." He rejects out of hand all views that would find an unresolved contradiction here. We have rather a true antinomy, in which both statements must stand, and must stand as they do here — together — and in this sequence! The locus of that "together" is the central Pauline conviction that *dikaio syne* is the eschatological gift of salvation ("eschatologische Heilsgut").⁴¹ The *prōton pseudos* of all historical and/or psychological interpretations of the indicative/imperative antinomy is that they fail to recognize that Paul consciously and deliberately grounds the imperative in the indicative, i. e., in the irreducible gift of *dikaio syne*. The second error is a failure to comprehend that Paul's indica-

tive assertions of freedom from sin are not ethical statements. The notion that they are rests on a false view of the justified man and on a misunderstanding of sinlessness:

Vor allem ist deutlich, dass für Paulus Sündlosigkeit nicht in dem Enthusiasmus, dem Willen und der Kraft, das Gute zu tun, besteht, sondern etwas Negatives ist, die Freiheit von der Macht der Sünde, dass endlich für Paulus der Gerechtfertigte eine eschatologische Grösse, ein wunderbares Wesen ist, nicht der Mensch, dessen Eigenstes und Höchstes sich frei entfalten kann. . . . Es ist klar, dass für Paulus die Vorstellung von dem Guten, dessen Idee das Handeln bestimmt, und das durch das Handeln werwirklicht werden soll, gar nicht existiert; und das damit auch seine Vorstellung vom Gerechtfertigten nichts mit dem durch jene Anschauung bestimmten Menschen ideal gemein hat. Jene Anschauung muss die Sündlosigkeit umdeuten in das zu realisierende Ideal des Menschen, während die Gerechtigkeit bzw. die Sündlosigkeit bei Paulus eschatologischen, wunderbaren Charakter hat; sie ist die realisierte Seinsweise des Gerechtfertigten.⁴²

Righteousness comes from God (*dikaiosyne ek theou*) as the gift to faith. The opposed interpretation sees sinlessness as an ideal to be realized; for Paul it is, however, the eschatological miracle. If for this new existence an imperative is employed, it cannot mean that thereby the gift of sinlessness is first to be realized or secured.

The relation of the individual to the Beyond is not that of progress towards a transcendent ideal of manhood, as in Stoicism; nor is it that of communion with transcendent reality through a change of substance, as in the mysteries. The relation for Paul is established by *pistis*. But that means precisely the renunciation of all claims and of all personal striving for the Beyond in a relationship of receptivity and simple obedience under God's saving deed ("Gehorsam unter Gottes Heilstat").⁴³ *Pistis* is that quality of faith which accepts that man is justified only in the adjudication of God. Righteousness (or sinlessness) is not a change in the ethical quality of man. It is not empiric; it can only be believed.

With all of that we are still in the orbit of the indicative. What of the imperative? Since it is the concrete, empirical man who is justified, his relation to the Beyond (*Jenseits*) is not abstracted from his concrete behavior. He, the concrete man, who acts and suffers, is the justified man, but his action and suffering as viewed by faith have now received a new meaning, that of obedience to God. By obedience (*Gehorsam*) Bultmann seems to mean the decision to place himself totally at God's disposal. "Present yourselves to God" (Rom. 6:13; 12:1). The essential expression of obedience is the reception of the justifying verdict, but it is then displayed in the concrete being and doing of the justified man, in ethical behavior. This behavior of course no longer has the meaning of "works" in the theological sense of that word. Behavior does not establish the relation; it expresses an already established relation.⁴⁴

Here Bultmann rapidly draws some large conclusions. The ethical requirement receives no new content for the man of faith. His ethical behavior is distinguished only by the moment of obedience. The ethical commands of the Old Testament remain, as well as the *Tugend- und Lasterkataloge* of the Hellenistic parenetic tradition. He is, in other words, empirically the same man still, placed in his concrete actions under the same requirements as any other man. By including Hellenistic parenesis (we trust we are being fair to him), Bultmann would seem to suggest that what is at issue is not a life governed by some ethical absolute but

responsible behavior in a given time and place as this is directed by the generally available contemporary ethical insight. That also seems to be the force of his observations on the gradual disregard of Old Testament ceremonial regulations:

Paulus bekämpft sie als "Werke"; sind sie als Werke erledigt, so müssen sie natürlich auch überall da hinfallen, wo sie nicht mehr als aus der konkreten Situation des Menschen erwachsende, an ihn gerichtete Forderungen einsichtig sind, d. h. ihr Wegfall folgt nicht aus einem für den Gerechtfertigten gültigen besonderen sittlichen Ideal, sondern einfach aus allgemein zugänglicher sittlicher Einsicht.⁴⁵

What distinguishes the justified man at any time is not a new ethics. What distinguishes him is the obedience that rests on the justifying Word. But that precisely is not empiric!

Much of this is very congenial, but the sentence on which these conclusions hinge is tantalizingly brief. Each word cries for a footnote:

Die Kontinuität zwischen dem alten und dem neuen Menschen ist also nicht abgerissen, wie in der hellenistischen Mystik; der *dikaiōtheis* ist der konkrete Mensch, der die Last seiner Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft trägt, *der also auch unter dem sittlichen Imperativ steht*. Dieser fällt keineswegs hin; er gewinnt nur den neuen Sinn des Gehorsams unter Gott.⁴⁶

There are questions that will not down. What of the crucial *also auch*, which would trap one with its claim on the self-evident? What is that burden of the past, and how do the imperatives relate especially to it? Are there no new norms for behavior in the eschatological *Gegenwart*? Is everything contained for Paul in Jewish and ethnic moral thought? What of the parenesis that is not specifically ethical? Or that which recommends a complex of attitudes that are not comprehended in any ideal of coldly moral rectitude? Why, above all, is there not one word about love? Would that perhaps not be a better catchword for the new life than "obedience"?

Perhaps we should broaden our investigation briefly and in conclusion place the indicative/imperative contrast into the context of other Biblical correlatives:⁴⁷

1. The Old Testament Law and the New Testament Gospel
2. The Old Testament *Nomos as Law and Promise*
3. The Gospel and *Paraklesis*
4. *Nomos* and *Paraklesis*
5. The Justifying Acquittal and the Coming Judgment

1. OLD TESTAMENT LAW AND NEW TESTAMENT GOSPEL

Nomos (with or without the definite article) is for Paul always the Old Testament Torah in its aspect of commandment unless the context clearly indicates otherwise; Gospel is the good news of grace in Christ. Paul contrasts these as follows:

The law requires works; the Gospel elicits faith.

The law manifests sin; the Gospel justifies the sinner.

The law reveals the wrath of God; the Gospel mediates grace.

The law is weak to effect the good; the Gospel is a *dynamis* to create new life.

The law is confined to dead *gramma*; the Gospel releases the living *pneuma*.

The law enslaves; the Gospel frees.

Law and Gospel, thus understood, are not related to one another in a dialectical

contemporaneity (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) but are related as the old is to the new in *heilsgeschichtlichem Nacheinander*.⁴⁸ Thus although Paul correctly reflects by way of negative reaction the legalistic perversion of the Torah in contemporary Judaism, his indictment is not leveled from the vantage point of the Torah, as correctly interpreted, but from the new vantage point of faith.

2. OLD TESTAMENT AS LAW AND PROMISE

Despite the sharp line that Pauline *Heilsgeschichte* draws between the old and the new dispensations, Paul recognizes a basic distinction in the Old Testament between Law (*nomos*) and promise (*epaggelia*). The two are absolutely opposed to one another as are Law and Gospel. What more the New Testament believer receives through the Gospel than was available through commitment to the promise is never completely clarified.

3. GOSPEL AND PARAKLESIS

Rom. 6 typifies the Pauline emphasis that is for us of highest significance: that the Gospel proclamation addresses man both as promise of a new righteousness and as command — in the neat German antithesis, both as *Zuspruch* and as *Anspruch*.⁴⁹ We have thereby returned to the indicative/imperative contrast, and all that is needed is to reiterate the cruciality of the proper sequence between the two. The imperative is grounded in the indicative; indeed, in the indicative perfect tense of God's completed action (*dikaiosyne theou pefanerotai*, Rom. 3:21). The sequence must be indicative/imperative; *Zuspruch*/*Anspruch*; Gospel/command. The divine action moves through death to resurrection, both for Christ and for those who through Baptism have been incorporated into Him.

It is of the essence to comprehend that it is the Gospel in continuous action that addresses man in both indicative and imperative. The relation is paradoxical but not antithetical as in the Law/Gospel polarity. Here there is no either/or; it is both/and. Paul's customary word for command in the context of the indicative is *parakalein*, or the nominal *paraklesis*. If it were not for the terminological tradition, we would have chosen to entitle this study "Hermeneutics and Pauline Paraklesis." The connotations of *paraklesis* are just right. For how is the word to be translated: exhortation, command, warning, admonition, or even — paradoxically — comfort? And what is the force, the motive and emotive significance, of an imperative that grows out of the divine indicative perfect tense? There is in the word *paraklesis* itself the moment of assurance. God gives before He requires, and He gives what He requires. One regrets that English does not offer such a gracious pair of synonyms as *Bitte* and *Gebot*. Which of these corresponds best with *paraklesis* and which with *nomos* should be clear. We cannot resist quoting a few words from a most compelling article by Schlier with the title "Vom Wesen der apostolischen Ermahnung."⁵⁰ He speaks of apostolic *paraklesis* as "tröstliche Mahnung" and "mahrender Trost." His summary definition follows:

So sehen wir, vom Begriff *parakalein* selbst darauf verwiesen, bereits einige Wesenszüge der apostolischen Ermahnung. Als eine besondere Form der Verkündigung, als jenes andringende, beschwörende Ermahnen, das der Bekümmernis um den Ermahnten entspringt, ihn fast mehr bittet als fordert, richtet sie sich, nicht Stimme des anfahrens und beschämenden Gesetzes, sondern Träger eines verborgenen Trostes an die Brüder, die Glieder der Familie Gottes auf dem Grunde gegenseitiger Liebe sind.⁵¹

While preparing this paper I took the trouble to count the imperatives and imperatival substitutes (hortatory subjunctives, hortatory verbs with infinitives, etc.) in Romans and 1 Corinthians. As so often, what began as a mere diversion from the requirements of thought led to a happy surprise — in this instance the observation that linguistic phenomena do support theological jargon. I had assumed that the indicative/imperative contrast was merely a convenient verbal peg supported by usage in a few key passages, such as Rom. 6. I was not prepared for statistical corroboration on such a massive scale. Consider the evidence from Romans alone:

Rom. 1—5 — Subject: description of man's need and God's saving action.

Imperatives: None! (with the possible exception of three hortatory subjunctives if one accepts the notorious variant in 5:1)

Rom. 6 — Subject: baptismal death and resurrection to new life.

Imperatives: 5 (and 1 possible); hortatory subjunctives: 2 (and 2 possible if variants are accepted)

Possible total: 10

Rom. 7—11 — Subject: continued description of God's action for man in creating the new life and the *heilsgeschichtliche* plan for Jew and Gentile.

Imperatives: 8 (but N. B.: 5 of these are in nonparenetic contexts. The other three are addressed to the Gentile in his relation to the Jew in chapter 11).

Significant examples: 3

Rom. 12 — Subject: *Paraklesis*. Alive? Then live! (Observe that the initial word is the first use of *parakalō* in Romans.)

Imperatives: expressed, 11; in ellipsis, 10; hortatory verb and infinitive, 3; infinitive used absolutely as imperative, 2; participles used as imperatives, 17.

Total imperatival locutions: 43!

Rom. 13—15 — Subject: *Paraklesis* continued

Total possible imperatival locutions: 36

Rom. 16 — Subject: mostly greetings

Total imperatival locutions: 17 (13 of the 15 imperative forms are the repeated *aspasasthē*)

TOTALS

"Imperatives" in the nonparenetic first 11 chapters: 18

(Note that this includes the 10 in chapter 6, a chapter which is more than half turned in the direction of the parenetic conclusion of the letter. Moreover, 5 of the remaining 8 are in clearly nonparenetic contexts.)

"Imperatives" in the last 5 parenetic chapters: 94

The imperative *is* grounded in the indicative! There is no command without the empowering gift.⁵²

4. NOMOS AND PARAKLESIS

Another pair of German synonyms may set the theme for this paragraph. If *paraklesis* should still be regarded as *Gebot*, it is certainly no longer *Gesetz*. Paul keeps his terminology scrupulously clean at this point. *Paraklesis* is never named *nomos*, even when the commands of the Law are taken over in passing to illustrate how love will act (Rom. 13:8-10). Obedience is never *ergon nomou*, even though love can be described as the "fulfilling of the Law" (*idem*; cp. Rom. 8:4). The apparent exceptions really prove this rule. When in Gal. 6:2 Paul once ventures the exhortation: "Thus fulfill the law of Christ," it is quite apparent that *nomos* is

sharply paradoxical in this decidedly antinomistic context. Law is here at a Gospel's remove from Torah; it is Christ Himself and the freedom He gives to be open to the brother. And when in 1 Cor. 9:21 Paul once describes himself as being "in the law of Christ (*ennomo Christou*)," the context again is that of total freedom to be a man for others.⁵³

When Bultmann places the slogan *Gehorsam*, rather than *agape*, over the portals to the new life, that may not only be because of philosophical commitment to an ideal of authentic existence through surrender but because he has not accepted the radicality of Paul's rejection of *nomos* in the new life.⁵⁴ Obedience is indeed a Pauline word. But the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5) is, at bottom, the acceptance of the Gospel. The ambiguity of Rom. 6:16 is marvelous. *Hypakoe eis dikaiosynen* is at once obedient reception of God's justifying verdict and commitment to live by its power.

We do not intend to enter the debate here on the third use of the Law. This is rather a historic and systematic problem than a strictly exegetical one. But the evidence on the level of vocabulary usage and the indicative/imperative structure of Pauline parenesis is clear: The relation between *paraklesis* and *nomos* is precisely that between Gospel and *nomos*. So deeply is *paraklesis* rooted in the Gospel itself. The phrase *usus practicus evangelii* appeals to us — not, however, for *nomos* in a third or in any other use, but for *paraklesis*.⁵⁵

A thorough categorization should be made of the contents of the variegated Pauline pareneses. It would — I have seen enough to be confident — take surpassing finesse to confine any considerable portion of them within the structure of the Decalog. That is already given in the positive form of so much parenesis. The negative form of the commandments presupposes man's brokenness, Pauline parenesis presupposes the newness of the justified man's relation with God. Thus of the 43 imperatival statements in Rom. 12 (the parenesis chapter *par excellence*) only nine are negative in form. Seven of these, moreover, are balanced by an immediately parallel positive expression. The other two have positive equivalents in the near context. To scant this overwhelmingly positive emphasis in an attempt, if such it is, to secure some residual function for *nomos* in the new life of faith and to reduce Christian moral pedagogy to a casuistically expanded Decalog, seems little short of criminal.

5. THE JUSTIFYING ACQUITTAL AND THE REALITY OF COMING JUDGMENT

Pauline parenesis is not all sweetness and light. The judgment to come is proclaimed also to Christians and in imperatival warning. Christ is both their "justification" (1 Cor. 1:30) and their Judge. Here Law does enter into parenesis, for works are the basis of the future judgment (1 Cor. 3:12 ff.; 6:9 ff. *et al.*). That this is the Law in its first and native Pauline sense is clear. It is addressed to the *peccator* in Luther's *simul* phrase. Is it significant, however, that even in this ominous context Paul never introduces the term *nomos* into his parenesis? The driving compulsion is still *paraklesis*, now predominantly in its connotation of warning. But if the harshest *paraklesis* is essentially a warning to persevere in faith, is that not still *usus practicus evangelii*?⁵⁶

With this we come to the end of the route we had charted. The function of this section was to test and validate a hermeneutical conclusion of the foregoing section:

that all application of parenetic materials must be consciously guided by the kerygmatic core. We have analyzed the relation of the imperative to the indicative. We have examined the structure of parenetic *paraklesis* within several Pauline correlatives. If we have been approximately true to the phenomena of the Pauline text, our conclusion stands. Parenesis is *paraklesis*, and *paraklesis* is *usus practicus evangelii*.

The Gospel is the norm for every interpretation of parenesis and for any contemporary translation.

It is evident that many of the themes of this paper have been dealt with too cursorily. The major theme, however, was the hermeneutical one. Our purpose was to discover hermeneutical problems and if possible some principles by a look at Pauline parenesis. I should like very much to pursue some of the subsidiary themes in the future. But the subject has for the moment yielded all of the harvest of hermeneutical grain that this reaper can garner. Some hermeneutical presuppositions and principles for the interpretation and "translation" of parenetic passages have been gathered in an appendix.

* * * * *

The Descriptive Versus the Prescriptive in the Study and Application of New Testament Parenetic Materials

A FIRST ATTEMPT TO STATE HERMENEUTICAL GUIDELINES

I. Presuppositions

A. Presuppositions arising out of the nature of the New Testament kerygma

1. The New Testament kerygma is radically historical, centering in the Christ event.
2. All N. T. statements, inasmuch as they are kerygmatic witnesses, are radically historical, and that in four senses:
 - a. They are related to what has happened in time (the Christ event).
 - b. They were originally addressed to people in historically contingent situations.
 - c. They are written by men whose witness is conditioned, both in the apprehension of that event and in its interpretation, by the historical particularity of their own situation in time and place.
 - d. They are addressed in the ongoing witness of the church's proclamation to men whose apprehension and interpretation of that witness is similarly conditioned.
3. All N. T. statements, inasmuch as they are kerygmatic witnesses, are addressed *from faith to faith* (*Vorverständnis*).

B. Presuppositions arising out of the nature of the interpretative task

1. The primal obligation of interpretation is to promote understanding of the original witness by laying it bare in all its particularity of form and expression.
2. The goal of interpretation in the fellowship of the church is to "translate" the intention of the original witness into forms of expression which are valid and comprehensible in the particularity of new historical situations.
3. In achieving this goal, interpretation, to be true to its *Vorverständnis*, will be guided and controlled by a conscious and determined orientation towards the central Christ event.

C. Presuppositions arising out of the nature of New Testament parenesis

1. New Testament parenesis is rooted in the kerygmatic witness to the Christ event and has as its goal that function of Christian witness which is life.
2. New Testament parenesis is the *usus practicus evangelii* and is not based in nor should it lead to casuistic legalism.
3. New Testament parenesis does not reflect the absolutes, the universals, or the ideals of a closed ethical system but is illustrative for the creative novelty of the Spirit's power in that form of obedience which is faith and that expression of faith which is love.
4. New Testament parenesis differs therefore, both in motive and in goal, from the Law (*nomos*).

NOTE: Parenesis is here understood in a broad sense to include all imperatival aspects of the kerygmatic witness: ethical injunctions, social directives, advice regarding conventional behavior, institutional and ecclesiastical guidelines, etc.

II. General principles suggested by the presuppositions

A. Principles suggested by the nature of the kerygmatic witness and of the interpretative task.

1. The validity of every descriptive and prescriptive interpretation must be challenged by its coherence with the central Christ event.
2. Every churchly interpretation must deal with the total historical context from which and to which it was originally addressed and the total historical context in and for which it is being undertaken.
3. Every interpretation of a parenetic passage, especially at the prescriptive level, must confront the possibility — approaching almost to a certainty — that there can be no easy transfer from the "then" to the "now."
4. Thus interpretation here lives in uneasy but necessary tension between the twin demands of faithfulness to the "then" and freedom in the "now."

B. Principles suggested by the nature of New Testament parenesis

1. The particular is not to be generalized.
2. The individual is not to be universalized.
3. The immediate is not to be institutionalized.
4. The illustrative is not to be systematized.
5. The parenetic is not to be legalized.

III. Guidelines for the specific instance — in the form of questions to be posed by the interpreter

A. Primary questions

1. How and how closely is the given parenetic statement related to the kerygmatic core of the New Testament revelation?
2. Are there contemporary circumstances which evidently condition the form or even occasion the substance of the statement?

B. Secondary questions

1. Is the statement related to the common stock of primitive parenetic materials, or is it isolated and relatively unique?
2. Is the given injunction manifestly ethical, or does it partake more of the nature of convention and custom?
3. Is the statement in the form of a premise or of a deduction?

4. Is the statement in absolute or in hypothetical form?
5. Is the statement positive or negative in form?
6. Is the sanction inherent, or is the statement associated with appeals to authority?

NOTE: In each of the above there is a certain presumptive force favoring a high degree of universality for the former alternative.

C. Tertiary questions

1. Is there a consistent churchly tradition in the application of the statement?
2. Is there a self-evident rationality in a given interpretation and application?
3. Is there an obvious existential "contemporaneity"?

NOTES

1. For a convenient survey of the use and application of the term *parenesis* in recent form-critical study of the New Testament, with full bibliographic references, see R. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God* (New York, 1966), chapter 10, "The Letter: Form and Style." As given precise definition by Dibelius, *parenesis* is a form in which general hortatory moral maxims are loosely strung together. The Epistle of James would be a model of this form of discourse, and in the Pauline epistles Rom. 12 would come closest to the strict type.
In this paper *parenesis* is employed much more loosely for all hortatory and imperatival address. Since the lines between moral, conventional, and cultic exhortation are so difficult to draw in Paul, we have chosen "parenesis" as a better term than the encumbered word "ethics." The phrase "Pauline ethics" suggests more of system and of philosophic reflection than is appropriate to the phenomena. Near the end of the paper we shall suggest that "paraclesis" might be even more appropriate than "parenesis" for New Testament exhortation.
2. Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, n. d. reprint), p. 600.
3. Reprinted in translation in *Word and Faith* (London, 1963), under the title, "The Significance of the Historical Critical Method for Church and Theology in Protestantism," p. 27.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *IDB* I, p. 420—25, *passim*.
6. No. 15 in Facet Books, Biblical series (Philadelphia, 1966), pp. 21 f.
7. In *The New Hermeneutic* (New York, 1964), p. 40.
8. Kurt Frör, *Biblische Hermeneutik* (Munich, 1964), p. 359.
9. Archibald M. Hunter, *The Gospel According to St. Paul* (Philadelphia, 1966), p. 48.
10. Quoted in *The New Hermeneutic*, p. 41.
11. In broad outline and in some of the detail, we are in this section utilizing the materials collected by Wolfgang Schrage, *Die Konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese* (Gütersloh, 1961), pp. 9—48.
12. See e. g., H. Preisker, *Das Ethos des Urchristentums* (Gütersloh, 1949), pp. 68 ff.; also R. Bultmann, *Glauben und Verstehen*, I (Tübingen, 1954), p. 238.
13. See e. g., J. Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, Torchbook reprint (New York, 1959), II, pp. 556 ff.
14. See, e. g., C. H. Dodd, *Gospel and Law: The Relation of Faith and Ethics in Early Christianity* (New York, 1951), pp. 28 ff.; also *New Testament Studies* (Manchester, 1953), pp. 109 ff., where the ethics of the Pauline epistles is graded on a chronological scale of diminishing eschatological tension.
15. A convenient summary of Paul's indebtedness to this tradition, as well as reference to further literature may be found in A. M. Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors*, revised ed. (Philadelphia, 1961), pp. 52—57; 128—131.
16. Schrage, p. 26.
17. See, e. g., the chapter "Mysticism and Ethics" in A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the*

- Apostle* (New York, 1931), pp. 293—333; also Weiss II, p. 518: "This enthusiastic view of the new life is in truth a bold anticipation which does not correspond to reality."
18. E. g., *Theology of the New Testament* (London, 1952), I, p. 335.
 19. E. g., M. S. Enslin, *The Ethics of Paul* (New York, Apex Books reprint, n. d.), pp. 118 f., where rules for conduct are seen as "logically . . . unnecessary" but required because Paul's converts "were still babes in Christ."
 20. Schrage, pp. 37 f. See all of pp. 37—48 for a discussion of this point and for pertinent bibliographic references. See, e. g., O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (Philadelphia, 1950), p. 225: "In every moment of the present the ethical decision is made on the basis of the concrete situation" (and all of pp. 222—30).
 21. See note 14. Cf. E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London, 1947), "Essay II," pp. 365—466, and Funk, *loc. sup. cit.*
 22. 1 Cor. 3:17; 5:11; 7:11, 28, 36, 39; 8:10; etc.
 23. "Glaube und Ethos im Neuen und Alten Testament, ein Beitrag zum Problem der biblischen Begründung der christlichen Ethik," *Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik*, 1961, pp. 129—49.
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 130. Schweitzer regularly places "dogmatisch" and "ethisch" in quotation marks to indicate that they are merely convenient symbols for his own complex of thought.
 25. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
 26. *Ibid.*, and literature there cited.
 27. *Ibid.*, pp. 135 f.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. Very recently by J. J. Stamm and M. E. Andrew, *The Ten Commandments in Recent Research*, SBT Series 2, No. 2 (Naperville, 1967); for the sixth commandment, p. 100 f.
 30. Symposium volume of W. C. C., edited by A. Richardson and W. Schweitzer (Philadelphia, 1951), p. 243.
 31. Schweitzer, "Glaube und Ethos," etc., p. 137.
 32. *Ibid.*
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
 34. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
 35. See p. 65, above.
 36. *ZNW*, 1924, pp. 265—81.
 37. *Ibid.*, p. 281.
 38. *Ibid.*
 39. For bibliographic references see R. Bultmann, *Das Problem der Ethik bei Paulus*, *ZNW*, 1924, pp. 124 ff.
 40. See previous note. The article covers pp. 123—40.
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
 42. *Ibid.*, pp. 125—27, *passim*.
 43. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
 44. *Ibid.*, pp. 137 f.
 45. *Ibid.*
 46. *Ibid.*
 47. The pattern for the following section was suggested by E. Schlink, "Gesetz und Paraklese," *Antwort* (Zürich, 1956), pp. 323—35.
 48. *Ibid.*, p. 325.
 49. *Ibid.*, p. 326.
 50. In *Die Zeit der Kirche* (Freiburg, 1956), pp. 74—89.
 51. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
 52. True to the nature of the book, imperatives are much more evenly distributed in First Corinthians, with the heaviest concentrations in chapters 7 (24), 10 (14), 11 (11), 14 (19), and 16 (13).

53. The use of *nomos* in 1 Cor. 14:32 may be regarded as another exception to the rule. The precise referent of *nomos*, however, is very much open to dispute, and both the wording and the function of this quotation formula are unique in Paul. See Else Kähler, *Die Frau in den paulinischen Briefen* (Zürich, 1960), pp. 79 ff., and G. Fitzer, *Das Weib Schweige in der Gemeinde, über den unpaulinischen Charakter der mulier-taceat Verse*, *Theologische Existenz heute*, No. 110 (Munich, 1963), pp. 11 f. The un-Pauline character of the formula is for Fitzer a major stylistic criterion for rejecting the passage.
- Romans 7 is not applicable to our argument. The chapter is not parenetic inasmuch as it does not address the Christian in exhortation. Neither is it as yet entirely clear in what guise Paul is employing the first person singular in the second half of the chapter.
- Nomos tou pneumatōs* in Rom. 8:2 is again clearly playful if not ironic.
54. See, e. g., paragraphs 38 and 39 (pp. 330—45) in *Theology I*.
55. See, above all, W. Joest, *Gesetz und Freiheit. Das Problem des Tertius usus legis bei Luther und die neutestamentliche Paraenese*, second ed. (Göttingen, 1956), especially the summary sections, pp. 78—82; 129—33; 190—200.
56. *Ibid.*

* * * * *

RESPONSES

... What a breath of fresh air it is to hear again that Gospel and Law are not to be equated simplistically with indicative and imperative! One wonders where on earth that caricature ever originated, all the more so since it keeps popping up also in many Lutheran theologies: Gospel is gift, Law is command. Of course, Gospel is a gift all right, and the Law does command. But is it only the Law which commands — which issues, that is, in imperatives? How about the Gospel? How about such imperatives as these: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ"; "Take, eat, this is My body"; "Come to Me, all you who labor"?

What's more, these Gospel imperatives are not merely — as Bartling shows the Pauline *paraklesis* to be — "the Gospel in continuous action," where "the sequence must be indicative/imperative" in a relation that is "paradoxical" (p. 72). No, in the examples just cited there is nothing paradoxical about the imperatives at all unless we assume from the outset that grace, in order to remain a "gift," dare not be responded to and accepted — a very questionable assumption for any theology that opposes *per verbum sola fide* against *ex opere operato*. In fact, in the examples cited — "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved"; "Come to Me, all you who labor, and I will give you rest" — the sequence is exactly the reverse: imperative first, indicative second.

On the other hand, if imperative is not to be restricted to Law, neither is indicative to be restricted to Gospel. I know that this was not the side of the ratio Bartling was assigned to, but it may serve to strengthen the point he does make. Consider, for example, his remarkable statistics on indicatives versus imperatives in Romans, especially his discovery that in chapters 1—5 there are "imperatives: none!" (p. 73). But the indicatives that do appear there, galore, indicate not only Gospel but, almost as frequently, Law — and not infrequently Law as "completed action." For instance: "God gave them up . . ."; "Many died through one man's trespass." . . .

I do still have some trouble, however, with Bartling's final and, I gather, clinching statement: "The Gospel is the norm for every interpretation of parenesis and for any contemporary translation" (p. 75). The poser here for me is the word "norm" as a description of the Gospel.

It isn't that the Gospel doesn't create a new ethos of its own, over and above what might be demanded by the Law. It does indeed. And the shortest summary of that new ethos is, as Bartling says, *agape*. The negative converse of this *agape* in Romans — especially if you read the end of the epistle (chs. 14 and 15) as the paracletic reply to its beginning (ch. 2) — is the new power which the justified have: no longer to pass judgment (14:13). But is that new power available to them merely as a "norm,"

especially if that suggests once more some criterion by which their lives are again criticized (*krinein*), evaluated? That the Gospel is not, and the Law is.

Perhaps I'm being too skittish about an innocent vocable. But referring to the Gospel as a "norm" — even if only as a norm for interpreting parenthesis — does seem to liken the Gospel once more to Law in a way that calling them both imperatives did not. I prefer Bartling's other, more frequent term: rather than relate parenthesis to the Gospel as to an external "norm" — external to a man like judgment is — why not instead relate it to the Gospel internally as to its "ground," its "root"? "So deeply is *paraklesis* rooted in the Gospel itself" (p. 74). But maybe Bartling is speaking of the Gospel as "norm" only ironically, the way Paul spoke ironically of "the *nomos of Christ*" or "the *nomos of faith*." . . .

* * *

. . . *What comes through so effectively in the Roehrs and Franzmann essays is the profound appreciation that faith has for the transcendent quality of God's Word and God's work. What comes through in this essay of Bartling's, at least for me, is the robust joy of faith's insistence that the Gospel really sets us free here and now in our earthly history, unconditionally free, so that parenthesis, like kerygma, finds its proper response in "heeding God's invitation" rather than "obeying a legal requirement." I'm struck by the semantic equivalence of hypakoe and Gehorsam, both deriving from a root that denotes "hearing" or "heeding," a connotation that "obey" seems to lack entirely.*

The questions which this essay raises in my mind (as is the case also with the Roehrs and Franzmann essays) do not touch at all on the evangelical substance — in which I find all three authors in strikingly complete agreement — but rather on some of the formal argument used to support the central Gospel appeal.

One such question which in a way is basic to the whole treatment is this: Is it a valid assumption that the movement of God's Word from "then" to "now" requires radical "translation" of meaning? Bartling shares the criticism which the "new hermeneutic" levels at the traditional distinction and separation between exposition and application. But I fail to see how that disjunction was significantly different from the effort (which he commends) to "translate" the original meaning or intention into contemporary meaning. Bartling himself, in the very last sentence of the essay as well as elsewhere, seems to distinguish "translation" from "interpretation" in just the same way as the traditional hermeneutics distinguished application from exposition. But perhaps there is a difference here that eludes me.

Behind both of these efforts to contemporize the Biblical Word lies what I think is a mistaken assumption about "meaning": that it changes from age to age according to circumstances. This is the kind of assumption that causes Stendahl, for instance (quoted on page 58), to suppose that the text's "meaning here and now" is simply not to be identified with the meaning then and there, but that the latter is accessible to a "frontal, non-pragmatic, non-apologetic attempt to describe the biblical faith and practice from within its original presuppositions, regardless of its possible ramifications for those who live by the Bible as the Word of God."

This, I'm afraid, is nonsense. A text, whether of Scripture or of Shakespeare, does not gain a new "meaning" (at least not an authentic meaning) at some later date. To be sure, the value of the text may change; the use to which people put a text may change; the external effect a text has on people's thinking and living may change — but its meaning always remains whatever it was to begin with. To suppose otherwise is to destroy the integrity of the text as a text. The meaning does not lie behind the text, neither does it necessarily lie on the surface of the text. The meaning comes to the reader through the text. If the student of Scripture (the Bible reader) can in fact discern or discover what it is that the apostle was really saying when he said what he said, then that "what" is the only meaning the text can have — now as well as then, tomorrow or next year as well as now. This meaning is inseparable from the event that takes place when the text is heard as God addressing me in judgment or grace. The meaning of the

biblical text is death or life (2 Cor. 2:15-16). Any listening to the Word of God that is not a being slain or being made alive is a failure to hear what God wanted said and what He is saying now.

What I seem to be saying then is that I find myself in agreement with Bartling's conclusions but not necessarily with every turn in the road that he took to reach those conclusions. . . .

* * *

. . . While I find certain of Dr. Bartling's emphases somewhat unsettling and disquieting, I am forthrightly challenged and profoundly stimulated. Now to be more specific. Questions:

1. P. 58. Are the ages flying apart quite so dramatically and irreversibly? And even though cultures may be, is it not the more amazing that ethical needs have a way of remaining constant? . . .

I note that Professor Gutmann in the introduction to his edition of the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (Washington Square Press, 1964) is so impressed with the fact that since the 16th century "fully ten translations into English have appeared, four of them made in the twentieth century," that he is emboldened to observe: "Evidently the thoughts of Marcus Aurelius have significance in a world *superficially* [my emphasis] very different from the one in which he lived from 121—180 A. D." If Gutmann's criterion can be accepted at all, what may one say of Paul and the New Testament?

2. Is it accurate to say (p. 62) that Paul never alludes to the temporary nature of his parenesis? See 1 Cor. 7:6, 10, 12, 26. . . .

8. Is the protest about the difficulty of transfer often in danger of becoming a sanctimonious, subconscious device for avoiding forthright obedience? Cf. Kierkegaard: "The New Testament is so clear that it required hundreds of years and hundreds of learned commentaries to obscure it. . . . It is to get rid of doing God's will that we have invented learning. . . . We shield ourselves by hiding behind tomes."

Is God's command going to become so vague (cf. Bonhoeffer, *Ethik*, p. 215) and indefinable that we shall simply be doing whatever we choose?

9. Does the involvement of the parenesis in a specific historical culture, although bringing some complications, not rather serve the cause of clarification? We are not simply handed a timeless, abstract principle, but the principle has been parsed for us in a concrete setting. . . .

* * *

This essay deals with a problem that agitates many people and deserves full exploration. The solution suggested here answers some questions but also raises new ones for me.

It appears to me that the "transfer from 'then to now'" of the Pauline parenesis needs to be discussed in the larger context of the function of the Law in the life of the believer. Answers to specific or casuistic questions should be sought on the basis of Biblical and Confessional teaching on what has been called "the third use of the Law."

To guard against the appearance of an antinomian stance, I would suggest that the discussion include answers to questions such as the following:

1. *Are there parenetic or paraclitic directives in Paul's writings (and the New Testament) that are directed to believers, to "saints"? Are they positive or negative, general or specific?*

2. *If the answer to the foregoing is affirmative, then the question arises: Why is it necessary that "saints" be told what to do and what not to do?*

3. *Do such commands and prohibitions constitute a contradiction to the declaration that for the believer there is no law?*

4. *Is the answer to be found in the fact that the believer remains in a "schizo-*

phrenic" contradiction with himself, the new man with the old man? Is not the believer, qua old Adam, in need of the demands and even of the threats of the Law?

5. Why and how is love the fulfilling of the Law? What is the law of love?

6. Are the Ten Commandments absolute and general statements, prohibiting the breaking of the law of love?

7. How do specific acts under varying circumstances constitute a breaking of a commandment of the Decalog? Do the Scriptures give examples that help to answer this question?

Such and similar questions, it appears to me, need to be kept in mind in the attempt to solve the problem of "translation."

* * *

. . . Basic to Dr. Bartling's position is the assumption that the core of the New Testament is the kerygma. All interpretation in the New Testament is to be related to the kerygma, and all doctrinal and ethical teachings are to be judged by the kerygma. The New Testament kerygma is defined as "radically historical, centering in the Christ event." Unfortunately, he has never defined what he means by "kerygma" nor by the term "Christ event." If they mean what the critical literature implies by them, then the writer believes that the deductions and conclusions that are made on the basis of the understanding of these concepts results in the adoption of a form of hermeneutics that is foreign to the exegetical principles accepted and practiced by many Protestants in the past. . . .

No person would question the assertion that Christ and the Christological teachings constitute the heart and core of God's revelation in Holy Scriptures. But does such a position justify a scholar and a Christian believer from excluding those God-given teachings which cannot be classified as Christological from being important and binding on Christian consciences? This position makes a great portion of the Bible irrelevant. It damages the organic nature of revelation. The coming of Christ is the climax of a great series of historic events. "The kerygmatic school in judging revelation solely from kerygmatic considerations does not grasp the pervasive and organic character of revelation. Therefore, the scope of authoritative revelation is diminished." (Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Authority* [Grand Rapids, 1967], p. 91)

If the Christological material determined the real meaning and heart of God's revelation, then what are we to do with the wisdom literature of the Old Testament? How binding are the messages of the prophets that deal with morality and justice? Are these teachings merely descriptive and not prescriptive? "Revelation is wider than Christology even though it centers in Christ; and any principle which is narrowly Christological narrows the scope of revelation, and thereby curtails the areas in which the divine authority should properly prevail." (Ibid.) . . .

This writer believes that presuppositions obtained from the kerygmatic school, from higher criticism, from form criticism, and from the new hermeneutic are basic to Bartling's "A First Attempt to State Hermeneutical Guidelines."

Paul claimed to be an inspired apostle of Jesus Christ. He claimed that his teachings were not his own but were made known by the Holy Spirit. Those who rejected his Gospel were to be anathematized! In the light of Paul's claim, how is one to understand the following presupposition (I, A, 2, c): "All N. T. statements . . . are written by men whose witness is conditioned, both in the apprehension of that event and in its interpretation, by the historical particularity of their own situation in time and place"? If the directives that Paul gives various congregations about doctrine and ethics are simply his own reactions to a given situation, not spoken by the Holy Spirit's direction, then one could argue that Paul's instructions are meant for the first century and have no binding force beyond the time and situation for which they were given.

Point I, A, 2, d, which states that "all N. T. statements . . . are addressed in the

ongoing witness of the church's proclamation to men whose apprehension and interpretation of that witness is similarly conditioned," would seem to indicate that the church down throughout the ages continues the proclamation of the witness and is able to give interpretations that will be acceptable to people living in a different culture from that which obtained in Paul's day. Revelation then becomes an ongoing process. The canon is still open.

CHAPTER V

Form Criticism and Its Implications for the Interpretation of the Old Testament

RAYMOND F. SURBURG

During most of the 20th century form criticism has exercised a strong influence on Continental Biblical scholarship, though somewhat surprisingly it has until recently been a negligible factor in American Old Testament studies. In *Introduction to the Old Testament* (1941), by R. H. Pfeiffer, only a few pages are devoted to the subject.¹ Samuel Sandmel in *The Hebrew Scriptures: An Introduction to Their Literature* (1963) makes no mention of the subject of form criticism, and he has only a brief reference to Gunkel in one footnote.² Emil Kraeling, who completely revised Bewer's *The Literature of the Old Testament*, does not refer to Gunkel's name, nor does he use the word "form criticism."³ Nahum Sarna in *Understanding Genesis* does not operate with form criticism, nor is there a single allusion to the name of Gunkel.⁴

In European Old Testament studies, however, form criticism has been prominent, employed especially by German and Scandinavian scholars. It was from Europe that this new thrust in Old Testament studies has come to America, especially as a result of the translation of European books and also because many American students have been studying at European universities. James Muilenburg, formerly of Union Theological Seminary, New York City, has expressed the opinion that form criticism is an exegetical methodology that cannot be ignored and that used properly ought to be employed by exegetes in their work dealing with the literature of the Old Testament.⁵

Form criticism had its beginning in the Old Testament field as early as 1905. In 1919 it was taken over by New Testament scholars and became an important method in dealing with synoptic materials.

I. What Is Meant by Form Criticism

Kendrick Grobel defines form criticism as follows:

Form criticism, also known as form history (*Formgeschichte*) as category criticism (*Gattungsgeschichte*), and as tradition analysis, is a method of dealing with folk material, whether written down or not, which for some part of its existence was oral tradition. While patches of such material quite often occur within works properly called "literary," this method intrinsically applies to subliterate "small literature," "folk literature."⁶

Floyd Filson describes the working of form criticism:

Form Criticism studies the literary form of documents that preserve earlier tradition. Its basic assumption is that the earlier, oral use of the tradition shaped the material and resulted in the variety of literary forms found in the final written record. Study of these forms, therefore, throws light on the life and thinking of the people who thus preserved tradition.⁷

Edgar Krentz states the purpose of form criticism:

Form criticism investigates the forms and patterns in ancient literature in order to set them into their place in the history of literature and to determine the cultural or

religious setting that originally produced and used the form (*Sitz im Leben*). It seeks to work back from the text to the setting of the original core of a literary form by defining and removing the later additions, modifications, made in the oral period and by the literary editor who arranged the material into a consecutive literary document.⁸

While the existence of literary forms had long been recognized by students of Biblical and classical literatures, the study of literary forms has undertaken a more serious direction since 1900.

II. The Influence of Hermann Gunkel (1862—1932) on the Development of Form Criticism and Its Application to Old Testament Studies: Genesis and the Psalter

Hermann Gunkel was the pioneer, architect, and for a generation the presiding genius over this new movement.⁹ Even though he now is dead, the influence of his works continues to affect Biblical studies. Together with A. Eichhorn, W. Wrede, and W. Bousset, Gunkel founded the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* as a reaction and complement to the literary critical school. The establishment of this school resulted in the belief that scholars could free the Bible from all dogmatic principles and thus be enabled to place the literature of the Bible into the stream of world literature and to integrate Biblical history into that of universal human history.

Gunkel worked on the assumption that the Bible was the end product of a long literary process. With this approach he initiated research into numerous infraliterary stages, a technique called *Gattungsforschung*, the study of Biblical literary forms, or genres. He categorized various literary materials as "sayings," "legends," "myths," but he considered the *Sitz im Leben* as the most important object of research. Gunkel applied his method particularly in his commentary on *Genesis* (1901; reissued, Göttingen, 1960), in *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (Göttingen, 1895), and in *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen, 1926). He also did pioneering work in the prophetic literature and in the determination of Jewish apocalyptic literature.

Gunkel was particularly successful in the classification of psalms. His influence in the field of psalms studies will be evident to the student acquainted with this area of Old Testament studies. As a result of his research, Gunkel stressed the importance of worship in the composition of individual psalms. In the prophetic literature he called attention to a few minor forms. Schökel declares: "Despite the twofold handicap under which Gunkel worked as a consistent rationalist and as an inexperienced pioneer, he made available to Biblical study a hermeneutical instrument for scientific method that, after 40 years, still dominates the field and is far from losing its vitality."¹⁰ Gunkel was soon followed by a host of exegetes who broadened and solidified his work, such as H. Gressmann, J. Begrich, H. Schmidt, W. Baumgartner, S. Mowinckel, and J. Hempel.

Muilenburg in his article "The Gains of Form Criticism in Old Testament Studies" claimed it was a stroke of fortune for modern Biblical scholarship that Gunkel, the foremost exponent of form criticism, was a scholar of diversified gifts and a man possessing great erudition. Muilenburg writes: "His was a many-faceted genius. He was able as no other before or after him to combine into a creative synthesis the various disciplines essential to responsible form-critical investigation."¹¹

Gunkel had been raised on the Wellhausian interpretation of Old Testament history and literature. Wellhausen assumed that the first written document was the J account, written ca. 850 B. C.; the E document came from 750 B. C. These documents were said to reflect the views of the age when they were written. Much in the Old Testament therefore was a placement into the past of events in the Pentateuch that actually reflected the views of anonymous writers living many centuries after the alleged time of their origin. By Gunkel's time higher criticism of the Pentateuch had been practiced for about a century and in Gunkel's eyes had reached a point when it no longer could be productive.

Gunkel became concerned with the writing of a literary history of the Old Testament. In his opinion historical criticism was unable to provide the proper approach to this undertaking because of the paucity of biographical data on Biblical writers and because the dating of individual literary units was insecure. He therefore came to the conclusion that the first task of the literary historian was to identify various literary types, or *Gattungen*, to be found in the Old Testament. This was to be followed by the description of the formal characteristics of each type, the delineation of its style, and articulation of its modes of composition and rhetoric. It was also necessary, according to Gunkel's conception, to trace each *Gattung* back to its preliterary history. He held that convention and custom determine the fashioning, structuring, and terminology of the various types. He set as his goal to gather as many types of each class as possible, both in the literature of the Old Testament and in that of the Near East. It was his conviction that much of the Old Testament literature and that of the Near East originally had been spoken. It became one of the guiding principles of his approach to do justice to the oral manner of the "literary" types.

Another important principle that Gunkel used was finding and determining the actual life situation, the *Sitz im Leben*, that gave rise to a *Gattung*. Thus he reasoned, for example, that songs of triumph were sung at the return of the conquering hero, dirges intoned at the bier of the dead, instructions recited by the priests in the sanctuary, royal hymns sung at court, prophetic oracles declaimed in the market places, judicial encounters participated in at the city gate, and liturgies chanted in the precincts of the temple. After the *Gattung* had been established, it would be necessary to determine the laws that govern composition. When the *Sitz im Leben* had been established and the concrete situation that had produced the literary genre determined, Gunkel ransacked Near Eastern literature to find parallels for the various literary genres found in the O. T. In his *Kultur der Gegenwart*, Gunkel presented his understanding of the literature of Israel in a section on "The Oriental Literatures."

III. The Predecessors of Gunkel

The method adopted by Gunkel and other German scholars had already been applied to German folklore by Jakob Grimm, the great German philologist. It had also been utilized in the field of classical studies, "as a result of which, Professor Ryder claimed, it has been demonstrated that ancient authors, in a way not applicable in modern literary composition, were stylistically bound by conventions of literary forms and literary structure of Hebrew poetry." The term *saga*, which has been employed by O. T. scholars, has been transferred from Scandinavia by way of analogy. Schökel avers that "the resemblance consists in the simple, direct style, the anonymous composition, the psychology behind the actions, the freedom from

Greco-Latin forms, and the oral transmission."¹² Gunkel fell back on the third type of Icelandic saga (*Formalder*), which was purely fictional and literary. Then Gunkel made subdivisions on the basis of content. Judg. 15:9-19 was for him a local saga, Gen. 9:2-27 a tribal or clan saga; and Judges contained heroic sagas.

Already in the 18th century Bishop Lowth had investigated the forms and literary structures of Hebrew poetry. His contemporary, Herder, the philosopher-critic, had given evidence of profound insight into the spiritual character of Hebrew writings. In his book *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie* he set forth the significant view that poetic spirit expressed itself in specific forms which became conventional in the written stage of literary history. From this it becomes clear that Gunkel's approach to the O. T., including his analysis of literary forms, was not altogether new.

It has also been claimed by Roman Catholic scholars that Gunkel's emphasis on the part played by oral tradition had its antecedents in the work of Alexander Geddes, an early Roman Catholic critic who emphasized the place of oral tradition among the Hebrews and in 1800 wrote that the Pentateuch was composed of separate literary units that had previously existed in oral form. In one sense this was not altogether new, for orthodox Christian scholars in the previous century had put forth the theory that Moses in the writing of the Pentateuch had relied on oral traditions in dealing with the events prior to his own day.

Gunkel contended that the various documents, separated by previous higher critics, had been compiled from oral traditions that had received a certain form as the result of constant repetition by the people. He attempted to reconstruct the history of the Old Testament through a study of the forms of the oral tradition. His principles were set forth in the introduction of his commentary on *Genesis*, now available in the English translation of Carruth, *The Legends of Genesis*. In describing Gunkel's methodology Hahn writes:

The principles of Gunkel's method were presented for the first time in the famous introduction to his commentary on *Genesis*, in which he showed that by examining the varieties of literary form occurring in the written texts it was possible to reconstruct the history of legend in the oral stage, much as the architectural history of a cathedral could be reconstructed from the various styles in which it had been built.¹³

Gunkel read two articles which claimed that oral tradition always followed definite lines of development: one by F. Brunetière, another by Axel Olrik. In *The Legends of Genesis* Gunkel endeavored to show how the stories of *Genesis* had developed from a simple type to a very complex one. He distinguished between broad hero tales, extensive legends, and story cycles. However, in his introduction Gunkel asserted: "Even in the oldest legends of *Genesis* we do not have crude stories, lightly dashed off; rather, a mature, accomplished, and highly animated artistry is manifested in them."¹⁴ The *Genesis* narratives, according to him, are not of much value for furnishing reliable historical information: "Legend weaves a poetic web around historical memories and hides the circumstances of time and place."¹⁵ The story cycles of the early Hebrews consisted of kernels of historical fact embedded in the enveloping layers of legends. This is supposed to be the situation also in the folk literature of other peoples. As stories were handed on from year to year by oral transmission, more legend entered the stories than historical facts. Wellhausen in his writings had claimed that the patriarchal narratives were unreliable.

IV. Form Criticism Applied to Other Historical Portions of Old Testament Literature

Inspired by Gunkel's studies in Genesis, Hugo Gressmann tried to do the same for the stories of Moses in Exodus, Numbers, and Joshua. Gressmann assumed that the Yahwist and the Elohist had taken from the accumulation of popular stories about Moses and incorporated them into their narratives. Because the redactors had not removed the differences between the various stories, Gressmann believed he could legitimately group the stories into types and separate what was primitive from that which had been subject to more elaboration. In his opinion the stories of J and E had retained their original features thus enabling him to recognize the legendary and poetic character of the Moses stories. He held that the original features of the J and E documents enable the perceptive student to recognize some genuine historical reminiscences about Moses. The latter, however, were covered over with elements of the supernatural, with the result that the life of Moses had taken on the character of wonder tales. Therefore historically speaking the stories of Moses' life are of little value but are significant as being a part of the literary heritage of Israel.

Scholars and individuals who accept the presuppositions and conclusions of Gunkel and Gressmann are persuaded that these two German professors have helped to create a better understanding of the nature of the episodes which heretofore had been considered historical by showing them to belong to a special kind of literary genre. It was also stressed by Gressmann that in the course of oral transmission many stories had undergone a change.

The result of this type of critical work was to reduce the importance of the Yahwist and the Elohist as creative literary writers, as earlier higher critics had held. Thus Rudolf Smend in his *Die Erzählung des Hexateuch auf ihre Quellen untersucht* (Berlin, 1922) portrayed the Elohist and the Yahwist as creative writers who depicted the history of their people in literary composition that was masterful in plan and execution. Gunkel demoted these redactors and averred that their only claim to fame was that they had gathered and selected the materials of oral tradition "essentially in the form in which they found it." Since an analysis of their selections revealed the legendary and mythical character, showing that it was primarily folk literature, Gunkel contended that what each individual hand had contributed to the whole was relatively unimportant.

Concerning Gressmann's application of form criticism to the Hexateuch Hahn wrote:

He started with the assumption that whatever qualities of narrative style written history possessed could be traced directly to the living art of narration which had grown up in the oral stage. Hence, he devoted most of his attention to the literary form in which individual narratives were composed. Analysis of the structure and the documentary development of an entire book, while not to be ignored, seemed relatively unimportant besides the interesting and illuminating study of the single narrative as a literary type.¹⁶

Gressmann's method some scholars believed to be so fruitful that they applied it to other portions of historical O. T. literature. Gressmann's technique was considered reliable enough to be used in solving problems which higher criticism thus far had not been able to solve. Gressmann's followers gave up the attempt to trace the existence of J, E, D, and P, allegedly all found in the Hexateuch. Leonhard Rost, in *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids* (1926), rejected the

position then generally held that the same sources were found in the books of Samuel as in the Hexateuch, and he advocated the position that Samuel contained a succession of independent materials distinguishable from the other data as self-contained units by their peculiarities of style and form.

Von Rad in an article published in 1944 found three different units of narratives in the Samuel books regarded by him as belonging to the oldest examples of historical writing in Israel. William Caspari, who wrote a commentary on the books of Samuel for Sellin's *Kommentar zum Alten Testament* (1926), subjected the so-called narrative units to an exhaustive analysis of their peculiarities and style and their underlying thought form, hoping thereby to be able to isolate the original units from which the present text had been built up. In the same year Kurt Wiese applied Gressmann's methodology to Judges. The result of this procedure was to fragmentize the documents of the Old Testament. The atomizing of Old Testament books was not done in the interest of finding a substitute for the documentary hypothesis but was the result of attempts to relate form and content to the separate literary units.

Although the fragmentation and atomizing of O. T. books might be disturbing to many O. T. scholars, Hahn believes these efforts of the Gunkel-Gressmann school were useful in attempting to trace the historical development of particular units embedded in O. T. literature. Form critics employed two different techniques: one had been to analyze literary forms and reconstruct the outward form of literature; the other was to establish the history of the conceptual contents of the literary form.

Gunkel had been the first scholar to employ this latter technique in *Schöpfung und Chaos* in 1895. The existing variants of a tradition were collected and arranged in the order of their development from primitive to the complex. Anton Jirku applied this method to the various brief summaries of Judah's early history as they are found in various O. T. books (e. g., Joshua 24; Ps. 78; Ps. 105; and Deut. 29). This he did in his book *Die älteste Geschichte Israels im Rahmen lehrhafter Darstellungen* (Leipzig, 1917). Because in the summaries there occurred certain oft-used formal expressions, they were classified by Jirku as a literary type. These historical summaries were employed for didactical purposes, and according to Jirku's conclusions they exhibited a form of tradition that preceded the conception of the canonical (Scriptural) history as found in the Pentateuch. The older form of the tradition dated to the use of them as "sermon" by the priests at the worship services. The present form represented a development from the short didactic style of oral delivery to the expansive form of the written documents.

Martin Noth made a similar study of the original form and of the development of the conception of the "twelve tribes" in *Das System der zwölf Stämme Israels*. According to Noth the idea that there were 12 tribes in Israel was a tradition that allegedly developed during the period of the Judges, and Noth found this tradition in Gen. 49 and Num. 1 and 26. These documents in their written forms came from later times than the written tradition on which they are based. This tradition Noth considered nothing more than the listing of the members of an early Israelite "amphictyony" such as appears in early Greek history. Noth's investigations led him to claim that the 12 tribes existed as a constitutional entity from the beginning of the settlement in Palestine.

Kurt Galling made a study of the two allegedly different traditions of the manner in which God chose His people (*Die Erwählungstraditionen Israels*, Giessen,

1928). He distinguished between the tradition of the call of Abraham and that of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Galling's study convinced him that the call to Abraham was mentioned only twice, while by contrast there are many references to the redemption of the Children of Israel in Egypt. He concluded that the true tradition was the exodus tradition and that the call of Abraham was an artificial construction invented by the Yahwist historian for political and religious reasons.

V. Form Criticism and the Poetic Literature of the Old Testament

Gunkel's major contribution next to that in Genesis was in the field of poetic literature, especially the Psalms. Before a history of the literature of the O. T. could be written, Gunkel became convinced of the necessity of making a special study of the types of literary genre to be found in the Psalms. From the study of prose he proceeded to poetry. For 25 years he devoted his energies to a study of various literary *Gattungen*.

Gunkel centered his attention especially on a study of psalm types, on the establishment of their distinctive characteristics and also their historical development. He took his cue from Herder, who had claimed that religious poetry was always suited to the subject matter. After determining the various psalm types, Gunkel proceeded to find for each type its literary characteristic. Here he also found help in Herder's theory that each type of poetry had certain conventions of literary form which usage had fixed. Students of classical poetry had reached the conclusion that authors in ancient times had been bound by the conventions of literary form — a situation which does not obtain in modern literature. Eduard Norden claimed that in classical times an author adapted his technique to the subject matter he was treating. The same principle, Gunkel asserted, was also characteristic of Hebrew poetry. Thus psalms examined by him showed typical formulas at the beginning and also at the end of a poem. However, the fixity of the literary genres made it difficult, if not impossible, to sketch the historical development of a literary form; but with the help of other pieces of poetry scattered throughout the O. T., Gunkel was able by a comparison of these with the Psalms to find clues that he believed suggested fixed points in O. T. history to which they could be related.

Gunkel became convinced that the religious poetry in Israel had behind it a long historical development. He argued that religious poetry began with an oral stage early in Israelite history and reached the peak of its development at the time of the exile. Most of the psalms in their present form he believed had been composed during the postexilic period. Many, according to Gunkel, revealed a mixture of types which he believed showed that they had been composed from older forms. One of the results for O. T. isagogics was that Gunkel dated many psalms much earlier than had the critics who had a penchant for a Maccabean dating for many psalms — without, however, raising doubts about the late date assigned to the compilation of the Psalter as a whole.

Gunkel first began his form-critical poetical studies in the early part of the 20th century.¹⁷ The first example of this methodology appeared in his *Ausgewählte Psalmen* (1904). He used it exclusively in *Die Psalmen* (1926) and in *Die Einleitung in die Psalmen* (1933), the latter work completed by Begrich after Gunkel's death.

Gunkel considered each psalm a fragment of ancient Israelite life. He sought to penetrate through each psalm to its setting in the actual worship life (*Sitz im Leben*) in Israel. These various worship settings gradually created types (*Gattungen*). Since there are many and various occasions for worship, Israel must have had different kinds of worship occasions. The net result was that each piece of sacred poetry was written for a certain kind or type of occasion, each distinct and with its own unique indications. Moreover, each genre had its own history, including both a secular and a religious expression. According to Gunkel the various types remained distinct until about 500 B. C., when they began to meet and mingle in particular psalms.

Gunkel felt that the primary questions to ask about a particular psalm are not: What is its date? Who wrote it? but: What is its function? or: What is it intended to do? Thus he had three distinct goals in mind in psalm interpretation: (1) to place the literature into type classification; (2) to determine the history of each type; and (3) to reestablish the *Sitz im Leben*, the real-life situation that gave rise to each piece of literature. The *Sitz im Leben* in general was the worship life of Israel.

Gunkel also claimed that "aesthetic sensitivity" must be exercised in determining the common forms or elements which actually locate a sacred poem in a certain type. The reasoning is that the poems that were originally composed for worship became such a part of the Israelite culture that many later poets used them for their literary innovations. These later creations would be deceptive if students unlike Gunkel were not aesthetically sensitive to them.

At first six major and six minor classes were identified by Gunkel. His final classification, however, recognized only five main types and five minor types. His five main types were: 1. Hymns of Praise; 2. National Laments; 3. Royal Psalms; 4. Individual Laments; 5. Thanksgivings of the Individual. To these he added five minor types represented by a number of psalms: 6. Songs of Pilgrimage; 7. Thanksgiving of the Nation; 8. Wisdom Poems; 9. Torah Liturgies; and 10. Mixed Psalms.

Gunkel inspired a host of O. T. scholars to work with and apply his views. Men such as Mowinckel, Kittel, Schmidt, Leslie, Weiser, Kraus, Westermann, and others, each developed his own particular views and theories.

Old Testament scholars believed that they found support for the new psalm classification in the literature of Egypt and Babylonia. Friedrich Stummer made a study of psalmic materials in Akkadian literature. In 1922 he published *Sumerisch-Akkadische Parallelen zum Aufbau alttestamentlicher Psalmen*, and in 1924 he submitted an article, "Die Psalmengattungen im Lichte der altorientalischen Hymnen Literatur." The Society for Old Testament Studies sponsored a special volume on the Psalms in 1922, in which a number of contributions by British and German scholars not only emphasized that parallels could be found in Near Eastern literature for the various genres but also stressed the structural composition of particular types of psalms. G. R. Driver and George Widengren pointed out the similarity of the thanksgiving hymns to examples in Egyptian literature. From this will be seen one of the influences of the school of comparative religions which emphasized the bearing Near Eastern literature supposedly had on the religious interpretation of the O. T.

With the discovery of the Ras Shamra texts in 1929 it became the strong conviction of many scholars that Israelite literature was indebted to poetic materials from ancient Ugarit. More significant parallels were believed to be found in the

Ugaritic epics than in Akkadian or Egyptian literature. Schaeffer, Patton, Montgomery, Harris, Coppens, Albright, and others asserted that a comparison of the Ugaritic epic literature with the poetical portions of the O. T. reveals that a multitude of its words, phrases, and stylistic features are paralleled in the Canaanite literature. Ps. 29, it is claimed, was literally taken over from Ugarit, the only difference being that the Hebrew poem has the name Jahweh while the Ugaritic parallel has the name of Baal. However, while many of the words and expressions of the Hebrew Ps. 29 are found scattered in the Ugaritic literature, it should be noted that no such poem has as yet been found in the treasure trove from Ras Shamra.

In Schökel's estimation Gunkel was very successful in classifying the psalms, and most of his work in this field still has validity.¹⁸ As a result of his psalm studies Gunkel came to see what he believed was a very important discovery: the great part played by the cultus in the development of various literary genres of the Psalms.

VI. Form Criticism and the Prophetic Literature

The same technique that has been applied to historical books and poetic literature — dealing with small literary units — was applied to the rather amorphous literature of the prophetic books. With the justification of this approach validated, in the eyes of many scholars the practice of Bernhard Duhm and others of breaking the prophetic oracles into separate oracles and poetical compositions became warranted. Form critics dealing with the prophetic literature contended that the written prophetic books of the Old Testament were not supposed to be the products of one writer but rather compilations of small units, some oracles originating with the prophet while others were additions by the prophet's disciples.

The classic exposition of this view may be found in Theodore H. Robinson's *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel* (1923). Gunkel held that the prophets added to their original short oracles materials arrived at as a result of their meditation. The prophets under ecstatic experience gave utterance to brief passages. Just as Gunkel had assumed the groupings of early legends into story cycles prior to their being written, so Robinson believed that the process of collecting prophetic oracles was partially achieved by a prophet's disciples, who arranged them into a cycle of prophetic tradition, which later was enlarged into a book.

Modern scholarship has followed the lead of Gunkel and Robinson, holding that the prophets of Israel were primarily preachers or speakers of God's message. Their sermons were delivered by word of mouth. The oral character of their messages was clearly stamped on their surviving works. Thus Muilenburg asserts:

However we may explain the consummate art with which many of the prophetic utterances are composed, particularly exemplified in their firm structure and in the recurrence of key words at strategic points, the dominant impression they leave upon us is of words spoken and addressed to a living body of men.¹⁹

It is claimed that the Oriental memory was very retentive. The Scandinavian or Uppsala School held that no Biblical writings were put in written form till after 587 B. C.

The form-critical approach to the prophetic literature has become one of the leading emphases in current Old Testament studies. This means that Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets were actually not the authors of these Biblical books, as formerly assumed. McCarthy in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* asserts of the "writing" prophets:

It was once the practice to call these men, the canonical Prophets of the Bible, the "writing" Prophets. Although this calls attention to the relative importance of their words as compared to the records of the older *nebi'im*, where it is the tale of the prophetic activity that is the center of interest, this term is unfortunate because these Prophets (except perhaps Ezechiel . . .) were not writers at all. They were essentially preachers who proclaimed God's word to the men of their times. The prophetic books as they are in the Bible are actually collections of their sayings preserved by the close associates of the Prophets, gathered together and edited over a more or less long period of time, a fact that it is important to notice in order to understand the loose organization of the prophetic books.²⁰

The stance of a number of Protestant and Roman Catholic O. T. scholars is that the prophetic books as they are in the Bible are the products of accumulation and growth. In some cases small collections preceded the gathering of disparate sayings with a similar literary form (e. g., the "woes" in Is. 5). In the materials collected to make up the prophetic books (Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Isaiah) there appears to be a certain amount of order according to fixed forms and themes: threats against Israel, threats against nations, and consolation for Israel. However, it is claimed that even in such instances the scheme is only loosely applied, and in general it is impossible to find a true overall plan in the prophetic books themselves according to any internal links between the literary or historical context.

Bruce Vawter in his *Introduction to the Prophetic Books* points out that in the prophetic books many different literary forms are found. But according to the form critics the proper prophetic form is the *oracle*. Vawter claims that in the strictest sense of the word "it is only in the oracles that the prophet spoke precisely as prophet, that is, as one inspired of God."²¹ This has unfortunately led scholars to conclude that one must distinguish between what really is a word from God and what is human interpretation in a prophetic book. Thus many statements are rejected as reflecting the Divine Mind as traditionally held in all branches of Christianity and Judaism prior to the introduction of form criticism.

Those who espouse form criticism hold that the first step for the proper interpretation of the prophetic literature is to determine the limits of literary composition. Muilenburg warns: "Failure to identify the extent of the literary units opens the way to confusion and misinterpretation. The second task is to define the literary type."²² Harrington, a Roman Catholic scholar who has embraced form criticism as an interpretational methodology, asserts: "It is absolutely essential for an intelligent reading of the prophets that the limits of these units be determined and their literary forms identified."²³

Old Testament prophecy, it is claimed by the critics, belongs to the literature of revelation, which means its character must be determined by the conviction that God has communicated His Word (*dabhar*) to man. The oracular style is therefore the outstanding feature of the prophetic literature. The most characteristic beginning is *koh amar Yahweh*, "thus says Yahweh." Another scheme is *neum Yahweh*, "oracle or utterance of Yahweh" (cf. Amos 1:3—2:16). Many of the original oracles were brief (1 Kings 21:19); others were longer. Those who espouse form criticism in treating the prophetic literature claim that the units of the pre-literary prophets were very short.

While the typical literary genre was the *oracle*, this in turn is supposed to be able to be divided into a number of subgenres. Gunkel, as has already been stated, had engaged in some study in the area of prophecy but had stressed the simplicity of the oracle. Claus Westermann in his *Grundform prophetischer Rede* (1960)

attacked Gunkel's position as erroneous and endeavored to show the composite nature of the oracles. Westermann distinguished between the oracle of condemnation, which may be uttered against an individual or a group, and the oracle of salvation. The former type of oracle (*Gerichtswort an den Einzelnen*) has the following structure: commission, accusation, formula of commission, and announcement of punishment (Amos 7:16-17; 1 Kings 21:17-19). Another variant according to Westermann was the *Gerichtskündigung gegen Israel*, the oracle of judgment against Israel, which had the following pattern: basic accusation, development of the accusation, formula of commission, divine intervention, and its consequences (Amos 4:1-3; Is. 8:5-8). In contrast to the oracle of condemnation there is the oracle of salvation, which does not seem to follow a particular literary scheme. Thus the oracle against the nations (*massah*) may use the simple scheme: because of sin, therefore the punishment (Amos 1—2), or it may have the following pattern: symbol or vision, reaction of the prophet, explanation of the vision as punishment, and Yahweh's conclusion.

Besides the oracle other basic literary forms are found in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament. The following is a typical listing adapted from Muilenburg:²⁴

1. *Exhortation* (cf. Amos 5:4 f.; Zeph. 2:3). Here the tone is that of the prophet who tries to convince his audience. The first word is "Hear."
2. *Autobiography*. The prophets describe a profound experience or an important incident in their careers (cf. Is. 6; Jer. 1:4-10; Hos. 3:1-4).
3. *Description* (especially of visions and dreams). This form began to dominate after the exile (cf. Ezekiel and Zechariah).
4. *Narrative Biography*. Jer. 26—29; 32—45; Amos 7:10-17.
5. *Hymns*. Is. 42:10-13; Hos. 6:1-6; Jer. 14.
6. *Confessions*. Is. 53:1-9; Jer. 11:18—12:6; 15:10-21; 18:18-23.
7. *Invective and Threats*. Is. 5:8-25; Jer. 7:16-20; Hos. 7:8-16; Amos 1:3—2:16.
8. *Allegory*. Ezek. 17:2-24; 19:2-14; 23:3-25.
9. *Symbolic Action*. Not infrequently the prophet was not content with uttering the word but would dramatize it by acting it out symbolically before the people (1 Kings 11:29-40; Jer. 13:1-9; Ezek. 4:1-37).
10. *Symbolic Life*. In some cases the life of the prophet was symbolic in itself. Hos. 1—3; Ezek. 24:22-24.
11. *Sermons*. Jer. 7:1—8:3; Ezek. 20.
12. *Satire*. Is. 44:9-20.
13. *Apology*. Jer. 26:12b-15; Micah 3:8.
14. *Mocking Song*. Is. 37:22-29; 46.
15. *Letter*. Jer. 29:1-23, 24-32.
16. *Herald's Report*. Is. 40:10-11; 52:7-10.
17. *Liturgy*. Is. 33; Jer. 14:1—15:4; Joel 1—2; Micah 7.
18. *Lament*. Ezek. 19:1-14; 27:3b-9; Hos. 6:1-3.
19. *Dirge*. Is. 14:4b-21; Amos 5:2.
20. *Threat*. Is. 13:6-16.

21. *Proverb.* 1 Sam. 10:12; 1 Kings 20:11; Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2.
 22. *Judicial Proceedings.* Is. 3:13-15; 41:1—42:4; 43:8-13.

Harrington in his *Record and Revelation* envisioned the formation of the prophetic books as follows:

Their words must soon have been written down and we may visualize a primitive prophetic literature circulating in the form of short and separate writings. In the gradual work of collecting and editing, elements were added: earlier collections were sometimes broken up, and the material was finally arranged according to a plan — something very vague — that must be determined (if possible for each book). The complex genesis of the prophetic books (or many of them) goes far to explain the disconcerting disarray that can confuse and exasperate the reader. The realization, for instance, that the Book of Isaiah is an anthology of sermons or oracles, puts the reader on his guard.²⁵

Form-critical advocates differ as to the degree to which the actual words and message of the prophecy can be recovered. Engnell says it is not possible; Bentzen says it is difficult; Mowinckel asserts it is possible.

The methodology followed by the "history of tradition" school introduces skepticism into Biblical interpretation, causes the hermeneutical methodology to be characterized by subjectivity, and destroys the beautiful harmony and unity of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets.

VII. Gunkel's Influence on the Scandinavian or Tradition-Historical School, or Uppsala School

The application of Gunkel's methodology to the historical and prophetic literature led to its extension by others. According to Hahn: "As a matter of fact, a whole new school of criticism was generated from his principle that the original sources of written literature were to be found in oral literature."²⁶ Gunkel's emphasis on oral tradition led to the formation among Scandinavian scholars of the "history of tradition" school. Nyberg, Engnell, Mowinckel, Haldar, and others investigated the formation and transmission of tradition in its preliterate stage.²⁷ As a result of their studies they reached the conclusion that oral tradition continued down to the time of the exile. Their views of the development of O. T. literature is quite different from that of the documentary hypothesis.

Nyberg in his *Studien zum Hoseabuch* made the suggestion that the prophetic books had grown out of oral traditions which a prophet's disciples had kept and amplified. A number of Scandinavian scholars began to study the prophetic books from this point of view. They extended this approach also to other O. T. books and came up with a theory for the interpretation of the Pentateuch radically different from that of the documentary hypothesis. Instead of speaking of J, E, D, and P, the Uppsala School contended that the documents J, E, D, and P were the literary crystallization of various bodies of oral literature that emanated from various centers or circles. Different bodies of tradition did not necessarily have to be successive but could be contemporary. The oral tradition was constantly growing, there was supplementation, and changes were made in the oral materials so that the late and early aspects of the tradition could not be distinguished by literary methods.

The Old School of Old Testament interpretation operated with fixed documents and the concept of redactors of written materials. According to the Scandinavian school, however, it was necessary to operate with units of oral tradition and circles of traditionists instead of fixed documents and redactors. The Uppsala

School conceived of its task as finding the origin, nature, and history of blocks of oral material. Thus "form criticism" consisted not merely in the analysis of literary form but more specifically in the determination of the formation of literature from oral tradition.

One of the contributions of the Scandinavian school, according to Hahn's evaluation, was "the description of the milieu in which prophetic literature originated and developed."²⁸ Alfred Haldar in his *Association of Cult Prophets* attached to the various shrines of the monarchical period associations of prophets, who, he believed, transmitted the oral materials of the prophets. It was his contention that throughout the Near East there were many popular shrines at which cultic prophets were to be found, that the books of the prophets were the outcome of such association of prophets who kept the oracles of the most outstanding prophets. This type of interpretation fits in with one of the main emphases of the oral traditionists: to find the "situation in life" of the prophetic literature.

VIII. Form Criticism and Pentateuchal Law

Some scholars believe that in the area of the Pentateuchal laws this methodology has shown some of its most fruitful results. The application of form criticism, in terms of trying to find out the life situation of a given literary genre, it is claimed, gives a clearer picture of the origin of different types of law than was possible according to an analysis of the formal codes found in the various sources.

Anton Jirku and Alfred Jepsen were the first two European scholars to try to classify Pentateuchal laws. Both men concentrated on the Book of the Covenant, the oldest of the Hebrew law codes. Though their classifications differed in detail, they were agreed in their twofold classification of Hebrew laws: those which were related to other Near Eastern laws and those unique because of their literary form. Albrecht Alt produced his classification of casuistic type as compared with the apodictic, the former being hypothetical and arguable as case law, the latter being categorical or final as commandments. The casuistic provisions (*mishpatim*) are supposed to have had the popular courts for their situation in life whereas, in the case of the apodictic laws (*debharim*), the *Sitz im Leben* was envisioned as the religious congregation. Both types are well illustrated in Ex. 22. For the hypothetical form the reader is directed to verses 1-17, where the laws begin with "If," with the provision in the third person; for the categorical form consult verses 18, 21, and 22: "Thou shalt not" — with the injunction in the second person; and for a further mixed form, verses 23-27, beginning "If you," where hypothesis and injunctions are syntactically combined.

The first type, the *mishpatim*, composing about half of the Book of the Covenant, closely resembled the laws of the ancient codes (Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite) in formulation, content, and juristic approach. These laws, differing from the laws of the Pentateuch, which were religious and humanitarian in character, were secular in spirit, more like the laws of the Code of Hammurapi. Alt considered the *mishpatim* to be the oldest in the Book of the Law and to have been borrowed from those ancient codes by the Israelites after their entry into Canaan. The most natural situation of the casuistic laws, according to Alt, was to be found in the judicial activity of the popular courts of each locality over which the elders of the people presided.

The apodictic type, in contrast to the casuistic law, is characterized by generalized principles which deal with the most important aspects of ethical life rather

than with regulations concerned with practical eventualities. The authoritarian tone of the apodictic laws caused Alt to attribute them to a priestly group whom he considered to have promulgated these laws in solemn proclamation. The proclamation is described in Deut. 27, where the priests are instructed to convene the whole people in the valley of Shechem. This action Alt was prompted to ascribe to the priests. The apodictic law was supposed to be rooted in fundamental institutions of Israel. The *Sitz im Leben* for this type of law was not the secular court but the religious congregation.

An example of individual laws promulgated by priests as interpreted by this school of thought is the literary type known as the "decalog." Mowinckel made a special study of this genre in *Le Decalogue* (Paris, 1927). A decalog — there are more than one — is a specific series of religious requirements by the priests at the entrance of a sanctuary before beginning the ritual in order to call the hearers to the cultic purity they need to meet. Mowinckel contended for the existence of more than one decalog. Critical Old Testament scholarship made a distinction between Ex. 34, termed a Jahwistic decalog, and traces of one in Ex. 21—23, both of which are to be distinguished from the traditional Decalog of Ex. 20. The two first mentioned "decalogs" were, according to Mowinckel, remnants of the sort of pronouncements uttered by the priests at the shrines. Hahn comments on this interpretation: "Like so many of his hypotheses, this attempt to identify the original 'situation in life' of such independent groups of laws was based on conjecture."²⁹

This methodology of emphasis on specific types of laws, it was held, freed the laws from their literary contexts and placed them into the cultus and also into relationship with the people. It meant distracting attention from comprehensive bodies of laws and concentrating on small groups of laws, considered at one time to have existed separately. Initially scholars were concerned with comprehensive codes in these different types of laws. Otto Eissfeldt in his *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen, 1934) identified within the Priestly Code various small corpora of laws, each of which was a distinct unit dealing with a single subject and formulated in a single style. Behind this view was the assumption that Israelite law had been a living and growing organism developed by the people and priests in real life situations at the courts within the city gates or in the sanctuaries. The older theory held that there had been just a few great creative moments in the history of Israel when legal codes were framed — a view that postulated the continuous activity of the people in producing the legal heritage of the nation. Some scholars even contended that the Pentateuchal laws were primarily developed orally.

IX. Form Criticism and the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament

Like other nations of the Fertile Crescent, the Israelites had their wise men who produced a literature commonly known as "the wisdom literature."³⁰ Archaeology has shown that Hebrew Hokmah was a part of the culture pattern of Oriental Wisdom which flowered in the lands of the Fertile Crescent during the second and first millennia B. C. The extensive remains of Oriental Wisdom, practically all of which antedates by centuries the emergence of Hebrew culture, make it clear that Hokmah in Israel was a very old intellectual activity. The international character of wisdom literature is suggested by Provs. 30:1; 31:1, where there are references to collections by Agar and Lemuel, who were not Jews. The Biblical presentation of the wisdom of King Solomon reflects that his reign marked the first Golden Age of wisdom literature and that his extensive political and commercial dealings

with other lands, particularly with Egypt, provided the basis for close intellectual relations with the Nile Valley.

There are about a dozen examples of Egyptian "teaching" (*sebayit*) from the earliest instructions of Hor-dedef (27th century B. C.) down to the Insinger Papyrus of the Ptolemaic period. These are in the form of teachings communicated in "father-to-son" style and are designed to prepare the son for his duties in life, especially in the court. The Egyptian is concerned with what in the Egyptian language was called *maat*, or justice, which is the order of truth established by God in a person's life and must be in agreement with *maat*. In these Egyptian books advice is handed down concerning a wide range of situations: how to deal with superiors, avoiding evil women, being honest and reliable, establishing right friendships, and practicing self-control.

The Wisdom of *Amen-em-opet* is held by many scholars, Protestant and Roman Catholic, to have influenced Prov. 22:17—23:11. While the majority of scholars hold for the dependence of Proverbs on Amen-em-opet, some claim that if there is any relationship between Amen-em-opet and Proverbs, the Egyptian writer borrowed from the Hebrew. Young, Kevan, and Drioton are among those contending for the dependence of Egyptian wisdom writing on the Hebrew. Those who postulate an Egyptian influence on the Old Testament Wisdom literature claim that, inasmuch as Egyptian writers are supposed to have placed their words in the king's mouth, as in the *Maxims of Merikare* and *The Wisdom of Amenemhet*, the same was done in Israel. 1 Kings states that Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs; this is claimed to be an exaggeration. Robert Gordis opines that it is unlikely that Solomon engaged in literary composition, because royal authors have been few and far between, Marcus Aurelius, James I, and Frederick the Great of Prussia being exceptions. If these rulers could compose, why exclude Solomon, especially when the Biblical text explicitly ascribes proverbs and poems to David's son?

Some Old Testament scholars believe that the *Sitz im Leben* for the wisdom literature was the school conducted out of doors (Prov. 1:20 f.) and later on the *beth hammidrash*, "the house of instruction," or academy (Sir. 51:23). Ryder believes: "It may have its antecedents in the court or Temple in the period of the monarchy." Different literary genres may be distinguished in the wisdom writings of the Old Testament. The characteristic literary unit was the *māshāl*, which means "likeness." The term is used for the popular proverb, as well as for a more extended composition. The popular proverb might be either prosaic or poetical in form. Another literary genre found in the wisdom literature was the parable, also called *māshāl*. In Ezek. 17:2 there is a parable, although in verses 3-10 the account has features of fable or allegory.

X. The Various Literary Genres of Biblical Literature

Christian and Jewish scholars down through the centuries have been aware of the existence of different types of literature in the Bible. The Old Testament itself recognizes the difference between various kinds of writings and employs a variety of words to designate what might properly be called "literary genre." One can agree with Schökel's judgment: "The ancient authors, collectors, and editors of the Old Testament writings recognized the existence of different literary genres, without, however, applying any strict theories in this matter. Yet the terminology

that they use and the classifications that they make show a thoughtful literary sense."³¹

In the following list Schökel gives the names of literary genres as classified by the Old Testament itself:

'iggeret, "letter"; *bereka*, "a blessing"; *hedad*, "vintage song"; *zamir*, "victory(,) song"; *mizmor*, "song of some kind"; *hida*, "riddle"; *midrash*, "commentary"; *miktam* (a term unknown in meaning applied to 13 psalms); *melisa*, "witty saying"; *maskil* (a term applied to 13 psalms); *massa*, (literally) "burden," a term applied to oracles of misfortune, almost always directed against foreign nations; *māshāl*, "likeness, comparison," a term applied to proverbs, parables, allegories; *neum yahweh*, "oracle of God"; *nehi*, "lamentation"; *quina*, "dirge"; *siggayon*, "plaintive song"; *shir* "song"; *shir yediyot*, "love song"; *shir hazzona*, "harlot's song"; *tehilla*, "hymn of praise"; *toqa*, "hymn of thanksgiving"; and *tepillā*, "prayer or supplication."

Certain books of the Old Testament seem to show that the writer of a Biblical book used a literary genre with deliberate judgment, as is evident from the manner in which Amos uses the *massa'ot* in chapters 1 and 2 and the four visions in 3:1—8:3. In other prophetic books we have *massa'ot*, oracles that predict misfortune and those that announce future blessings. Blessings, curses, laws, and psalms are held by scholars to be distinct literary forms. The Jewish division of the canon into the Law, Prophets, and Nebiim is not of much value for purposes of literary classification.

The Old Testament contains both prose and poetry. Each classification has its own subdivisions. The writings of the Old Testament contain certain short poems or folk songs that are classified as folk poetry. Examples of the latter would be a song sung at the digging of a well (Num. 21:17-18); love songs, either collected or imitated in the Song of Solomon; sentinel songs (Is. 21:11-12); vine-dresser's songs (Is. 5:1-2; 26:2-8); and mourner's songs (2 Sam. 1:19-27; 3:33-34). Other types of folk poetry are proverbial sayings (1 Sam. 10:12), riddles (Judg. 14:14), blessings and curses (Gen. 27:27-29, 39-40), felicitations (1 Kings 10:8-9), and oaths (1 Sam. 17:55; 2 Kings 6:31). A special kind of folk literature was the fable (Judg. 9:7-15).

Among the prose literary genres critical scholars distinguish between history, genealogy, legend, saga, covenant-command, legal statement, and priestly instruction.

One of the literary forms developed in the ancient Near East was the description of how the covenant form of law was used in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia.³² Since 1931 much evidence has come to the fore to show that the covenant treaty was a widespread institution. The earliest forms are Sumerian and Akkadian and are dated as coming from the third Millennium B. C. However, from the Hittite Empire the archives of Hattusa have revealed more than 20 Hittite treaties. These treaties were of two kinds: the parity and the suzerainty. The parity involved equals entering into a reciprocal agreement; the suzerainty treaty was imposed by a king on his subjects. In the latter the suzerain lord spells out the demands to which the vassals must swear. According to George Mendenhall it has the following structure: (1) a preamble in which the king or lord states his titles; (2) a historical prolog in which the king sets forth his good deeds in the past, the wording being in the "I-Thou" form of address; (3) stipulations demanding among other requirements no dealings with foreign kings or lords; (4) a provision that the

treaty is to be placed in the temple and read periodically; (5) a list of gods designated to serve as witnesses; (6) conclusion with a blessings-curses formula. A number of scholars find this structure in the O. T. Joshua 24:2-13; Deut. 31:9-13; Ex. 23:20-33; Lev. 26; Deut. 27—28; Joshua 8:34; and Ex. 20:1-2 can be arranged so as to show this structure with the exception of the listing of oaths by the gods. Meredith Kline in his *Treaty of the Great King* has organized the contents of Deuteronomy around the covenant structure and contends that the fifth book of the Pentateuch should not be dated as originating in the seventh century B. C. but in the Mosaic age, because this was the time period that similar Hittite treaties were produced. In his opinion the use in Deuteronomy of the treaty covenant structure supports the unity as well as the early date of the book.³³

XI. The Dependence of Form Criticism on Eastern Parallels

Ever since the emergence of Pan-Babylonianism in the early part of the 20th century there have been those among the school of comparative religions who have asserted the influence of Near Eastern literature and religion on the religious thought of the O. T. When Gunkel began his form-critical studies in Genesis and the Psalms, the controversy between the Pan-Babylonianists and their opponents was raging. Among Orientalists, depending on the scholar's speciality, influence was claimed by different scholars for their branch of Orientalistics. Thus Zimmern, Langdon, and Cummings, all Assyriologists, asserted that the O. T. was influenced by the rich psalm literature of the Tigris-Euphrates valley, including Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian psalms, all of which were shown to be connected with the official cult of the great temples. C. J. Gadd, the British Assyriologist, pointed out the alleged influence of Babylonia on Hebrew religion both before and after the Exile: "Since Babylonia was at once the creator of one of the world's oldest civilizations and the general mentor of Western Asia, both in religion and in the arts, it is only natural that its influence upon the Hebrews . . . would be the most distinguishable of all."³⁴

Egyptologists made the same claims as did the Assyriologists. Erman, Breasted, and Sethe have made available the most significant psalm literature from ancient Egypt. In Egypt the psalms again were used in the temples and so would seem to have originated in the cultic ritual.

Since 1929, as a result of the excavations at Ras Shamra, or Ugarit, a body of literature, comprising myths, religious and liturgical materials, was found that seems to present parallels to the Psalms. Schaeffer made the texts available to the scholarly world, Jack explored their relationship to the Old Testament, and Patton pointed out the specific parallels to the Old Testament.

Gunkel, the first to utilize the archaeological discoveries of the 19th century, emphasized certain aspects of Near Eastern literature. He was not so much concerned with finding parallels in content as trying to establish identical literary genres. In the introduction to his commentary on the Psalms Gunkel wrote:

So ist für uns an die Stelle eines einzelnen biblischen Buches eine umfangreiche religiöse Dichtungsart getreten, für die wir auch ausserhalb des Psalters eine Fülle von Urkunden besitzen, und die wir in Israel und in der Fremde vom 3. Jahrtausend an bis in die Zeit der Entstehung des Christentums verfolgen können, wo sie dann allmählich durch die Dichtung der altchristlichen Kirche und der Synagoge abgelöst wird. Unsere Aufgabe ist nun geworden, nicht nur den einzelnen Psalm oder das Buch des Psalters zu erklären — eben weil man dabei zu sehr

stehen geblieben ist, ohne auf die grossen Zusammenhänge zu achten, ist der bisherigen Arbeit der volle Erfolg versagt geblieben — sondern das letzte Ziel muss jetzt dieses sein, die ganze Dichtungsart und ihre Geschichte, die gewiss vielverschlungene Wege gegangen ist, zu beschreiben.³⁵

Extra-Biblical literature, however, is unable to furnish parallel literary genres for every *Gattung* discovered by scholars in the Old Testament. While it is possible to furnish apparent parallels for the psalm liturgies and to furnish examples of wisdom literature, myths, and laws, there as yet have not been found *true* parallels for the prophetic materials. Bernhardt claims that the few evidences for prophecy found at Mari and some possible references in later Babylonian literature only emphasize the uniqueness of Biblical prophecy. The same observation may also be made concerning historical materials of the Old Testament that only have parallels in the inscriptions of the Babylonian and Assyrians, concerning which scholars are agreed that they do not compare with the historical writings of the Old Testament in scope nor in conception.

The extra-Biblical material, however, does have value in that it permits the Biblical scholar to see the difference in content between the Biblical genre and its counterpart in Sumeria, Assyria, Syria, Canaan, or Egypt. Thus Leslie wrote about the comparison of the Biblical psalms with the psalm literature of the Near Eastern World:

These sources make it possible to view the psalms of the Old Testament as a part of the psalm literature of the ancient Near East. Here we meet, as in the Psalms, the language of individual and social worship, the mood of devotion to deity, the desire for fellowship and for right relations with deity, the ceremonies and rituals of the public cult, and lyrical, religious utterance from the heart of pious individuals. Yet this comparative study sends us back to the psalmody of Israel with a deepened sense of the latter's incomparably higher level of religious and ethical insight and its immeasurably greater spiritual power.³⁶

However, in the utilization of the Oriental materials from the Near East for the exegesis of Old Testament texts according to the form-critical method, it must not be forgotten that the methodological point of origin is to be found in the identity of forms. A hymn is a hymn whether it is addressed to Marduk, Amen-Rah, Baal, the goddess Isis, or to Yahweh. A funerary inscription will always be a funerary inscription whether it was written to describe the death of a heathen king or a king of the Old Testament. A list of taxes will not change whether it was composed by a Carthaginian or a Jerusalemite. Certain situations require certain types of writing. Literary genres cannot be mixed or one substituted for the other. It would never do to substitute a letter for a hymn of praise to a god.

XII. The "Sitz im Leben" According to Form Criticism

A sound exegesis for a text, a chapter, or a book will undoubtedly be aided by a knowledge of the *Sitz im Leben* (the life situation). Bernhardt aptly writes: "Die Frage nach dem Lebenssitz, nach dem Lebenszusammenhang, dem der Text entwachsen ist und in den er hineingehört, ist die notwendige Ergänzung zum ersten ursprünglichen Anliegen gattungsgeschichtlicher Forschung."³⁷ However, it is not always easy to determine the *Sitz im Leben* for many literary genres. For the proper understanding of a wisdom book such as Proverbs it would be difficult to establish the life situation that would be absolutely argument-proof.

Students of the Book of Proverbs have postulated different life situations that supposedly were responsible for the writing of some 900-plus proverbs. For example, there are scholars who claim that Solomon was the author of most of the proverbs, and they would consequently assume that the regal court was the place that witnessed the utterances and possibly also their publication. Another school, holding a completely different life situation, made Ptolemaic Alexandria the seat for the origin and promulgation of these proverbial wisdom sayings. Still a third view, postulating yet another *Sitz im Leben*, held that they were penned in postexilic Jerusalem, when prophecy had ceased and wise men came into special prominence.

To cite another case of the difficulty in deciding the *Sitz im Leben* for a Biblical writing: What is the life situation for the Book of Ruth? Is it to be considered a protest writing together with the Book of Jonah against the narrow-minded nationalism and chauvinism of the postexilic period in Judea? Or was the book written simply to entertain a Jewish reader audience? Or was it composed toward the end of David's reign or during the beginning of Solomon's reign to show how David was descended from a Moabite woman named Ruth who was married to the Hebrew Boaz? There are those who claim it is a *Tendenzschrift* produced to counteract some faulty and bad attitudes during the postexilic period. In reading the Book of Ruth there is no way to establish the assertion that it is a piece of fiction and not an episode that occurred during the days of the Judges, as is stated in the opening verse of that book.

The *Sitz im Leben* for many literary genres cannot be determined. A great deal of speculation and hypothesizing has been engaged in by Old Testament scholars without proof or validity for the assumptions and conclusions concerning many of the literary genres that have been isolated by form criticism. Among those subscribing to form criticism is a school of interpretation commonly known as "The Myth and Ritual School." The objective of this school is to call attention to the relationship of myth to ritual. This school of thought found mostly among British and Scandinavian scholars, finds the *Sitz im Leben* for myth in the ritual practices of the Hebrews.

Jane Harrison in her *Themis* (1912) was the first scholar to propose the distinction between *mythos* (the spoken word) and *dromenon* (the done part) and to claim that these two were the essential parts of valid ritual. However, in 1912 Miss Harrison was not aware of the fact that much of early Greek myth and ritual is believed by many present-day scholars to have come from Mesopotamia. The first scholar to apply these findings from the Babylonian religion to the Hebrew religion was the Scandinavian scholar S. Mowinckel, who in his *Psalmestudien* introduced the idea of the influence of the Babylonian *enkitu* festival on Hebrew ritual. In 1933 a group of British scholars in the symposium *Myth and Ritual* drew parallels between the Babylonian and Hebrew religions, claiming especially an influence of Mesopotamian religion on the Biblical contents of the Old Testament.

Since then mostly Scandinavian scholars and a number of English scholars have emphasized this approach. They were certain that in Gen. 1—11 Babylonian influence is very evident. The Creation and Flood epics of Babylonia, these scholars asserted, influenced the accounts in the first 11 chapters of Genesis. They also claimed that references to the victory of Yahweh over the dragon (Ps. 74:13 f.; Is. 51:9) must be related to the Babylonian myth of the victory of Marduk over

Tiamat. Since the Enuma Elish epic played an important part in the New Year's celebration of the Babylonians, it was assumed by Scandinavian and British scholars of the Myth and Ritual School that the Hebrews adopted such a festival and observed the victory of Yahweh over the monster of chaos. Gen. 1 was supposedly recited at the Jewish celebration of New Year.

In Israel a new aspect entered the picture when A. R. Johnson in *The Labyrinth* proposed the importance of the king in the ritual. He followed this up in 1955 with *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*. Johnson tried to prove from a detailed study of the so-called royal psalms that during the rule of King David in Jerusalem there was the celebration of a New Year festival in the month of Tishri in which the king played an important role. The members of the Myth and Ritual School are also known as "The Pattern School." The "original pattern" for the literature of the Old Testament was supposedly the ritual pattern, believed to be the basis for different kinds of legal genres for many different psalm liturgies and for various prophetic liturgies.

Gunkel had given impetus to this type of thinking in connection with his *original* work concerning the genesis of the genres found in the Psalter. Mowinckel pursued this much farther and claimed that all psalms were a product of the cult and of the worshipping community. The cultic emphasis became more pronounced in O. T. studies as the religious life and cultic practices of Near Eastern nations became better known as a result of archaeological discoveries and the translation and publication of the literature of Mesopotamia, Syria, Canaan, and Egypt. Bernhardt claims there is hardly a text in the O. T. for which some cultic life situation has not been found. Von Rad has interpreted the traditions found in the Hexateuch as the product of Israel's cultus. In *Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuch* he spoke of the "fast ausschliesslich um ehemals sakral gebundenes Geistesgut." Even the story of Cain and Abel is given by Engnell a ritual interpretation, according to which Eve is depicted as a mother goddess and Cain and Abel as representing the sacral kingship, positively and negatively. According to Humber and Haldar the prophetic books of Habakkuk and Joel were temple liturgies used in the temple in Jerusalem. The members of the Myth and Ritual School recognize that these books in their present textual form did not have their origin in the cultus. This means that the Biblical interpreter will have to operate with two different "life situations" for most Biblical documents. This has prompted Bernhardt to write:

Dann aber ist es in jedem Falle problematisch, ob man einen Text von seinem angeblichen "ursprünglichen Sitz im Kultus" her wirklich noch verstehen kann oder ob es nicht doch vielmehr auf den "Sitz im Leben" des Textes in seiner gegenwärtigen Form ankommt.³⁸

Two different life situations present a problem for the Biblical exegete. Bernhardt asserts that the Biblical interpreter's only concern should be: What was the *Sitz im Leben* of the text in the Bible? He writes:

Für den Exegeten, dessen einziges Anliegen das Verstehen des ihm vorliegenden Textes ist, dürfte diese Frage von vornherein klar entschieden sein: Für ihn gilt es, den "Sitz im Leben" seines Textes, wie er ihn überliefert findet, zu erkennen. Es geht ihm nicht um das, was der Text ursprünglich, als er noch mit einem vielleicht nachzuweisenden kultischen Haftpunkt verbunden war, bedeutet hat, sondern was er in seiner jetzigen Gestalt und ihrem "Sitz im Leben" bedeutet.³⁹

XIII. Implications of Form Criticism for the Miracles of the Old Testament

Negative higher criticism has attacked three aspects of the historic Christian faith: the inspiration of the Bible, the necessity for dogma, and the credibility of miracles. Throughout church history men have rejected the miracles of both the Old and the New Testament. Volumes that dealt with the discipline of Christian apologetics usually contained a chapter on the defense of Biblical miracles. Roman Catholic, Calvinist, and Lutheran writers in the past who have published volumes in defense of the Christian faith against the attacks of its detractors have perennially included a discussion on the topic of miracles. Vernon Grounds claims that "within the framework of the Biblical Weltanschauung, however, miracle is no embarrassing anomaly; it is an inevitable corollary of redemptive theism. Granted the postulates of creation, province, sin, and salvation, miracle becomes a veritable necessity, a necessity of grace."⁴⁰ Paul Krutzky, a pastor of the old Iowa Synod, in his monograph *Modernism and Miracle* complained in 1925:

We cannot fail to discern an increasing tendency in the religious thinking of our day to minimize the miraculous and the supernatural. This is clearly seen in the attitude toward the miracles of Christ, and in the naturalistic interpretation of the miracles of the Old Testament.⁴¹

Again the same writer asserted:

Modernism has lost sight of this conception of God and would eliminate all the miracles in the Scriptures and explain them on scientific grounds as natural phenomena. This movement is only a recrudescence of rationalism, but it is all the more dangerous because doubts are being broadcast everywhere.⁴²

It has generally been recognized by Biblical expositors that miracles are a conspicuous feature of the Biblical record even though miracles are not abundant in all parts of Scripture. Many of the miraculous happenings in the Old and New Testaments occurred at strategic times, in times of crises. Biblical miracles seem to take place at the great historical junctures of Old and New Testament history. Miracles are in evidence, thus, during the time of the establishment of the Hebrew nation (1400—1280 B. C.). Moses and Joshua are conspicuous as miracle workers. Another crisis took place about 850 B. C. in the days of Elijah and Elisha. The books of Kings depict Elijah and Elisha as performing 24 different miracles. Again around 600 B. C., during the days of the Babylonian captivity and in the postexilic period, Daniel and his friends are the subjects of miracles. With the introduction of Christianity the New Testament has a series of miracles, all involving the person of Christ, notably the Virgin Birth, the miracles performed by Christ during His ministry, the miracle of His corporeal resurrection and ascension. After the Lord's ascension, the apostles are depicted as performing miracles.

No one will deny that miracles have a place and a significance in the pages of the O. T., but the precise definition of their place and significance has long been a matter around which theological controversy has revolved. Philip E. Hughes stated: "There have never been lacking those who are altogether unwilling for various reasons or for none to countenance anything that appears to be at all abnormal or supernatural or out of the ordinary, and who are prepared to regard the Old Testament stories as but picturesque folklore of an ancient people, comparable to the sagas and traditions which have been preserved in the primitive annals of other races, and possibly of some value in the realm of religious allegory."⁴³

The leading religious philosophers of our day have taken the position that miracles in the Old Testament have no place in the objective sphere of history, but they assert that miracles have a significance "mythologically." They maintain indeed that the miraculous element in the Old Testament is in itself of no ultimate consequence and that a too liberal approach to the miraculous narratives is actually destructive of their inner or "mythological" significance.

One of the implications of the use of the form-critical method for the interpretation of the O. T. is the elimination and rejection of miracles in the O. T. by their being classified as belonging to the genres of legend, saga, fable, and apocalyptic. McCasland in his article on "Miracles" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* writes:

One of the main reasons for the problem of miracles is the monolithic view of the Scriptures which has characterized traditional interpretation. This view fails to recognize that the Bible is a literature composed of various types of writing. The first obligation of the interpreter is to recognize the type or form of writing with which he is dealing in any particular case. The Bible was first of all the literature of an ancient people.⁴⁴

Here McCasland has appropriated the thinking of Gunkel and other practitioners of the form-critical method by claiming that many narratives are wrongly interpreted when they are considered as presenting actual historical facts. Gunkel, it should not be forgotten, was a rationalist and an unbeliever in Biblical revelation claiming that the Old Testament contained myths and saga which under no circumstance were to be considered as reporting actual historical happenings.

McCasland lists the episode in the Garden of Eden as a myth, saying that it presents a picture of human nature. Adam and Eve are everyman and everywoman, and the serpent is the voice of temptation which each person experiences in his heart. The narrative is said to be a profound study of moral life. This interpretation removes the possibility that a serpent spoke to a woman or that the devil used the serpent as an agent of temptation. The mythical approach interprets the third chapter of Genesis different from what it literally asserts if treated as reporting an actual historical event. According to the interpretation of Paul in the N. T. there was a tempter who brought about the downfall of Adam and Eve. Gen. 3 according to the N. T. refers to the origin of sin in the human race and says nothing about the fact that each person is tempted and commits sin. For the latter assertion there are other passages that teach the sinfulness and culpability of all men.

Another example cited by McCasland is Gen. 11:1-19, where the text states that because of human pride God confused the languages of those who participated in the building of the Tower of Babel. According to McCasland this account is an aetiological myth invented to explain the existence of many languages. The Biblical account literally would involve a miraculous happening. The miracle has been removed by the device of classifying the account as belonging to the literary genre of "myth."

In Exodus the reader is confronted with a number of miracles interwoven in the narratives that deal with the deliverance of the Children of Israel from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. The miracles performed by Moses are classified by McCasland as belonging to the literary genre of "legend." Critical scholars reject the miracles involved in the ten plagues and divide the chapters that treat of them among the sources J, E, and P. The article on "plagues" in *Harper's Bible*

Dictionary claims that the oldest source for the ten-plagues narrative is J, which is less emphatic in stressing the miraculous. In the P and E sources the miraculous increases; P especially is said to express the supernatural.

E. Basil Redlich in his *Introduction to Old Testament Study* discusses the matter of the O. T. miracles. He admits that no man in the abstract dare deny that God could have worked miracles in the history of Israel and if necessary overrule the laws of the universe. All things are possible with God. The question that needs to be asked is not, Could the miracles have happened? but, Did they happen? Redlich furthermore contends that it is difficult to assess the records because they were transmitted by men who lived centuries after the events. It would be simple to evaluate the evidence were it not that the elements of wizardry and magic have been introduced by some of the writers.

Richardson declares there is no contemporary evidence for any of the Old Testament miracles: "The accounts of the Exodus were written down centuries after the events recorded. Hence we cannot hope to reconstruct anything like a reliable historical account of what happened."⁴⁵

G. Henton Davies claims: "The different versions, J, E and P, are not agreed as to the number and mode of these disasters. The recording of the miracles is controlled by the master idea of the book, namely, the active Presence of the redeeming God."⁴⁶

Lowther Clarke in his exposition of Ex. 7:1-13 explains the growth of the miraculous element in the plagues as follows: J made the plagues natural events ordered by Jahweh. In E the plagues are wrought by the rod of Moses, and the miraculous element is prominent. The Hebrews are interspersed among the Egyptians. P puts the rod in Aaron's hand and introduces the magicians. Clarke is certain that the actual events were obviously heightened in retrospect, but he avers there is no need to doubt a residuum of fact. A modern writer would say the Egyptians had a run of bad luck, a common enough occurrence. That the miracles occurred when they did and facilitated the escape of the Hebrews from bondage was to them a clear proof of divine intervention. The plagues are all intensifications of natural phenomena and seem to follow in the expected sequence. The water of the Nile colored by the red marl brought down from the mountains of Abyssinia in the summer becomes undrinkable. The river overflows and, as the flood recedes, leaves behind a multitude of frogs. Stagnant water breeds clouds of mosquitoes. Skin diseases break out in the hot season. The barley harvest is destroyed by a hailstorm in January, the wheat escaping damage since it matures a month later. Finally, at the time of the Passover, which was at the beginning of spring, a great epidemic occurred killing many children. The Egyptians, depressed by an unprecedented sequence of disasters, were glad to let the Hebrews go, being frightened by the wrath of the god responsible for these calamities.⁴⁷

Martin Buber in *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant* claims that the sources used for the portrayal of the life of Moses reflect oral traditions that have suffered change in the course of their transmission. The task of the Biblical scholar then becomes one of separating, so far as possible, genuine tradition from the reworking of tradition. The "build-up" of tradition also accounts for the rather fantastic "stories" that occur in the Pentateuch. "The happenings recorded there can never have come about, in the historical world as we know it, after the fashion in which they are described."⁴⁸ Buber believes that the events narrated

in the O. T. as "history" must be classified as belonging to the literary category of "saga."

According to McCasland some miracles of the Old Testament are misunderstood when the student fails to realize that some miracle stories have a poetic origin. The episode about the sun standing still in Joshua 10:12-14 is of this type.⁴⁹ What the author of Joshua wrote down in prose was a misconception of that which he had set down in poetry.

Judg. 13—16 records the activities of Samson, to whom the author of Judges devotes more chapters than to any of the major judges. Samson performed feats that were not normally performed by the average individual. The historicity of these accounts has been rejected by form critics, and these events in Samson's life are labeled "saga." Thus McCasland claims that the parallel for the Samson story is to be found in the Hercules story of Greek mythology. The marvelous deeds of Samson should be evaluated in the light of Greek stories. The purpose of the Samson chapters was to emphasize that the struggle between the Hebrews and the Philistines was unresolved. "Samson represents the Hebrews who waste the power which God has given them."⁵⁰

In the Books of Kings a number of chapters treat of the events in the lives of Elijah and Elisha. It is claimed that no fewer than 24 miracles are ascribed to these two prophets who have left no writings. Conservative Biblical scholars of the past and present consider these miracles as having happened as recorded. The past exegetical literature of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod took this position regarding the miracles attributed to Elijah and Elisha. Alan Richardson, who believes that the concept of miracle is essential to the Biblical understanding of God, contends that in dealing with the miracles of the Old Testament we must be guided by standards of historical accuracy. Richardson claims that the miracles associated with the ten plagues, the Sea of Reeds, and the wilderness miracles as well as the Elijah-Elisha narratives must be judged in the light of modern knowledge. Of the latter he wrote: "The Elijah-Elisha group may perhaps best be understood as the kind of legendary tales of wonders which accumulate around famous men, and are tributes to the impressiveness of the personalities of the two prophets rather than eye-witness accounts of their doings."⁵¹

Redlich rejects the miraculous elements of the Elisha-Elijah narratives and asserts that the Elijah sources were compiled by a prophetic guild in order to glorify both Elisha and the guild and to enforce the lesson of reverence. After pointing out five different types of difficulties for the historian who wants to accept these accounts, he asserts:

Our conclusion is that on the evidence the Elisha sources — where it departs from reliance on the annals — are of inferior value. In so far as they describe the main facts of the life of Elisha and of the prophetic guilds and refer to Israel's political relations with Syria, they contain useful and valuable information, but the miraculous element must be regarded as legendary.⁵²

McCasland claims that the Book of Jonah has been misunderstood by those who have accepted the book with its miracles, for they fail to realize that the book belongs to a special class of literary genre. McCasland states that it is "a short story which has been misunderstood because of the fish episode." It is his contention that Jonah was intended to be a satire on Hebrew nationalism and sets forth God's love for all nations. By adopting the position that it is a parable, an

allegory, a piece of satire, it is possible to remove this book as a source of stumbling to minds that are normally offended by the supernatural and the miraculous.

Knight declares that the Book of Jonah is an allegory, a tale in which everything has a hidden meaning.⁵³ According to the allegorical interpretation, Jonah represents Israel; Jonah's being cast into the depths of the sea and swallowed by a fish stand for the Babylonian exile (cf. Jer. 51:34, 44), and his disgorgement means the return of the exiled Jews to Palestine. But despite that Knight and a number of scholars have adopted this interpretation, it cannot be accepted. This explanation completely disregards the flight of Jonah from the Lord's command to preach to Nineveh, it leaves without significance the second part of the book, and it makes the fish represent Israel's captors and oppressors whereas in the story it is the means used by God to bring Jonah back to his own land.

Other scholars claim that the poem is designed to be didactic. Thus it is asserted that there is no need of consulting manuals on marine biology to ascertain whether or not it would be possible for any sea animal to swallow a person. The purpose of the fish in the book is to teach with clarity the idea that Jonah in his false attitude had sunk very low and was brought up from great depths of narrow-mindedness by Jahweh and returned to Palestine, permitting him another opportunity for a healthier attitude toward his fellowmen. The gourd in chapter 4 is created by the author to show the prophet in all his ingrained selfishness and disregard of others. By assigning Jonah to some type of nonhistorical literary genre, the miracles of the book are removed as a stumbling block.

Roman Catholic exponents of form criticism have adopted a special literary genre called by them "midrash."⁵⁴ The word *midrash* occurs only twice in the Old Testament (2 Chron. 13:22; 24:27), and it is impossible to determine what kind of writing is alluded to in these verses. In the later literature of Judaism the word "midrash" was used to designate a special kind of literature. In the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach there is a reference in 51:23 to the *bet midrash*, "house of midrash," believed to be a school where the sacred text was studied. Rabbinical literature used the term *midrash* to designate the study of the text in general, with special emphasis on its homiletical character. Two types of *midrash* are distinguishable, the *halakhah* ("walking," i. e., conduct) and the *haggadah*, in which Jewish students of the Pentateuch sought to find edifying lessons. *Midrash* was not an attempt to interpret the text literally but to find as many edifying applications as possible. Its interpretation of a text is always designed to give light and instruction for the generation of the midrashic interpreter. This exegesis ignores the original historical situation and fastens on the time of the users of *halakah* and *haggadah*. Therefore it is impossible to accept *midrash* as literal exegesis, and it is unjust to reject it simply as being fantasy.

McKenzie claims there are numerous examples of *midrash* in the earlier books of the O. T. The Priestly narrative of the Pentateuch is an example of this tendency of Judaism. Thus this Roman Catholic scholar asserts:

A comparison of this material with the material of the older sources shows that the priestly source has no intention to relate the history of the past but to draw lessons from tradition by a homiletical retelling. The same principles explain the treatment which is given in Ch. [Chronicles] to the stories of S. [Samuel] and K. [Kings]. . . . The narratives of Dn. [Daniel]; Jon. [Jonah]; Tb. [Tobit]; Jdt. [Judith]; Est. [Esther] take some principle of the law or Jewish belief and present it in a fictitious narrative.⁵⁵

The Book of Daniel, before the age of higher criticism, was considered a historical book. Daniel was believed to have had the experiences ascribed to him in Chapters 1—6. These chapters were said to contain a record of historical events involving Daniel and his three friends. This meant that the preservation of Daniel's friends in the fiery furnace was accepted as a miracle of God. Daniel cast into the lions' den and preserved by God's providence was still another miracle. Critical scholarship has rejected the historicity of the first half of the book and has questioned the portrayal of the book, according to which Daniel was the recipient of visions in which the future of the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman empires was foreseen. The climax of the prophetic visions was the coming of the Messianic kingdom of Christ.

According to Heaton the book was written as if it were made up of a series of adventures and visions that came to Daniel (and his friends). However, Heaton claims that scholarship is generally agreed that the period of the Jewish persecution by the Seleucids is the occasion for the penning of the narratives.⁵⁶ What is represented as "vision" is not genuine prediction of future events but *past history written up in the future tense*. McKenzie believes that the figure of Daniel was not altogether an invention of the author of Daniel but was probably a figure existing in popular tradition. He may have utilized folklore tales of Daniel. Thus McKenzie writes: "For the author of the book and for his readers it was of little importance whether Daniel was a historical figure or not, since any historical character he may have had has been lost both in oral tradition and in the composition of the book."⁵⁷ The character of Daniel as he is presented in Daniel was truly fictional, according to McKenzie.

The purpose of Daniel, it is alleged, was to furnish consolation and encouragement for the Jews during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. But it should be noted that there is no evidence in history that the Jews issued under a pseudonym a book claiming to be a revelation from God and set centuries earlier than the time when it is alleged to have been presented to the public. Thus in the absence of such historic evidence, there is no reason for departing from the accepted Judeo-Christian tradition of a sixth-century date and authorship for Daniel.

Not a single miracle in the O. T. has not been explained away by critical scholars. One of the methods employed for the rejection or complete reinterpretation of the miracles of the O. T. is to consider them episodes that should be assigned to the category of myth, saga, folk tales, legend, or haggadic writing. Form criticism is used by critics to make the miraculous and supernatural episodes palatable to human reason by explaining them away or depicting them as part of an age that believed in miracles.

XIV. Implications of Form Criticism for O. T. Historical Literature

Large portions of the O. T., once considered to belong to the genre of historical writing, have now been removed from consideration as setting forth reliable data from a historical point of view. James M. Robinson in *New Directions in Biblical Thought* states that Gunkel's introduction of the study of oral tradition has raised the important question as to the preliterate course of Israelite history and religion. He writes: "The net result has been to overthrow the construction of Wellhausen, by tracing roots of the post-exilic law and of the interpretation of Israel's historical origin in terms of *Heilsgeschichte* back into the period of Israelite origins itself. This remarkable reversal in Old Testament research can be illustrated

from the work of such outstanding modern scholars as Albrecht Alt, Gerhard von Rad, and Martin Noth."⁵⁸

Albrecht Alt has questioned the whole history of the patriarchal narratives. In his famous monograph *Der Gott der Väter* he departed from the expression "the God of the Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." He believed that legends of each patriarch were centered in a shrine that was venerated by just a few tribes. Mamre was the place for the clustering of the Abraham legends; the shrine at Beersheba became the focus for the Isaac legends; while the Jacob legends were gathered around Bethel and Shechem. These cultic centers were favorites of certain tribes. Mamre was sacred for the Calebites and probably Judah; Beersheba was sacred for the tribe of Judah, perhaps also for that of Simeon; Bethel and Shechem were holy for the tribe of Joseph. Alt contends that the legends adhering to these various shrines were actually of Canaanite origin. The names of the patriarchs probably go back to the nomadic period before the settlement. While they were living as nomads, the deity of each patriarch was named in terms of the tribal leader who first experienced the numen and introduced his worship into the tribe. Alt claims that remnants of the names of gods worshiped by the patriarchs have survived in such phrases as the "Fear of Isaac" (Gen. 31:53b), the "Mighty One of Jacob" (Gen. 49:24; Is. 49:26; 60:16; Ps. 132:2, 5), "the God of Abraham" (perhaps originally "Shield of Abraham," Gen. 15:1), and the "God of Nahor" (Gen. 31:53a). The reason the names of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob survived is that they were the founders of tribal cults.

Robinson observes that the result of Alt's position, quite radical compared with that of Wellhausen, is to establish that "one could say that the most reliable fact about Abraham is his faith, and that all we know about the patriarchs is in terms of *Heilsgeschichte*: in the beginning was the promise, the covenant (Gen. 15)." ⁵⁹

The result of form criticism is that very little can be accepted as reliable and dependable in Genesis. Gunkel interpreted the entire book as comprising various types of legends.

Gerhard von Rad has played havoc with the books from Exodus to Samuel with his form-critical theories. He devoted his attention to that portion of the Biblical story falling between the end of Genesis and the beginning of the monarchy. He concentrated on Deut. 26:5b-9, claimed by him to be an ancient formula:

A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us and laid upon us hard bondage. Then we cried to the Lord the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; and He brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (RSV)

The series of events referred to in this "cultic formula" is said to be found in many other places in the O. T. In this formula there is no mention of the giving of the Law at Sinai. Because of this failure to mention the giving of the Law in these "creeds" Von Rad drew the conclusion that the tradition of the promised land of the "creed" and the Sinai traditions had no connection and were independent of each other.

The *Sitz im Leben* for the Sinai tradition Von Rad claimed was the feast of

tabernacles. Mowinckel placed the feast of tabernacles at Jerusalem, where it was supposed to have been celebrated to historicize the Babylonian New Year festival. Von Rad, on the other hand, found its origin in the covenant-renewal festival at Shechem, where the Sinai tradition was stressed. According to Von Rad, the legends about the Exodus from Egypt (Deut. 26) had a beginning other than that of the Sinai tradition. The Exodus and the entry into the Promised Land had their origin in the historicizing of the Canaanite harvest festival (Feast of Weeks), yet the tradition itself must be separated from the Canaanite rite. The "creed of Deuteronomy 26" leads up to the partition of the Promised Land at Gilgal, whose shrine Von Rad believed, was the localization for this tradition.⁶⁰

The result of these theories of Von Rad and Mowinckel has been to reject the priority of the historical presentation from Ex. 1 to 1 Sam. 16:14. Only at this point and continuing through 2 Sam. 5:25 and the narrative of the struggle for a successor (2 Sam. 7:9-20; 1 Kings 1-2) is real historiography said to begin, because in these chapters the narrated events are considered contemporary and characterized by factuality and sobriety. Thus before the time of Samuel we do not have true history. Robinson states the case very clearly:

Yet this factual historiography began only with the Israelite "Enlightenment," and was preceded by a period in which history was transmitted only as a mass of legends clustering about cultic formulas which gave them their meaning, and this meaning was *Heilsgeschichte*. It was the gradual bringing together of these formulas into a united *Heilsgeschichte* under Yahweh that made possible the union of the originally independent tribes into a confederacy of twelve tribes, which in turn made possible the monarchy and the dawn of Israelite historiography. Hence *Heilsgeschichte* not only preceded historiography, but was a major factor in producing the history which modern historiography reconstructs.⁶¹

This actually reverses the facts as they are portrayed in the Biblical record. Before the coming of these theories millions of Biblical readers seemingly misunderstood the real historical origin and development of the history of the chosen people, but now through the form-critical experts students of the O. T. supposedly know that this sequence is not as portrayed. Concerning Moses, called the greatest prophet in the O. T., we can know little, according to Von Rad.

The results of these various approaches of Von Rad and Mowinckel are clear. To quote Robinson once more:

The historical implications of this study of oral traditions are thus not a confirmation of the sequence of the story as we have it in the Pentateuch. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not kin, did not worship the same God. The band which escaped from Egypt, the people who received the law at Sinai, and the nomads who over a period of centuries settled in Palestine are not one and the same group.⁶²

Thus, according to the form critics, for the average Biblical reader the Bible from Exodus to 2 Samuel is a misleading book because the reader would draw all manner of false conclusions because of his ignorance of the confusions, contradictions and misrepresentations the Spirit of God had permitted to be recorded as the final editing of these books found in the Torah and Former Prophets of the Hebrew Bible. If the form critics are right, the reader can ascertain few reliable facts about the patriarchs, Moses, Joshua, and the 15 individual judges whose activities are described in Judges and 1 Samuel.

The device of classifying books like Esther, Jonah, and Daniel as representing various types of literary genre, not considered historical, permits the removal

of these books from a serious discussion of Old Testament history. Thus large sections of the Pentateuch, the Former Prophets, Esther, Ruth, Daniel, and Chronicles have been removed from the category of history and assigned to that of other literary genres which reject the historicity, factualness, and the "happenedness" of many events that were accepted as historical before the advent of form criticism.

XV. Implications of Form Criticism for the Interpretation of the New Testament

Ira M. Price, onetime professor of Semitic languages at the University of Chicago, has listed in the *Cross Reference Digest* 70 different happenings in Genesis to which there are references in the 27 books of the New Testament.⁶³ The same scholar has also shown how at least 60 historical happenings mentioned in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and 1 Samuel are referred to by different New Testament writers. These O. T. references are accepted as factual, and there is no indication that they were believed to possess the characteristics of myth, saga, or legend or to belong to a type of literary genre that would justify the rejection of their "happenedness." A study of Acts 7 and Heb. 11 would not seem to substantiate the judgment of Robinson previously cited to the effect that "the historical implications of this study of oral traditions are thus not a confirmation of the sequence of the story as we have it in the Pentateuch. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not kin, did not worship the same God. The band which escaped from Egypt, the people who received the law at Sinai, and the nomads who over a period of centuries settled in Palestine are not one and the same group."⁶⁴

The presuppositions and conclusions underlying O. T. form criticism relative to the historicity and "happenedness" of events and the existence of Biblical personalities are contrary to the New Testament evidence. The N. T. postulates the existence of Adam and Eve and claims that they were the first human pair; it asserts clearly that Eve sinned before Adam (1 Tim. 2:14); portrays Abel's sacrifice as more acceptable than Cain's (Heb. 11:4); assumes that Cain murdered his brother (1 John 3:12; Jude 11); Enoch walked with God (Heb. 11:5); the existence of the ark (Heb. 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20); the occurrence of the Deluge (Luke 17:26-27); Noah's family saved from a watery grave (2 Peter 3:6). Abraham's call to Haran (Acts 7:4), the promised blessing of a Savior (Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8), and the sojourn in Canaan are likewise held factual. Thus many incidents are referred to as factual by N. T. writers which, according to the proponents of oral tradition, are wrongly interpreted by the N. T. or at best reinterpreted.

The acceptance of form criticism has not only important revolutionary implications for understanding large portions of O. T. books, but it also means that N. T. writers misunderstood the O. T. as have Christians down the centuries until they were supposedly enlightened as to the true nature of episodes that were formerly considered historical but really are myths, legends, sagas, or midrashic writings.

The New Testament also accepted events that have traditionally been considered miraculous or supernatural. The burning bush episode is accepted by Luke (Luke 20:37; Acts 7:30); the miracles performed by Moses in Egypt are accepted by Stephen in his speech (Acts 7:37); the waters of the Nile turned into blood (Ex. 7:20) are alluded to in Rev. 16:3-4; the pillar of cloud by day as a guide for Israel is accepted by Paul as historical in 1 Cor. 10:1; that the manna came down from heaven is believed to have occurred as can be seen from John

6:31-32, 49, 58; 1 Cor. 10:3. Paul stated that water came forth from the rock when struck by Moses' rod (1 Cor. 10:4). That Moses had to wear a veil over his face because of the fading glory shows that Paul accepted the miraculous account of the shining face of Moses resulting from the latter's having been in the presence of God. The punishment of Korah and his associates is accepted by Jude (v. 11). The budding of Aaron's rod (Ex. 17:2, 4, 10) is recorded by the author of Hebrews as an event that occurred (Heb. 9:4). The episode of the erection of the serpent of brass with resultant healing for those who looked upon it is the basis for the statement in John 3:14-15: "As Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the desert, in the same way the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life." The miracle of the widow of Zarephath's son is alluded to in Heb. 11:35. The miraculous healing of Naaman by Elisha is accepted by Christ according to Luke 4:27. Christ refers to the swallowing of the prophet Jonah by a fish in His rebuke of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees who demanded a miracle.

Thus in various N. T. books a number of O. T. miracles are alluded to and their occurrence is not questioned. Yet form-critical scholarship has rejected them, a fact which would place the New Testament in opposition to the rejection of miracles as is done by critical form criticism.

XVI. Implications of Form Criticism for Messianic and Biblical Prophecy

One of the implications of form criticism for the interpretation of the Psalter is to rule out Messianic prophecy. Psalms 2, 8, 16, 40, 45, 69, 110, and 118, quoted in part or totally as Messianic, have been removed from this category by the new psalm classifications adopted by form criticism. The result has been to eliminate Messianic prophecies from the Psalter, a position not held by Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, Stöckhardt, Theodore Graebner, William Arndt, Walter A. Maier, P. E. Kretzmann, and also until recently by Lutheran interpreters outside The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod.

The conclusion of form-critical studies in the area of the psalms also means the rejection of the superscriptions of the psalms as containing reliable data. Statements about authorship and circumstance of compositions must be repudiated as they conflict with the conclusions of form criticism. The N. T. ascribes at least two psalms to David, 2 and 110, an ascription which at least favors the possibility that the psalms have titles that reflect correct information about the authorship of other psalms ascribed to David, Moses, Solomon, the sons of Korah, Ethan, and Heman. The form-critical conclusions of Gunkel, Westermann, Weiser, Mowinkel, Schmidt, Leslie, and others invalidate the data contained in the psalm titles relative to authorship and occasion for origin. Thus the psalm titles, always the opening verse in the Hebrew text, cannot be a part of the original psalm.

The contributions made by David toward the Hebrew cultus as described in 1 Chronicles are seriously questioned by form criticism. By whom and when a psalm was written have important implications for Psalter interpretation as may be seen from the manner in which the psalms are interpreted by the form critics versus the school of interpretation that has been unconvinced of the hermeneutics of the form-critical school. Bernhardt has pointed out the uncertainty that characterizes the work of the form critics in their classification of the various classes of psalms in the Psalter. He has given a number of examples of experts classifying

the same psalm differently, thus raising the question of the objectivity and reliability of the criteria employed to assign a given psalm to a certain *Gattung*.⁶⁵

Since form critics operate with the same presupposition that negative higher criticism has regarding the supernatural, predictive prophecy has been ruled out. This clearly results in the rejection of the position that many events in the life of Christ were foretold by the O. T. prophets. Form critics are at one with the higher critics in ruling out specific Messianic prophecies in the literature of the O. T., not only in the Psalter, as pointed out in the beginning of this section, but also in other parts of O. T. literature.

XVII. Implications of Form Criticism for the Doctrine of the Inspiration of the Bible, the Concept of Heilsgeschichte, and the Doctrine of Revelation

Muilenburg believes that form criticism has had some extremely salutary effects on Biblical studies. He claims (1) that form criticism has breathed new life into Biblical studies; (2) that it has called attention to the incomparable literary elevation of Israel's literature in the ancient world; (3) that it has given the modern student techniques to penetrate to the heart of the passage; and (4) that it has paved the way for a better understanding of the worship of Israel.⁶⁶

It cannot be denied that, as a result of the theories formulated by form critics, scholars of all religious persuasions have been forced to examine every facet of O. T. literature. The emphasis on a comparison of O. T. literary genres with those of the ancient Near East has led to a better understanding of the historical background of O. T. literature. A positive contribution that can be ascribed to form criticism has been to show the superiority of many episodes of the O. T. when compared with similar ones in the literatures of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Asia Minor. Another result of the emphasis of form criticism is that the necessity of distinguishing between different literary genres will no longer be ignored, as was often done in the past.

However, when the presuppositions and conclusions of form criticism are evaluated in terms of doctrinal and isagogical positions expressed by The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod as set forth in various synodical decisions at its conventions at Houston (1953), St. Paul (1956), San Francisco (1959), Cleveland (1962), Detroit (1965), and New York (1967), then some serious problems arise regarding the use of form criticism. One of the implications of form criticism in the O. T. is that of distinguishing between the Word of God and the word of man, especially in the prophetic writings. If a "thus says the Lord" is needed as a part of a Biblical writing, what does one do with the Psalter and the wisdom literature, books and portions of the O. T. that do not contain any statements to the effect that they are a *dabhar* or *neum Yahweh*? The N. T. frequently quotes passages from the Psalter and Proverbs as Holy Scripture, the Word of God.

The results of form criticism present great difficulties for the position taken by The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod on inerrancy. Like higher criticism, form criticism operates with the conclusions that the O. T. Scriptures contain not only inaccuracies and errors but outright contradictions. Different cultic centers are supposed to have held traditions about Israel's past history that are flatly contradictory. A reliable O. T. Scripture has become an impossibility, according to form criticism, and its trustworthiness has been seriously impugned. Furthermore, unless the ordinary lay reader has the expert guidance of form critics, he is un-

able to understand properly much of the O. T. Scriptures, especially since miracles are rejected or reinterpreted and historical events are based not on factual occurrences but, according to the form critic, are often simply the creation of the *Heilsgeschichte*.

Form criticism has espoused a concept of *Heilsgeschichte* different from that of the N. T. or that which is found in the Lutheran Confessions. Ever since man's fall into sin (Gen. 3) there has been available to mankind only one plan of salvation. Law and Gospel were employed by Yahweh from the very beginning of man's fall in history. *Heilsgeschichte* as properly understood centered in the promise of a Redeemer, whose coming was delineated in the O. T. ever more clearly and fully as centuries passed since the giving of the protevangelium. A proper understanding of *Heilsgeschichte* is associated with the history of Abraham and his descendants. It was to them as St. Paul wrote: "They are God's chosen people; He made them His sons and shared His glory with them; he made His covenants with them and gave them the Law; they have the true worship; *they have received God's promises*; they are descended from the patriarchs, and Christ as a human being belongs to their race" (Rom. 9:4-5 TEV). Of the Gospel Paul states in the opening verse of Romans: "The Good News was promised long ago by God through His prophets and written in the Holy Scriptures [i. e., the Old Testament]. It is about His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: as to His humanity, He was born a descendant of David." At Rome, Luke relates that Paul "tried to convince them about Jesus by quoting from the Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets. Some of them were convinced by his words, but others would not believe." (Acts 28:23-24). Christ was the heart of the true *Heilsgeschichte* of the Old Testament. Form criticism does not accept the true concept of Old Testament Messianicity. The Formula of Concord, Article V, is based on this concept of *Heilsgeschichte*, which is different from that proposed by form criticism:

Since the beginning of the world these two proclamations have continually been set forth side by side in the church of God with the proper distinction. The descendants of the holy patriarchs, like the patriarchs themselves, constantly reminded themselves not only how man in the beginning was created righteous and holy by God and through the deceit of the serpent transgressed God's laws, became a sinner, corrupted himself and all his descendants, and plunged them into death and eternal damnation, but also revived their courage and comforted themselves with the proclamation of the woman's seed, who would bruise the serpent's head; likewise, of the seed of Abraham, by whom all nations should be blessed; likewise, of David's son, who should restore the kingdom of Israel and be a light to the nations, "who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities and with whose stripes we are healed."⁶⁷

The method of literary analysis that had obtained during the 19th and early 20th centuries was hostile to the traditional doctrine of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, but at least it did not challenge the doctrine to the extent that form criticism has done. Thus Woudstra observes: "Following the literary-historical method one may or may not adhere to the doctrine of inspiration. At least one may adhere to some form of that doctrine without directly coming into conflict with this method of study."⁶⁸ Such, however, is no longer the case with the employment of form criticism. By the substitution of the idea of influence that oral tradition is alleged to have exercised on the origin and composition of the Scriptures, emphasis has been placed on sociological processes which controlled, as it were, the form as well as the contents of the tradition.

If the presuppositions of form criticism and the concomitant conclusions are valid, then so far as the doctrine of inspiration is concerned, a great deal of material has been determined before the Old Testament's inscription. How does one then harmonize the truth that the O. T. was written by Moses and the prophets? At best the process is a social one in which many individuals have contributed a part in the process from its inception through numerous stages till the final product resulted in the written documents. The Old and New Testaments know nothing of a phenomenon called "social inspiration." To quote Woudstra:

To put things differently, if communal beliefs are as decisive in the shaping of the traditions as form criticism asserts, is there any point where these beliefs began to assume the form of divine revelation? Is not the interpreter's task completed when he has explained what used to be believed, whether this be *during* the tradition-process or at *the end* of it. Can a real doctrine of inspiration emerge from a form critical method of interpretation?⁶⁹

It is correctly held that revelation preceded inspiration. There are many passages that depict Yahweh appearing and communicating with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, various judges, Eli and Samuel, David and other O. T. believers. Form criticism has questioned the historicity of many of these Biblical characters; in other instances the content of the revelations reported in Scripture has been rejected by form criticism. Just as it has undermined the Biblical doctrine of inspiration, form criticism has also rejected Biblical materials the reader would use to set forth a Biblical doctrine of revelation.

XVIII. Conclusion

Before the advent of form criticism it was recognized by critical scholars that literary criticism with its many documents was extremely confusing to the average Biblical student. A great deal of ingenuity on the part of the student was required to keep the sources apart and to understand what happened according to the documentary hypothesis. But now that the student must operate with a pre-history for each document and trace the changes which the oral tradition underwent, how can the average Bible student determine the meaning of a text according to a hermeneutical methodology that is so complex?

When the apostle Paul preached in Berea, the Jewish believers are said to have studied the Scriptures (Old Testament) to see if what Paul preached was really true (Acts 17:11). As a result of their study many of the Bereans believed. However, the interpretation of the Old Testament has come today to be an extremely complicated process. Thus Otto Kaiser in *Exegetical Method* writes:

Every evaluation of an Old Testament text for the reconstruction of the history of Israel remains *amateurish* [writer's italics] unless the text is examined beforehand from the standpoints of literary criticism, form criticism, and tradition criticism. The mere accumulation of a vast number of parallels from the history of religion and culture cannot release one from the historian's obligation to subject his sources to criticism in the senses just mentioned.⁷⁰

With literary criticism, form criticism, and tradition criticism as required hermeneutical procedures, how can the average lay reader, yes, even the average pastor, be able to understand correctly the Old Testament Scriptures? The Protestant Reformation restored the *open Bible* to the laity. Now as the result of 200 years of so-called scholarly development in the Biblical field with its emphasis on the three different types of criticism, including that of form criticism, the Bible

has again become a *closed* book for the laity and for most of the average clergymen. How can we accept the psalmist's statement: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a guide unto my path" when the interpretation of Scripture has been made so difficult of comprehension and involved?

NOTES

1. Harper & Brothers, New York, 1941, pp. 48—49.
2. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1963, p. 243 n.
3. The 3d edition, Columbia University Press, New York, 1962. A number of the writings of Hermann Gunkel are listed in the select bibliography. Emil Kraepling, *The Old Testament Since the Reformation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), does not mention Gunkel and has one reference to form criticism, p. 218.
4. The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York City, and McGraw Hill Book Company, 1966. 267 pages.
5. "Modern Issues in Biblical Studies," *The Expository Times*, LXXI (May 1960), 229—33.
6. K. Grobel, "Form Criticism," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. G. A. Buttrick (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), Vol. E—J, p. 320.
7. Floyd V. Filson, "Form Criticism," *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Lefferts A. Loetscher, editor-in-chief (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955), I, 436.
8. Edgar Krentz, *Biblical Studies Today* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 32.
9. In this section and in those showing the historical development of form criticism as applied to various portions of Old Testament literature, the author consulted and used especially the following: Herbert H. Hahn, *The Old Testament in Modern Research. With a Survey of Recent Literature* by Horace D. Hummel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 119 to 156; 280—97; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart* (Neukirchen: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1956), pp. 309—444; A. Robert, "The Literary Genres," in *Guide to the Bible*, by A. Robert and A. Tricot, rev. and enl. edition (Paris-Tournai-Rome-New York, 1963), vol. I, pp. 476—515; Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 1—154; Sellin-Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, trans. David Green (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), pp. 51—101.
10. L. Alonzo Schökel, "Literary Genres, Biblical," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 8, 805.
11. Muilenburg, "Modern Issues in Biblical Studies," p. 229.
12. Schökel, p. 807.
13. Hahn, p. 124.
14. Hermann Gunkel, *Die Genesis* (1901), as quoted by Hahn, p. 124.
15. Gunkel, *Die Genesis* (1901), p. x, as cited by Hahn, p. 125. The writer has had difficulty finding these quotations in the 6th edition of Gunkel's *Genesis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1964).
16. Hahn, p. 130.
17. Cf. the introduction by James Muilenburg in Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Study*, trans. Thomas M. Horner (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. iii—ix.
18. Schökel, p. 805.
19. James Muilenburg, "Old Testament Prophecy," *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), 477—78.
20. D. J. McCarthy, "Prophetism," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11, p. 870.
21. Bruce Vawter, *Introduction to the Prophetic Books* (Collegeville, Minn., 1965), p. 5.
22. Muilenburg, "Old Testament Prophecy," p. 478.
23. Wilfred J. Harrington, *Record of the Promise: The Old Testament* (Chicago: Prior Press, 1965), p. 178.
24. Muilenburg, "Old Testament Prophecy," p. 478.

25. Harrington, p. 179.
26. Hahn, p. 135.
27. Cf. Eduard Nielsen, *Oral Tradition* (Chicago: Alec R. Allenson, 1954); D. R. Ap-Thomas, "Oral Tradition," *James Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 713.
28. Hahn, p. 137.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
30. On the wisdom literature cf. John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 929—31; Robert Gordis, "Wisdom Literature," *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, II, 1177—78.
31. Schökel, p. 805.
32. A. Yonick, "Covenant," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, p. 402; Krentz, pp. 34—5.
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* * * * *

RESPONSES

. . . The paper demonstrates that the premises and procedures of the form critics are in conflict with the traditional positions of our Synod. Do we now reaffirm our old-time anathemas? Or do we dig ourselves out of and relocate some of our entrenched positions? If we modify our former denunciations, if we legitimate certain critical premises and procedures, how do we (pardon the atrocious pun) break and "brake" the news to our congregations? If we are changing our positions, we must candidly admit this. It seems to me that we have already done the former but are not doing the latter. I further believe that in the exhilaration of a purloined freedom some of the brethren have on occasion made drastic statements about, e. g., the value of the historical method, doing a "geology" of the text, etc. Here we need to "brake" the news that there is something good in form criticism after all. . . .

Now there are some specific questions I should like to address to Surburg.

If "not a single miracle in the O. T. has not been explained away by critical scholars" (p. 109), is this proper use, abuse, or inevitable development? Are there form critics who explain away some miracles but retain others? If so, on what principles? Are these principles legitimate or inconsistent?

I miss, but would much appreciate, a more systematic statement of Surburg's understanding of literary genres and their employment as a tool in Biblical interpretation. Sometimes I get the impression that nonliteral genres are considered to be per se and necessarily unreliable. We read: "The result of form criticism is that very little can be accepted as reliable and dependable in the Book of Genesis" (p. 110). This judgment seems to have shed the qualification included on p. 109: "Large portions of the Old Testament, once considered to belong to the genre of historical writing, have now been removed from consideration as setting forth reliable data *from a historical point of view*" (my emphasis). If form criticism leaves very little in the book of Genesis as "reliable and dependable," would this not mean that nothing is left but a theologically bleak wasteland? And yet the homiletical studies and sermons treating the first chapters of Genesis as something other than literal narrative cannot, so far as I am acquainted with them, be characterized as wasteland. I should appreciate something more detailed and probing at this point.

Surburg has demonstrated to my abundant satisfaction that the form critics do dismantle much of the O. T. Is it then true, as some have alleged, that our negative attitude toward the critics can change because the critics have changed? Not only does the paper argue: "A reliable O. T. Scripture has become an impossibility, according to form criticism, and its trustworthiness has been seriously impugned" (p. 114), but it is sug-

gested that the new critics are actually worse than the old. "The method of literary analysis that had obtained during the 19th and early 20th centuries was hostile to the traditional doctrine of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, but at least it did not challenge the doctrine to the extent that form criticism has done" (p. 115) . . .

Another point causes me some difficulty. Is it always evident as the paper implies that a N. T. reference to an O. T. narrative inevitably canonizes that O. T. narrative as literal history (e. g., references to Jonah)? Is there any parallel to the following homiletical approach? In a sermon on 1 Peter 2:18-25 Walter Luethi links the slaves at the beginning of the pericope with the Shepherd and Guardian in verse 25. Interestingly, he follows this procedure in defiance of the critics who say of v. 25: "Von den Sklaven ist hier nicht mehr die Rede" (Martin Doerne, *Die Alten Episteln* [Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1967], p. 119). . . . Taking the text as it stands, Luethi gives an eloquent description of the worth of the slave in view of the fact that he too has a Good Shepherd interested in his soul, so that he is more than skin and bones with feet to run errands and hands to do work for a human master. And then Luethi goes on to note how moving for slaves must have been the humble manner of our Lord's incarnation. "Als Gott in Christus Mensch wurde, stieg er nicht oben herein, nicht durchs Kamin; Gott landet nicht auf dem Dach der Menschheit; nein, Gott steigt unten ein, im Parterre, im Southerrain menschlicher Existenz: Gott nimmt Knechtsgestalt an" (*Basler Predigten* [May 1968], pp. 8—9.) Now, just suppose that these graphic words suggest an audacious, perhaps outlandish, little addition to the preacher, and as he plagiarizes, he modifies for the sake of the children and to satisfy his own perverse impulses and says that in the incarnation God did not come in spectacular fashion like Santa Claus, who lands on the roof with his sleigh and reindeer, climbs down the chimney, etc., but rather God came inconspicuously and entered human existence at the ground level or even the basement level. Would the unqualified reference to Santa Claus mean that the preacher accepted Santa literally? Without a parenthetical disclaimer, do such comparisons and references always stamp both sides of the comparison as equally literal or nonliteral? . . .

* * *

This reviewer was especially struck by the repeated assertion that form criticism has been subversive of simple confidence in the reliability and credibility of the O. T. documents. It is evident that "reliable and dependable" are here measured against a model of historical accuracy that is bound to a rigid correspondence theory of truth. Now although it is manifest that form criticism seriously challenges such a model for many portions of the O. T., it is surely debatable whether form criticism is itself the villain in the piece or whether it has not lent methodological dignity to what for many modern men is a prior and necessary scepticism.

It simply is not so that the "historicity, factualness, and the 'happenedness' of many events . . . were accepted as historical before the advent of form criticism" (p. 112). By many they were; and by many of these they still are, perhaps because of an a priori commitment to a rationalistic doctrine of verbal inspiration. But the method — if one may take a confessional stance — need not be subversive. Indeed, it may be positively supportive of a faith that has grown weary of baseless assertions. The invitation to join the confessing community as it elaborates its faith by a rehearsal and refinement of its traditions may be exhilarating to one whose view of inspired authorship is not limited to the final moment of inscription and whose view of historical truth is not confined to a concept of rigid and undifferentiated correspondence between event and report.

* * *

The writer drew on his wide acquaintance with and penetrating understanding of the pertinent literature. The result was a lucid sketch of form criticism and its im-

plications. The conclusion drawn is valid: A consistent application of this approach to the O. T. clashes with the claims that the Scriptures make for themselves.

* * *

This painstaking and wide-ranging critique of form criticism would be more effective and more helpful if its strictures were more clearly defined and differentiated. While I share the author's skepticism regarding this kind of literary phrenology, I feel compelled to ask such questions as:

Is the alternative of "straight history" or "unhistorical" altogether fair? Are there not other in-between possibilities, such as "stylized," "poetically-theologically narrated" history?

Does the question of the historicity of books such as Esther and Jonah lie on the same level as that of the Pentateuch or the Former Prophets?

Is the skepticism concerning the superscriptions of the psalms confined to form-critical study? Did it originate with the form critics?

Is the rejection of the miracle given with the form-critical approach essential to it, or is it a part of a more pervasive rationalism in Biblical studies?

* * *

In the quotations from Grobel, Filson, and Krentz (p. 84) Surburg provides three clear, concordant, and objective definitions of form criticism as a method of dealing with literary material which may be assumed to have origins, at least partly, in earlier oral stages of a people's tradition. Whether there are conceivably valid reasons for making such an assumption regarding a given body of literature, or what such conceivably valid reasons might be, he does not indicate. From his comments about some positive results of this method as applied to the Old Testament (p. 114), however, it does appear that he concedes, albeit reluctantly, the possibility of such reasons and the consequent assumption that at least some Biblical materials had a pre-literary stage.

In view of this, it seems disappointing that he has chosen to concentrate his assessment of the technique almost entirely on what he regards as unacceptable conclusions reached by individual practitioners of the methodology but gives no significant attention to the question of principle: whether any aspects at all of the form-critical method or any nonheretical conclusions that have been reached by means of it have actual objective merit or validity or even a presumptive claim to our serious consideration as responsible interpreters of Scripture.

The essay makes quite clear that Surburg's judgment of form criticism as a hermeneutical procedure is basically negative. But at no point does it become clear what, if any, *essential* elements of the methodology should be regarded as in themselves a violation of the devout Christian's attitude toward Scripture or of his approach to its interpretation.

Surburg's warnings about particular conclusions, as also his demonstration of a certain pattern of affinity between unbelief and critical methodology, are not to be disregarded. But I cannot see that he has established any necessary or inevitable causal relation between form criticism itself and a denial of either the Gospel or the authority of Holy Scripture.

Limitations of space preclude any extensive discussion, and I must therefore confine my comments to a few selected items as sample illustrations of the general critique just mentioned.

The first paragraph on page 93 describes what Surburg apparently regards as an unacceptable view: "That the prophetic books as they are in the Bible are the products of accumulation and growth" (cp. also pp. 115 f.). If indeed this is unacceptable, whether on doctrinal or on scholarly grounds, the reader should be given the reason for this negative judgment. If, however, in principle it is a view that may be entertained, the

reader should be told that the essayist grants this. In any case, the idea of accumulation and growth in the process by which Biblical books reached their final canonical form did not originate with form criticism. Nor has it been unknown in our own circles. In 1919 August Pieper wrote in his commentary on Isaiah:

To be sure, I do not hold that the mode and manner in which the New Testament asserts the authorship of Isaiah excludes the acceptance of earlier or even alien material, not even if this should have been added only later by others. . . . I believe there are post-Mosaic materials in the Pentateuch, just as there are some pre-Mosaic materials. . . . Thus I regard it as very possible that in Isaiah we have not only textual corruptions here and there, but also elements that come from other hands, whether these persons belonged to the school of Isaiah — as Delitzsch, Bredenkamp, and Klostermann assumed — or whether they did not. . . . I regard it as possible that chapters 36—39 were introduced by another hand, that here and there the text underwent redaction by later persons, and that these added this or that item. But along with this, and at the same time, I have the conviction that if this is so, then it took place according to God's will and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through called and inspired persons, and that to the book as a whole the Lord's statement applies: "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Nevertheless, I consider the entire Isaiah criticism from Doederlein on to Duhm and Cheyne . . . to be as huge a scholarly swindle as the Pentateuch criticism. Certainly, if someone would here give us compelling scholarly proofs, what rational man would not submit to them? But where are they? (*Jesaias II* [Milwaukee, 1919], pp. XXVI—XXVII)

Similarly, the opinion is not new among us that in some cases "it is impossible to find a true overall plan in the prophetic books themselves according to any internal links between the literary or historical context" (p. 93). Luther, for instance, had the following to say on just this point.

What the prophet [Isaiah] has been treating so far [chapters 1—12] pertains properly to the Jewish people. For he has been speaking about the present kingdom of the Jews and the future kingdom of Christ. But we shall not be out of line if at this point we begin the second book. For the prophet passes over the Jews and prophesies future devastation on the neighboring nations. The sequence of history certainly produces an error here, because he is prophesying under Ahaz against Babylon, whereas the monarchy was not at that time under the Babylonians, but was carried off sometime later by the Assyrians. My opinion is this: Since it is very likely that these oracles were not published by the prophet but taken up by scribes, they did not observe any historical sequence. Thus Jeremiah's prophecy appears to have been taken up by others and in that case a scribe is also named. The Psalter too was put together this way, so that there is no order to the psalms. Therefore, whether we regard this prophecy as having been published by the prophet himself or by scribes, it is certain that by way of anticipation he recounts matters which belong to Hezekiah's time as being in the time of Ahaz. The same thing was done also by other prophets. Thus in the 12th chapter of Jeremiah matters are related which ought to have been reserved for the 25th chapter. So here too, by way of anticipation, events are narrated which according to historical sequence ought to have been told after the 40th chapter. (*WA* 25, 138)

Surburg is dismayed — perhaps rightly — over what he regards as the form critics' tendency toward an all-too-ready discounting of the historicity of certain Old Testament narratives. As part of his counterargument he declares: "The New Testament also accepted events that have traditionally been considered miraculous or supernatural" (p. 112). But does not this kind of argument run the risk of proving too much? For example, he refers in this connection to 1 Cor. 10:4 as evidence that Paul "accepted" the historicity of water coming from the rock smitten by Moses' rod; but remarkably he has nothing whatever to say of Paul's apparent "acceptance" in that very same verse of the midrashic tradition that this wilderness rock followed the Israelites in their journeys!

He charges (p. 113) that "one of the implications of form criticism for the interpretation of the Psalter is to rule out Messianic prophecy" and refers particularly to Psalms 2, 8, 16, 40, 45, 69, 110, and 118. Unless the concepts "Messianic" and

"prophecy" are understood in the narrowest possible sense, this surely is an unwarranted overstatement, as a quick glance at Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1962) will show (see especially pages 111, 116, 145, 178, 365, 493, 692 f., and 728 f.). Cp. also Claus Westermann, *The Praise of God in the Psalms* (Richmond, 1965), pages 161—162.

On the same page he objects that Weiser, among others, invalidates "the data contained in the psalm titles relative to authorship and occasion for origin." But does he thereby wish to maintain the canonical character of the superscriptions of the psalms as a matter *de fide*?

On page 114 he calls form criticism into question on the grounds that some of its practitioners have reached conclusions which he feels are at variance with "doctrinal and isagogical positions expressed by The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod as set forth in various synodical decisions at its conventions." Apart from the fact that the concepts "doctrine" and "isagogics" must certainly be differentiated more carefully, one is also compelled to ask whether he means to imply that doctrinal or isagogical positions have dogmatic or confessional binding force simply by virtue of having been set forth in synodical resolutions. Pertinent here is the document adopted by the CTCR, "A Review of the Question, 'What Is a Doctrine?'"

On page 114 Surburg holds form criticism (along with higher criticism) responsible for the conclusion "that the O. T. Scriptures contain not only inaccuracies and errors but outright contradictions." This is hardly a just charge. If such an assertion regarding the O. T. Scriptures is made, it is not on the basis of either *form-critical* or *higher-critical* methodology but rather on the evidential basis of the Scriptural texts themselves, with which unfortunately the essayist does not himself deal directly. By way of random example one may mention discrepant (contradictory?) statistics in parallel accounts (cp. 2 Sam. 24:9 and 1 Chron. 21:5; Ezra 2 and Neh. 7); or discrepant accounts of the same event (cp. Deut. 10:1-15 and Ex. 37:1-9); or even apparent theological contradictions (cp. Ezek. 20:25 f.; Jer. 7:31; Lev. 18:21). Unedifying as it surely is to call attention to these facts, they remain the hard facts presented by the actual Biblical texts themselves and are not a construct of the form critic's imagination or anyone else's. By no means should this be understood as impugning the absolute truthfulness of God's Word; it is only to remind us that our responsibility as hearers of God's Word is to hear and take to heart nothing more and nothing less than that infallibly truthful message with which God addresses us through precisely these texts in their full context as well as in their ineluctable discrepancies.

CHAPTER VI

Studies in Progress

THE HERMENEUTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF APOLOGY IV

ROBERT W. BERTRAM

(The projected study on this subject will run to five or six chapters, more than half of which are already completed. What follows is not a chapter-by-chapter outline but only a highlighting of some of the study's findings so far.)

The Fourth Article of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession may yield help for Biblical interpretation today. But it can do so only when we heed how that article's own Biblical interpretations stick to the specific theological issue at hand, justification solely by faith, or to put the issue as a question: How to "commend works without losing the promise." In other words, it is not enough to look merely for the general literary procedures in Melanchthon's exegesis (like his interpreting passages in their own context or according to their grammatical-historical meaning), which for the most part were by then the common stock of northern European humanism and by now have virtually become truisms. But justification entirely by faith, together with what this means for interpreting Scripture, was at that time hardly a truism. Nor is it now. But that already has hermeneutical significance. For then it is impossible to ask how Scripture is to be interpreted without constantly asking how men are to be saved. Biblical hermeneutics is at no point separable from Biblical soteriology.

The hermeneutical situation of Apology IV contains not just the two components of a Bible and an interpreter but at least a third component as well: the interpreter's critics — in this case the Roman Confutatores. Yet in concrete fact isn't that the hermeneutical situation still today? The interpreter's task is to cope not only with the text but with the text in the face of his own contemporary "accusers" (*adversarii*), who accuse on the basis of a contrary Biblical interpretation of their own. It is noteworthy that in the case of Apology IV the opposition was coming from the theological "right," and the Reformers were here being accused of innovating and of betraying the heritage of the past — worst of all, the Scriptures. At other times during the Reformation the opposition came from the theological "left." But even then the opponents were no less Scripture-quoting than the Roman Confutatores were.

But why did a Biblical interpreter like Melanchthon have to take his opponents so seriously as all that? Why not simply ignore them? Why dignify their criticism as if it were itself an essential ingredient in his own exegesis? Answer: Because these critics, for one thing, had had a great deal to do with formulating the question before the house, defining the very issue. True, one of Melanchthon's monumental achievements in Apology IV is the way he succeeds finally in reformulating the question. Here too is a moral for hermeneutics today: Embattled as the Biblical interpreter may be, he need not supinely accept the question in the legalistic form his critics put it to him but may instead have to restate it until it becomes a question directly about the Gospel. What this demands of the interpreter, however, is that he must then interpret not only Scripture but his opponents as

well — or rather reinterpret them — so as to avoid having his Biblical exegesis dragged down to the subevangelical level of their question.

For Melanchthon, however, there was still another reason for taking his critics seriously: Their criticism had quoted in its own support very formidable evidence from Scripture. This Biblical counter-evidence he could scarcely ignore. On the contrary he subjects it to a most careful cross-examination. His intention is to get down to the bottom, to the "sources" (*fontes*) of his opponents' objections. And these sources of theirs were at least in large part Biblical. In the course of this source analysis Melanchthon does isolate also a non-Biblical source, the critics' *opinio legis*. But even that non-Biblical factor of theirs seems to get some encouragement from Scripture, at least from that motif in Scripture which Melanchthon classifies as *lex*. Though their *opinio* is merely that, an exaggerated opinion, still what it is an exaggeration of is thoroughly Biblical, the Biblical *lex*. They have elevated to a saving truth what, though it is not saving, is still truth. And the *lex* motif in Scripture does on the face of it seem to contradict the evangelical motif, the "promises." That the promises are ours entirely by our faith and independently of our "works of the Law," Scripture does at times seem to deny. Question: Could it be then that there is "bad" Scripture which drives out "good" Scripture? This delicate question, which the Confessors boldly faced (and faced it when even their own critics had not dared to do so) dare not be faced any less boldly by the Biblical interpreter today.

Although Melanchthon finally answers this question — this question of Scripture versus Scripture — with a no, his answer is by no means automatic. One of the most treacherously difficult operations he first has to perform is to distinguish the *lex* motif in Scripture from its *promissio* motif — a distinction his critics saw no need to make, preferring as they did to regard Scripture as a self-evident unity. And what makes Melanchthon's distinguishings more difficult than ever is that as a matter of fact large and important sections of Biblical literature — for example, passages about repentance or about rewards — do indeed combine both *lex* and *promissio* into a most intricate togetherness. The critics saw no need to put asunder what God had joined together.

But neither of course was that Melanchthon's intention. The trouble was that the togetherness which the critics saw in Scripture was not the togetherness which is really there. They misjoined *lex* and *promissio* unbiblically because of that "source" (admittedly Biblical) from which they had taken their start and to which they had erroneously given priority: the *lex*. But you cannot start from just anywhere in Scripture, no matter how true and divine that may be. Unless you start from Scripture's *promissio*, you wind up with a legalistic mishmash which is neither *promissio* nor *lex*.

This is why Melanchthon first had to distinguish these two motifs, the legal and the promissory, in order ultimately to relate them back together the way they belong: internally at odds with one another yet able to coexist effectively in one and the same passage, really in one and the same sinner — provided that sinner takes Christ's victory over the law *sola fide*, entirely on faith. Only in Christ is the Law given its full Biblical due and yet reduced to its Biblical position of subdominance. And the only way to "have" this Biblical Christ — and hence to keep both promise and Law intact in their Biblical togetherness — is by faith, not first by actualizing Him in faith's works. That, that and no other doctrine of Scripture's wholeness

(not even the doctrine of its whole inspiredness, which of course Melancthon's critics likewise believed) is the secret of Scripture's deepest diversity and its ultimate unity. Could anything be more significant hermeneutically than that?

To have the promised Christ altogether by faith is the only way to "use" Him for what He historically was and is: the coming true of sheer merciful promise. Any other way than the *sola fide* is to render Him and His whole history "unnecessary." For what else was that whole long Biblical history, both fore and aft, but the history of God's *promissio* — not only His revealing of it but His making the promise and keeping it, historically — the historic judgments of His *lex* to the contrary notwithstanding? Throughout that Biblical history, as in human experience generally, promises are made to be trusted. Not only does faith need the promise, but as Melancthon adds, the promise also needs faith. This is the only way to benefit from a promise at all and still honor it as the promise it is: by trusting the promissor's own goodness, especially when he is known to have no illusions about ours. To try instead to insure his promise by realizing it on our own is to make his promise needless.

Melancthon's reply to his Roman accusers is that by obscuring the *sola fide* they have let Biblical history (which is nothing if it is not promissory) simply go to waste. In that case it might just as well not have happened. Then Christ has died in vain, and there is no "need" of Him. Here we might interject: Could it be that some exegetes today (including those who speak most glowingly about "faith") require only a minimalist Biblical history because, with a kind of subconscious and perverse honesty, they are living out Melancthon's warning? Having lost the promissory secret of Biblical history (which for Melancthon was the one reason faith "needs" that history), perhaps they have now done the only consistent thing of discounting that history. How ironic that would be!

Melancthon's solution, on the other hand, is not merely to insist that all Biblical history did in fact take place. That much the Roman Confutatores would also have insisted, and still he claimed that for them the history's happening was really quite pointless. No, his solution was rather to recover within that history its basic "need" of having happened at all: Jesus Christ, God's promise kept, who is ours only by faith. Melancthon's sort of interpreter — and Luther was only one of his models, the Biblical writers themselves having set the pace — realigns the Biblical record again and again with what was really going on there: God subduing His *lex* with His *promissio*, so that good works could freely be commanded and "commended without losing the promise."

If here and there in the Biblical record the accent on *promissio* had been "omitted" — conspicuously by the Confutatores and sometimes seemingly at least by the Biblical writers themselves — then that accent needed now to be "added" by the faithful interpreter. Still that "adding" was not a case of making Biblical history over into something it was not, into some allegorizing re-creation by the interpreter's own pious imagination. It was simply a case of having no good evangelical reason for saying *that* a Biblical event happened until it was clear first of all *what* it was that happened. And those Biblical passages which were the most "clear" passages of all, and hence the clearest clues to *what* God was doing throughout, were those which announced that He was justifying the ungodly by faith alone — as He does still.

RECENT ROMAN CATHOLIC THINKING ON THE INSPIRATION AND INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE

H. ARMIN MOELLERING

Why bother? What relevance can the topic have to our own concerns and problems? The RC presents a kind of laboratory opportunity to examine and analyze the process of shifts and changes, the accommodations and adjustments, to the critical-historical approach to the Bible now dominant in the RC. The RC has left behind a position not dissimilar in many respects to our own traditional stand. How did the change come about? What have been the themes of the discussion and debate? What are the observable consequences up to this point? What developments may one reasonably predict for the future? Our own concern may well be seen in terms of a metaphor suggested by the Jesuit scholar Norbert Lohfink: Is the critical-historical method a beast that will always remain an untamable tiger tearing theology to tatters at every opportunity, or an animal that can be domesticated to perform valuable service?

In the attempt to learn from the discussion and experience of the RC, attention will be focused on the following:

I. *A Departure from the Past*

Vatican II's *Constitution on Divine Revelation*; *The Jerusalem Bible*; the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*; *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* — all would be incredible if one were to come directly to them from the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* (1893). Therefore some attention will be given to certain highlights in the historical development of RC thought on inspiration and inerrancy.

II. *Key Current Documents After "Divino Afflante Spiritu" (1943)*

- A. Vatican II
- B. Letter to Cardinal Suhard — 1948
- C. The *Monitum* of 1961
- D. *Instructio de Historica Evangeliorum Veritate* — 1964

It is proposed to examine these documents for background, content, and ramifications.

III. *Some Noteworthy Individual Authors*

- A. Benoit
- B. Rahner
- C. Schökel

Theories and theses, some of which may already have been more casually encountered in the previous sections of the paper, will here be examined in greater depth and in the more graphic setting of the writings of specific RC theologians.

IV. *Illuminative Special Questions*

- A. A Patristic Comparison — St. Augustine, *De Consensu Evangelistarum*

We are not the first to have agonized over some of the basic problems. The past must not be ignored.

B. Inspiration of the Septuagint

This topic may sound remote and irrelevant. However, the RC has discussed the question of the inspiration of the LXX seriously. Attention to the problem affords insight into RC thinking and should clarify our own.

C. *Sensus Plenior*

Is there a deeper meaning in Scripture not clearly intended by the human author but still intended by God? If a *sensus plenior* is in the Bible, how is it to be discovered, and how is the search for deeper meanings to be restrained from deterioration into a fantastic sport?

V. *Concluding Evaluation*

What is the new approach in Biblical studies effecting in the RC? Are Scriptural bases for universal Christian doctrine being corroded? Is the scientific method diverting attention from "existential" exegesis to sterile scholarly investigations? Some remarkable revisions in the interpretation of key Scripture passages have been made. Is acceptance of the historical-critical method to be credited? What is happening to the "kerygma"? Examining the New Catechism ("Dutch Catechism") is one way of trying to find out.

It is a vast and intriguing topic. To keep the study within limits and to rescue it from insufferable superficiality, some curtailment of proposed subtopics may be necessary.

PROPHECY AND FULFILLMENT IN POST-REFORMATION THEOLOGY

(A Presage of Modern Biblical Hermeneutics)

ROBERT PREUS

1. *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of the piece of research is to investigate how the post-Reformers related the Old Testament Scriptures to the New in terms of (a) promise (prophecy) and fulfillment, (b) typology, and (c) application (sometimes called allegory).

To carry out this aim, we will try to get the opinions of the widest possible range of theologians, e. g., Socinians, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Arminians. In this way we will examine (through select representatives) every approach to the question that was made in the 16th and 17th centuries.

It is presently felt that in a study of each approach from left to right (Socinian, Arminian, Calvinist, Lutheran) we will find many of the seeds of present hermeneutics toward the question at issue (i. e., historico-critical method, fundamentalism, and Confessional Lutheran hermeneutics). But our conclusions may not be at all clear-cut.

2. *Material for Study*

The representatives of each of the four approaches are:

Socinianism: Faustus Socinus

Arminianism: Hugo Grotius

Calvinism: John Coccejus, Francis Turretin, Peter Martyr, Gaspar Olevianus, Campegius Ristringa, Jerome Zanchi, Andre Rivet

Lutheranism: Martin Chemnitz, John Gerhard, Giles Hunn, Salomon Glasius, Sebastian Schmid, Abraham Calov

3. *Pericopes to Be Studied*

The pericopes will be chosen to bring out the basic approaches of the theologians under consideration. They will be taken mainly from Matthew and Romans in the New Testament because many commentaries were written on these books and because our hermeneutical core committee is studying rather intensively pericopes from these books.

The pericopes tentatively chosen are:

Matt. 1:23 and Is. 7:14

Matt. 2:17 ff. and Jer. 31:17

Matt. 2:15 and Hos. 11:1

Matt. 8:16-17 and Is. 53:4 (cf. 1 Peter 2:24 et al.)

Matt. 13:35 and Ps. 78:2

Matt. 21:5 and Zech. 9:9

Matt. 27:9 ff. and Zech. 11:12

Rom. 5 (Adam and Christ)

Rom. 4 (Abraham the Father of Believers; cf. John 8 et al.)

1 Cor. 10:1-4 (Jesus the Rock)

4. *Outline of the Project*

Promise and Prophecy (their nature and their relation to revelation, inspiration, etc.)

Promise and Fulfillment (direct word prophecies)

Typology

New Testament Application of the Old Testament (allegory)

Conclusion: Implications of the Findings as they relate to History, Revelation, Inspiration, Inerrancy, and General Lutheran Hermeneutics (*analogia fidei*; Law and Gospel; the Unity of Scripture, the Search for the *Sensus Literalis*, etc.)

5. *Detailed Bibliography*

HISTORY AND HERMENEUTICS

HEINO KADAI

A New Historical Consciousness

A modern writer, Alan Richardson, has claimed that all Biblical theology is historical theology, that is, theological interpretation of history. Perhaps the statement is too broad and not in the idiom of the Lutheran tradition. Nevertheless, it focuses attention on the fact that Biblical theology and historical reality must not be separated irresponsibly. Also, the "new quest for the historical Jesus" calls attention to the starkly historical character of Jesus Christ. History is rapidly becoming the new frontier in terms of which theology is interpreted and understood.

This new consciousness of history is at least partly a reaction to the lack of success experienced by the theologians of the first half of the 20th century in relating history and theology. The failure was particularly obvious in the theology of revelation sponsored by the Swiss theologian Karl Barth and in the existentialist

theology of Rudolf Bultmann, the two men who dominated their era. Barth's efforts to place God and His revelation in the forefront of theological concerns were justly applauded and widely imitated. However, in attempting to expose the folly of making anthropology the proper center of theology, Barth pictured Christ primarily as a revelatory bridge between God's revelation and man's ignorance. Thus the proper distinction between revelation and salvation was blurred.

The post-Barthian and the post-Bultmannian theology is more sensitive to history. The terms revelation and history are frequently coupled together. What has emerged is the judgment that history is indispensable to a theology that claims to be oriented to God's reconciling act in Christ. Some have suspected that behind the new historical consciousness lurks an apologetic theology. There may be some truth to the rumor that the new stance owes a bit to the desire to demonstrate that Christianity can take history seriously and will be able to meet the challenge of historical relativism. Whatever the reasons for the growing interest in the historical aspects of theology, the conclusion is clear that theology, and therefore hermeneutics, henceforth will not be able to bypass the discipline of history.

Some very basic questions must be posed at the outset by the Biblical interpreter. What is a historical fact? Is faith without the so-called historical facts possible? To what extent are historical facts describable and provable? Do historical facts provide proof for faith? Does the apparent relative nature of history impose a dimension of relativity on theology? Is the German *Geschichte-Historie* distinction valid and useful? Are there levels of historical narrative? Should and could one identify such levels in the Biblical record? What place does historicism have in the study of theology? Can the methodology of the historical discipline be applied to Biblical studies? One can extend the list of vital questions without difficulty. The difficulties arise in answering them. This is so not only because the issues touch the very heart of the Christian faith but also because — surprisingly enough — not much work has been done in this area from a Lutheran perspective.

The Historical Framework

It is not always obvious that the meaning and matter of history has a history of its own. An awareness of the vicissitudes in interpreting historical reality will sharpen the Biblical interpreter's sense of history.

The Greek Age of Enlightenment can boast of some remarkable history writing by Herodotus and Thucydides, but it failed to awaken a quality of historical-mindedness in the ancient world. In spite of remarkable methodological advances, the Greeks failed to lay the foundations for the modern meaning of history. For the Greeks history was not a legitimate source of truth. Therefore it is not surprising that their historiography degenerated into a continual rehistoricizing of the myth of Greek superiority.

In sharp contrast, the Hebrew people developed a strong sense of history. They insisted that history was *the* locus of our knowledge of God and man. The Hebrew prophets saw their whole history as a stage on which the righteous judgment of God became manifest. They sensed a historical destiny which was being fulfilled in successive stages of history.

The triumph of the Hebrew-Christian over the classical view made possible the emergence of a modern scientific historiography. Contrary to popular opinion, rationalism, not Christianity, is unhistorical. In the Christian context, and after the manner of the Hebrew prophets, Augustine of Hippo was the first to offer the

classical world a transcendental critique of the myths of the secular historians. In this newly articulated Christian perspective, history was seen as the recruiting ground where men of every age, color, race, and class were enrolled as members of the City of God.

The medieval times contributed to historiography the idea of universal history. For the first time the notion that the world had a single history entered European consciousness. The theological interpretations of the medieval historians invested the secular order with dignity and significance. Their work, however, was particularly strongly influenced by the awareness of the cosmic history, the drama of salvation, which began in heaven and was to be consummated there. With good reason this era has been called the Age of Faith. But a serious flaw plagued the medieval mind. The Christian Middle Ages delighted in a synthesis of science and religion, a coming to terms of philosophy and faith. In this vein it treasured the apparent Biblical corroborations for Greek ideas; it reasoned from nature to God via an *analogia entis*. The suspect idea arose again that nature, not history, was the significant source of knowledge.

The Age of Reason witnessed the beginning of a radical reorientation in the way men think. Thinking scientifically created a new world view and ushered in a new understanding of history as a source of knowledge about the world and men. This development was slow. There were strong antihistorical elements right within Rationalism. Contrary to mathematics and physics, historical knowledge seemed beyond the possibility of adequate verification. Men like the humanist Thomas Hobbes (1588—1679) abandoned history for the new scientific philosophy. Also Gotthold Lessing's (1729—81) remark that incidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason reflects the rationalist depreciation of history. David Hume (1711—76) formulated the rationalist dogma in pure 18th-century form when he insisted that history informs of nothing new or strange in particular. The chief function of history is to discover the constant universal principles of human nature.

In the 19th century, two centuries after he had become aware of his scientific-mindedness, man became historically minded in the modern sense. But even then many thinkers did not sever their roots from 18th-century Rationalism. They failed to see history from the point of view of the participant; they failed to recognize their own ideological presuppositions; they suffered from undue respect for natural sciences. At least partly because of these limitations, positivist history inspired by Auguste Comte (1798—1857) enjoyed popularity. In line with Comte's philosophy, only that in history seemed significant which could be verified by scientific method of the type applicable to the natural sciences. Henry T. Buckle (1821—62) promised a new kind of scientific history that would lay bare the laws of progress. This promise remained unfulfilled and called forth a host of distinguished critics. For example, Karl Popper holds that no historical laws, no universal history, no meaning of history exists. For him history is a stream of purposeless process. Within the framework of this meaning of history it is entirely understandable why Albert Schweitzer (1875—1965) concluded that the Jesus historically known did not matter for our time. In Schweitzer's theology the abiding and eternal in Jesus became divorced from the historical knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth.

Soren Kierkegaard (1813—55) in a remarkable way anticipated the trends of thought of the 20th-century theologians. For him the lack of objective certainty about the Jesus of history was no obstacle to faith. Paul Tillich (1886—1965),

Karl Barth (1886—1968), H. Emil Brunner (1889—1966), and Rudolf Bultmann (b. 1884) felt much the same way. They accepted the scientific validity of positivist notions of history. Finding that such a concept of history left no room for divine revelation, they turned to the sphere of superhistory or an existentialist understanding of historical reality. This in fact proposed a disengagement of theology from history.

Reportedly the present age is radically historical-minded. History is assumed to be the indispensable agent of self-understanding. It has become evident that the historian is involved in history in a way unlike the way the natural scientist relates to his subject. The historian participates in history. This is why concepts like intuition, insight, understanding, projection, imagination, sympathy, empathy, compassion, and involvement have become of much concern for the practicing historian. The path to involvement was established by an international triumvirate, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833—1911) of Germany, Benedetto Croce (1866—1952) of Italy, and R. G. Collingwood (1889—1943) of England. These historians showed with credibility (1) that the "truths" of history cannot be stated once and for all in a manner in which the truths of physical sciences could be formulated; (2) that history always relates to action at the present time; and (3) that the demand for rethinking and rewriting history is most urgent in time of rapid and radical change.

Modern theology, sensing the shortcomings of the Barth-Bultmann era and influenced by the developments in interpreting history, is engaged in a revolt against an exclusive theology of the kerygma. Together with his friends the youthful German systematician Wolfart Pannenberg (b. 1928) published a symposium entitled *Revelation as History*. This theological group argues that revelation comes not merely in and through history but that revelation must be recognized as history. Revelation without history, they insist, is meaningless. Pannenberg's proposals seek to accent the universal historical scope of revelation and are intended to bridge the gap between salvation history and world history. One cannot but wonder, however, whether this school of thought has not learned too much from Hegel's philosophy of history.

New Historical-Mindedness and Current Theology

a. The New Quest

The idea that the Gospels are a kerygmatic witness to the risen Christ rather than biographical reports has found favor with contemporary theologians. The problem of the relation of the historical Jesus to the kerygmatic Christ has become an important topic in current New Testament studies. Has Bultmann removed the earthly life, words, and deeds of Jesus from the context of the kerygma? Many have thought so. From the very beginning Bultmann's ideas devaluating the historical Jesus met resistance. After Ernst Käsemann and Günther Bornkamm led the way, a number of theologians, Ernst Fuchs, Gerhard Ebeling, Hans Conzelmann, Willi Marxsen, Herbert Brown, James Robinson among them, tried to establish more precisely the sort of continuity that exists between the Jesus of history and the kerygma. The New Quest has not lacked in students. Their common concern is to reassert the significance of the Jesus of history for the Christian faith.

b. Old Testament Studies

The idea of history as medium of revelation has found strongest support in the field of Old Testament scholarship. Recently the Old Testament specialists

have exercised uncommon patience in listening to the Biblical record on its own terms before applying the hermeneutical question of contemporary meaning. As a result of the work by Gerhard von Rad and others, the Old Testament has unexpectedly become a new frontier of theology. Does this mean that the Old Testament can become the point of departure for a comprehensive systematic theology of history? It is too early to be certain, but for an answer one would do well to listen to the discussions of Von Rad, Franz Hesse, Friedrich Baumgärtel, Claus Westermann, and Rolf Rendtorff among others.

c. The New Hermeneutic

The new interest in history also relates to the so-called New Hermeneutic. The label has been especially associated with the work of Gerhard Ebeling, Ernst Fuchs, and Heinrich Ott. In fact, Fuchs and Ebeling have succeeded in making the theme of hermeneutic an indispensable auxiliary in a theology of the Word of God. Here the traditional limits of hermeneutics have been extended to include the theory of understanding the movement of the Word of God from the Biblical text to contemporary proclamation. Thus hermeneutic becomes a theory about language and makes understanding through language an event. This movement looks back to the historical Jesus and reaches forward to the world come of age. Here the critical question must be raised as to whether the transculturation of the Word into new words is at all in the realm of the possible.

d. Hope and Eschatology

The most exciting development in modern Protestantism is the discovery of the importance of eschatology. Schweitzer's *Quest* alerted the liberal theologians that the kingdom of God was a reality breaking in from above. Now theologians are beginning to realize that Christian eschatology deals not only with last but also with ultimate things. Jürgen Moltmann's book *Theology of Hope* has contributed significantly in this direction. He has sought to forge a language of hope that corresponds to the Biblical category of promise.

The Task Ahead

Enough has been said to point out that developments in understanding history have influenced theology and particularly contemporary theology. During the last decades The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod theologians and pastors have increasingly been influenced by the problems of the ecumenical Christian church. To the surprise of no one Missouri is now faced with an abundance of theological, particularly hermeneutical questions. In an age of historical-mindedness these questions can be faced better if the concerns of history are probed and discussed. There is clearly a need for historical clarifications. The purposed study hopes to speak to this need. The present plans are to investigate four topics:

I. The Concept of "Involvement" in History

II. An Evaluation of the Past Efforts of Barth and Bultmann in Relating Theology and History

III. A Study and Evaluation of the Newly Proposed Options of Pannenberg and Moltmann

IV. Some Practical Applications to the Hermeneutical Questions Facing Missouri

CHAPTER VII

Evaluation: Analysis and Appraisal

Any attempt to analyze the hermeneutical problem as it confronts the church, particularly The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, runs several kinds of risk, all of which — if succumbed to — result in distortion of the issue. The issue is distorted, for instance, if it is couched in terms of simplistic questions about literalism in interpretation, historical accuracy of Scriptural narrative, the identity of human authors of Biblical books, or the methodology of contemporary scholarship. What appear on the surface to be forthright, specific questions regarding particular points turn out on examination to have wide implications and subsurface complexities, so that an adequate answer cannot be given in just a few words, much less with a bald yes or no. On the other hand the issue is distorted also when it becomes submerged and confounded in tortuous technical discussions of scholarly complexities that tend to evade the real concerns of Christians to whom the Holy Scriptures are rightly precious and inviolable.

While the committee therefore recognizes that the basic hermeneutical questions really cannot be dealt with at the hand of simplistic questions or answers, it has in fact found that the form in which the issue seems to present itself most urgently in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod is in terms of the historical dimension of Biblical revelation. It is at this point that the committee has become aware of both the strongest convergence of opinion in the church as well as the sharpest continuing divergence.

We rejoice in a common commitment to a Word that is embedded in the history of a people and in ultimate disclosure became historically incarnate. We stand together in unqualified submission to that Word in its written form as the canonical Scripture. Without reservation we hear this Word both as the sole authoritative witness to the history of God's redemptive work and no less as His infallible voice addressing us here and now in judgment and in grace.

On the other hand a divergence of opinion arises only when we attempt to describe or define the truthful quality of Scripture's historical dimension with particular reference to contemporary questions of reportorial accuracy and factuality.

If we look for an explanation of the divergent opinions at this point, they appear at first glance to result from two different ways of approaching the question, both of which are theologically legitimate: a deductive approach that begins from the a priori conviction of faith that as Word of God the Holy Scriptures are utterly truthful, and an inductive approach which in reliance on Scripture as sole source and norm of all Christian teaching begins from the actual data of the Biblical texts themselves. The two approaches collide at various points but most obviously in their treatment of apparent discrepancies in Biblical narratives that recount one and the same event.

In the committee's opinion there is nothing to be gained by evading the issue that is posed in this form, although there is reason to doubt that any agreement reached on this score alone would really touch the core of the hermeneutical question as it has always faced the church.

Closer to the heart of the problem is the concern for the "happenedness" of Biblical history. Why is that happenedness the important thing it is? What makes it "matter" if a Biblical narrative is recounting a historically identifiable event or not? What *is* it about the Word and work of God — and what is it *not* — which

demands that a Biblical story have in fact historically occurred? To put it conversely, what makes an "event" a *necessary* event for God's Word and work to be in fact His Word and work? By way of illustration, does Christian faith raise the question of historicity in the same way and on the same grounds regarding both the narrative of the Book of Job and that of our Lord's resurrection? What is finally at stake here "for us men and for our salvation"?

By no means do questions such as these permit us to trivialize the primacy of the Biblical texts themselves in our effort to grasp the full historical dimensions of the Word of God. Rather the committee agrees fully with the following assessment given by one of its members:

The basic hermeneutical issue in our church is raised by the inability of men to submit unreservedly to the tyranny of the texts. This inability manifests itself in many ways both on the "right" and on the "left."

On the "right" (traditional-conservative), for example, this inability is seen in the failure to recognize the allusive, connotative, figurative, poetically truthful character of the human language employed by the Spirit in the proclamation of Law and Gospel, the fact that the *sensus literalis* is, more pervasively than hitherto generally recognized, a *sensus poeticus*.

On the "left" (full stream of contemporary scholarship) the inability to submit to the tyranny of the texts manifests itself, e. g., in the interpreter's entrapment in a conception of history and the historical which is alien to that of the texts themselves and therefore injurious to a sympathetic understanding of the texts.

This leads, e. g., to a failure to recognize the bright nimbus of ultimate futurity in O. T. prophetic utterances, to primitivising exegesis in both Testaments, and to an inability to apprehend fully the organic connection between the two Testaments.

There is still another way of analyzing the problem. The exceptionally strong interest in "hermeneutics" currently expressed in our church is perhaps to be understood as deriving more from concern about the *nature* of Holy Scripture as source and norm of Christian faith than from an interest in the art of interpretation as such. In other words, much of the anxiety that is felt about formal methods and scholarly procedures actually represents a fear that Scripture's intrinsic authority is somehow at stake. This fear is not groundless. But the threat to Biblical authority is one that arises not merely from the ranks of modern scholarship. It is posed whenever and wherever the question of Biblical authority is divorced from the question of the ultimate meaning and purpose of Scripture.

To put it bluntly, we can say that a basic question underlying most if not all of our present hermeneutical discussion is whether or not the article of justification by faith is in fact the key that opens the meaning of all Scripture. If so, the question arises: By what hermeneutical principle is the "key" itself elicited from Scripture? Are we here being driven to sheer subjectivism? Or is it not rather so that our confession that "the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel" requires also the frank acknowledgement of this hermeneutical circle in which the key to Scripture is in fact derived from Scripture itself, which cannot however be understood properly without that key to begin with?

CONCLUSION: LOSS AND GAIN

At this point an assessing backward look is in place. What are our losses, and what are our gains? We should be less than honest if we did not record on

the debit side that ancient occupational disease of committees: some initial fumbling, motion without progress, debate taking time that should have been used for common search and exploration, the impatient desire for answers before we had learned to ask the questions. But it would be ingratitude toward the Spirit (whose presence we surely felt) not to add that the disease was less virulent and ran its course more quickly than is usual in committees.

We have lost some grand illusions. As we look back at our "Prospectus," we are not inclined to be ashamed of it or ready to modify it radically. But now that we have gotten some little way into the foothills of hermeneutics, we see alps on alps arise; we see how high is the peak on which we once set our sights so confidently, how distant the ultimate peak. We know with a new clarity that the hermeneutical problem is in the last analysis simple (as all things profound are) but is not simply analyzable — so many first, second, and hundredth analyses must be made before the "last analysis" is reached. And these prior analyses can be made only in constant, intensive, and affectionate converse with the sacred texts themselves. One can and does occasionally lose confidence and courage, especially when one finds how difficult it is to formulate profitably even preliminary results.

But this loss is at the same time a gain. One learns anew, or grows in, those ancient virtues of scholarship and churchmanship: modesty, patience, openness to the other man, recognition of one's need of the other man. One learns to get out of the embattled stance, to look first for common ground and to capitalize on it, to see in fraternal fisticuffs an opportunity for improving everybody's health rather than a chance for personal victory. The desiderated "health" is of course not a set of good committeemen but a church made up of brothers listening obediently together to the Word of God.

This experience is perhaps a greater gain than the published results of our work. It has happened to only nine men, to be sure; but these men are in the church and at work there — one may see this experience as an inoculation that gets into the bloodstream of the church. The published results will, we trust, be viewed as exploratory shafts for an excavation rather than an uncompleted excavation; we hope they reflect the spirit of the committee's work and will prove useful for the continuation of our hermeneutical task.

Another gain that accompanied our loss of illusions and self-confidence is that we have gained a heightened respect for the work of the past, especially our own Missouri and Lutheran past. As we attempted to formulate our *Vorverständnis* (p. 10), we felt like the farmer who could not remember the age of faithful old Flossie: "We always had that cow"; and we asked ourselves: "Have we always *milked* that cow?" And the health, sanity, and evangelical utility of the basic hermeneutics of our Lutheran Confessions impressed us as a desperately needed fixed point amid the ebb and flow of hermeneutical opinion and the flutter of hermeneutical fads. As we studied Walther's thesis on the interpretation of Scripture, we all realized: These things dare never be forgotten; they remain an indispensable part of the answers we give to the questions of the present.

Whatever the future of the Hermeneutical Core Committee, it seems certain that the chemistry of our moving and changing history will keep the test tubes fuming, bubbling, and occasionally popping in the hermeneutical laboratory. And that laboratory is in the last analysis the church, everybody who hears, reads, marks, learns, and inwardly digests the Word. For the hermeneutical task is cyclical; we proceed from our association with the Word to a summarization of our experience

with the Word and then test that summarization by returning with it to the Word itself. As such the task needs to be both solitary and societary. Societary, because we learn to "comprehend *with all the saints*," and not even the most gifted can or dare go it alone; solitary, because only he who comes with shining countenance from his encounter with the speaking God can speak, however modestly, to saints.

There is some danger in that laboratory but no deathly danger. "God can and will have patience with us so long as we hold to His word," Luther said. The deathly danger is that the laboratory be deserted, that we forget the past and refuse to face the present and the future.