

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

Editorial

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Editorial

OF HERMENEUTICS AND OSTRICHES

THE NUMBER ONE QUESTION confronting most Christian denominations today is the hermeneutical question. A basic hermeneutical question in the minds of many is that of the origin, nature, and purpose of the Scriptures. The debates about inspiration, revelation, and inerrancy indicate this. The fruitfulness of some of the revived emphases in hermeneutics is revealed by Maynard Dorow in the first article in this issue. For example, much of his support for his thesis is derived from the fact that he views the New Testament books as historical documents. Thus he approaches the Scriptures historically. He assumes that the New Testament reports the life of the church as it adjusted to new problems and new challenges in its God-given mission. He concentrates on the historical reports in the New Testament about what was actually happening in the life of the church. Another school of hermeneutics would perhaps have emphasized certain *sedes doctrinae* on the nature of the sacred ministry. A more static conception of the ministry might have been arrived at by the process of deducing certain characteristics from these verses.

Dorow proves his point without raising the question of whether the New Testament passages which he studies are God's revelation or only a witness to God at work in the early church. The validity of his conclusions is in no way affected. He has carried off a skillful reconstruction of the earliest ministry in terms of its function and form. These are some of the basic principles of current Bible study. While he undertook the work to clarify his own thinking about mission strategy in Korea, the implications of his findings are not limited to mission fields.

Runia's article represents a different approach to the theological knowledge explosion which is taking place all over the world. The staff took a calculated risk when it decided to print it in two installments, (see the June 1964 issue for the first article). We realized that many of Runia's comments on Bultmann, Barth, and others were based on early works of these men or in some cases on analyses prepared by others. This didn't bother us particularly. As a matter of fact, we felt it was one of the strengths of the article, for it is precisely these interpretations which are still being cited in pulpit, books, and periodicals. Many are still getting mileage out of a Model-T version of contemporary theology, and a mechanics' handbook for the care and maintenance of this theology is therefore in order.

The risk in printing his article lay in the fact that some readers might be tempted to use it as a road map to travel down the always comfortable road of theological ostrichism. "Bultmann denies the resurrection," some might hear Runia saying, "and so does Barth . . . and Macquarrie . . . and Ogden, and so I condemn them all to the same abyss." This would represent a misuse of the article, for the abundance of footnotes invites the reader to use Runia's article as a handbook to make his own study and analysis.

A television show from time to time features the game "What's the question?" The master of ceremonies has a collection of answers, but the panel must provide the proper questions. This odd approach is one that has to be mastered by theologians. The proper questions must be asked before honest answers can be given. We would go farther and suggest that no answers should be offered until a person has worked hard to develop his own.

H. T. M.