

THE DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL REVIEW

Spring 1969



The Lord's Prayer

(as tentatively proposed for ecumenical use by a committee composed of representatives of the Joint Commission on Worship of the Consultation on Church Union, the Roman Catholic International Committee on English in the Liturgy, and the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship.)

Our Father in Heaven:

Holy be your Name,

Your kingdom come,

Your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us in the time of trial,

and deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, the power,

and the glory forever. Amen.

THE
DUKE
DIVINITY
SCHOOL
REVIEW

Volume 34

Spring 1969

Number 2

Contents

The Lord's Prayer	Inside Front Cover
Introducing Hermeneutic	51
Toward an Old Testament Hermeneutic	53
<i>by Gene M. Tucker</i>	
Authority, Hermeneutic, and Church	67
<i>by D. Moody Smith, Jr.</i>	
Historical Methodology and Biblical Hermeneutic	81
<i>by Charles K. Robinson</i>	
History, Hermeneutics and Homiletics	93
<i>by Thor Hall</i>	
Black and White Together?	113
<i>by Frederick Herzog</i>	
The Dean's Discourse	119
<i>by Robert E. Cushman</i>	
The 1969 Convocation	125
Looks at Books	127

Published three times a year (Winter, Spring, Autumn)
by The Divinity School of Duke University

Postage paid at Durham, North Carolina (27706)

Introducing Hermeneutic

In this issue of the REVIEW we have brought together a collection of articles on the common—if broad—problem of hermeneutic, which in recent years has moved to the center of the theological discussion. Hermeneutic has become a critical issue for the various theological disciplines in part because the term itself has undergone redefinition. The word no longer refers simply to the discipline which reflects upon the theory of exegesis. Some of the original connotations have been recaptured and have provided new approaches to issues important to all theologians, whether they work in the classroom or the parish. Many understand hermeneutic as interpretation itself, or the translation of meaning from one language and culture to another. Or the word is used, perhaps even more broadly, to describe the method of understanding. (Cf. Frederick Herzog's *Understanding God: The Key Issue in Present-Day Protestant Thought* [New York, 1966].)

The issue of hermeneutic then not only raises for the biblical scholar and student both the theological and historical problems of the interpretation of biblical material. It may also open and focus the theological problems of language and understanding, the questions of tradition and authority, issues in historical methodology, and the theological and practical problems of communication, among others. With this rich variety of issues before them the contributors to this issue of the REVIEW have approached the question of hermeneutic from their respective disciplines: Old Testament, New Testament, Philosophical Theology, Homiletics, and Systematic Theology.

The first paper, "Toward an Old Testament Hermeneutic," raises the general questions of the possibility and the point of making sense of the ancient biblical language in our time. It approaches these queries by first sketching the limits within which one may raise the issue of the "authority" of the Bible, and of the Old Testament in particular, moving then to the questions of the nature of biblical interpretation and the place of historical criticism in interpretation. The paper then argues that the Old Testament actually presents itself as hermeneutic or interpretation, thus suggesting a paradigm for the contemporary interpreter.

D. Moody Smith has approached the issue by searching for the loci of authority in the early church and pointing out some of the

ramifications of the New Testament's understanding of authority for hermeneutic. He suggests that the main loci were the kerygma of the cross and resurrection, the tradition of Jesus' words, spirit-inspired prophecy, and the Old Testament scriptures. The need for a distinctly Christian norm, already at work in the actual formation of many New Testament books, led to the eventual establishment of the New Testament canon. Thus the hermeneutical problem must not be separated from the question of authority in the church, for "whoever would come to terms with the New Testament must take account of its intention to speak an authoritative word to the church."

In "Historical Methodology and Biblical Hermeneutic" Charles K. Robinson has raised the questions of the nature and importance of historical knowledge for the man of faith. He argues that on the one hand historical knowledge—as all knowledge and experience—is mediated and interpreted, and on the other hand there is no "mere" interpretation, but always interpretation with some reference. In historiography the reference is "a contextual interconnection of events as involving and involved in human life." He then examines the relation of historical interpretation to biblical hermeneutic, setting out some principles to help clarify the relation between rejection of alleged events and theological significance. He argues that "a reconstruction involving rejection . . . of the event of the life of Jesus of Nazareth would invalidate Christian religion in any of its historic forms," and that indeed, we daily base our actions on interpretations of the past.

Thor Hall argues that the problems presented by history, hermeneutics and homiletics cannot be examined in isolation, but rather the interaction and interdependence between the three disciplines must be emphasized. He next outlines the history of recent developments in the areas of historiography, hermeneutics and homiletics, showing their convergence at crucial points. He then spells out the implications of such developments for homiletics in terms of a set of principles for Christian preaching.

In the last paper Frederick Herzog has presented his definition of hermeneutic as understanding, in particular, the grasping of personhood, and from the perspective of Systematic Theology applied that definition to the problem of "understanding" in the recent crisis at Duke University involving its black students.

Gene M. Tucker

Toward an Old Testament Hermeneutic*

GENE M. TUCKER

Assistant Professor of Old Testament

Do the ancient biblical traditions have any significance in our time, and if so, how can that significance be shown? The issue before us is the one posed by Bultmann: How are we going to make sense out of the biblical language in the modern world? That this is a central and decisive question for biblical studies is obvious. The importance of finding an answer to this question for the sake of Christian preaching is equally obvious. Furthermore, especially in recent years, the question has been recognized as a basic issue for historical and dogmatic theology.

Viewed from the perspective of Old Testament criticism and biblical theology, the issue has several sides which may be put in the form of questions. To the extent that these are questions which I must ask myself, they are personal, existential questions; but they are also more than personal—indeed, they are ultimate questions—in that they have a direct bearing on the possibility of speaking and hearing the Word of God in our time. The questions are: 1. Does the world need the Bible, including the Old Testament? This is the question of the authority of the Bible. 2. Does the world need biblical theologians? This is the central hermeneutical question itself. 3. Does the world need biblical criticism and biblical critics? This is the question of the place of historical critical exegesis within the broader spectrum of biblical interpretation. We shall attempt here to find the appropriate way of raising the issues, and suggest some tentative answers. Finally, we shall turn to the Old Testament itself, where most of these issues already have been raised. The Old Testament confronts us with an answer to the hermeneutical question which, I believe, supports the answers we are able to work out by posing the issues theologically and historically.

All our questions taken together, under the general rubric of the possibility of interpreting the biblical traditions in our time, add up

*This paper was originally presented at Duke Divinity School in a student-sponsored lecture series.

to the broad issue of hermeneutic. At the outset, then, it is necessary to state what we mean by "hermeneutic," or by the phrase "the hermeneutical question." A definition is necessary and useful on the one hand because the traditional definition of the problem of hermeneutics has been called into question in recent times, and on the other hand because it is the new understanding of hermeneutic which has opened up new horizons in biblical interpretation and theology.

Traditionally "hermeneutics"—note the artificial plural—has been the discipline which reflected upon the theory of exegesis. The development of a specific science of hermeneutics since the Renaissance and the Reformation meant the division of biblical interpretation into theory—hermeneutics—and practice—exegesis. This development finally resulted in such a compartmentalization of the various aspects of interpretation that the relationship between biblical studies and theology was distant and obscure. It is not too surprising, then, that by the beginning of this century there was little interest in hermeneutics, removed as it was at least two steps from the biblical text itself.¹

But recently the hermeneutical question has moved to the center of theological and biblical discussion as the problem of hermeneutic. The return to the etymologically correct singular is part of the attempt to grasp the original meanings of hermeneutic (the Greek *herméneia*) and to apply those meanings to the problem of interpreting the biblical tradition. Hermeneutic may refer to something both broader and deeper than reflection on the theory of exegesis. It may mean interpretation itself in the broadest possible sense, including making clear what is unclear, the translation of meaning from one language and culture to another, and commentary upon, e.g., the biblical texts.² Primary here is the understanding of language as the mode of interpretation, and as that which is interpreted. Hermeneutic so conceived seeks to unify the biblical and theological disciplines for the full task of interpreting the Word of God itself. It is this renewed understanding of hermeneutic as interpretation itself which has made it possible for "hermeneutic" to "become coterminous with Christian theology as the statement of the meaning of Scripture for our day."³

1. James M. Robinson, "Hermeneutic Since Barth," *The New Hermeneutic*, James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., eds. (New York, 1964), pp. 7-15.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-7.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

I. The "Authority" of the Old Testament.

Does the world need the Bible? In particular, does it need the Old Testament? This is one way of asking what is usually called the question of the authority of the Bible. Our query opens up the entire issue of the nature of revelation, and therefore is far too broad to be treated comprehensively here, but we must be able at least to state what we mean by the question itself and draw the limits within which an answer might be found. The issue may be narrowed somewhat arbitrarily at the outset by considering—at least for the moment—not whether or not "the world" needs the Old Testament but whether or not the Christian faith needs it.

The proper context for asking this question is the Christian view of revelation through the Word of God. To assert that the Bible—including the Old Testament—is authoritative is to say that the Bible is in some sense the Word of God, that is, through this book Christians have encountered God in a particular way. For reasons which I hope to make clear, I think it is best to talk about the authority of the Bible as ". . . its power to originate and further the coming of the Word of God and faith,"⁴ to use the words of Gerhard Ebeling.

But simply asserting that the Bible is the Word of God, or that the Bible has the power to originate and further the coming of the Word of God and faith does not make it so. This would appear to be especially true with regard to the Old Testament, for from the very beginning to the present day the Christian community has debated the question of the authority of the Old Testament. The uncertainty of the early church about the proper authority of the Old Testament is reflected in its debate about the place of the Old Testament law in the Christian life, and the broader debate has continued down to the present day in various forms, with many from Marcion to Harnack insisting that the Old Testament should be considered in no sense binding upon Christians. And the uncertainty about what to do with the Old Testament is reflected by the very presence of several different historically conditioned canons of the Old Testament in the different Christian churches.

The fact that the Church has, however, overwhelmingly asserted that the Old Testament along with the New is holy Scripture—authoritative, Word of God, written for us—gives us a point of departure. This history of the Bible in the church does not *prove* the

4. Gerhard Ebeling, *Word and Faith*, translated by James W. Leitch (Philadelphia, 1963), p. 427.

authority of the Bible, just as the debate about the status of the Old Testament does disprove its authority. But the history of the Bible in the church does demonstrate the *possibility* that it can be the Word of God. That possibility, then, must be the point of our departure. To pursue that possibility the following points must be kept in view.

1. To assert that the Bible is holy Scripture cannot mean that it is some objective, external and absolute authority which is a criterion or *the* criterion for Christian faith and life. It would clearly be an unbiblical way of viewing the Bible to think of it as the final, complete Word of God, handed down from heaven. The words of the Bible point to the Word of God, above all in Jesus Christ. The Bible of itself, then, is not to be equated with revelation. At most, it is that which makes revelation possible; it is a means for us to experience the Word of God.

Therefore, there is no sense in talking about the Bible as means of revelation except to talk of the Bible read, heard, and proclaimed. It has no meaning, and hence no authority, in and of itself, but only as it encounters men. Words, including the Word of God, must have hearers to be words at all. For these reasons the phrase "the Bible is the Word of God" must be taken to mean that it has the power to originate and further the coming of the Word of God. This conclusion is consistent with the biblical assertion that the revelation of God is a living Word. Hence, one can talk about the Bible as the "source" for theology only in the sense that the Word of God may come to expression in the encounter of the Christian hearer with the words of this particular book, not as a source in the sense of a reference work from which the theologian derives his dogmas.

2. A basic affirmation of the Christian faith to which our ideas about biblical authority must be bound is "the radical historicity of the word of God."⁵ Therefore to speak of the biblical words as "treasures in earthen vessels" is consistent with the central Christian affirmation that the Word of God became flesh. It is our faith in the incarnation of the Word of God, then, which reminds us that the words of the Bible are human words. Therefore it would be idolatry to take them as *more* than symbols. They are human words which point to the reality of God but must not be identified with the reality which they may reveal.

5. Robert W. Funk, "The Hermeneutical Problem and Historical Criticism," *The New Hermeneutic*, James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., eds. (New York, 1964), p. 182.

But neither—if it is indeed our faith that the Word of God became *incarnate*—should they be considered *less* than symbols. And at this point we are confronted by the basic Christian paradox of the incarnation which extends to the entire question of the Word of God. This Word is fully human, and yet at the same time it is the very Word of God. With regard to the question of the Bible, this means that while these are human, historically conditioned words, they may reveal the Ground of history himself, who is not only transcendent beyond but also genuinely immanent in history. So two dangers are present in this paradox: first, that the historical biblical symbols will become idols, that they will replace the reality which they may reveal, and second, that they will be less than symbolic, that they will cease to convey the real presence and living sovereignty of God, becoming meaningless or trivial.

3. The possibility that the Bible may originate and further the coming of the Word of God and of faith exists, further, because these human words are addressed at every point to the question of being: What is “ultimate reality,” the most intensely and enduringly “real being” as relevant to our own reality? They are serious words, which talk about the reality of God and his ways with men. That is, the prophets and the apostles and the historians and the poets of the Bible, by being bold enough to say that God has acted, take us to the point where the question of God’s activity may be asked again and again. They deal with what is absolute in and through all relativities and therefore enable us to do the same. But the possibility that the Bible may further the coming of the Word of God can become an actuality only if we take it seriously. A prior dogmatic commitment to the Bible is not required, or we would be begging the question. All that is required is for the reader or hearer to take seriously the question which the Bible addresses, the question of our own being. It is at this point that our question “Does the Christian faith need the Bible?” may be broadened. In-so-far as men raise and must raise the question of being, the Bible is needed.

4. And now the question of the authority of the Old Testament itself must be raised. To what extent, if at all, can our assertions about the authority of the Bible include the Old Testament? If they do it is because there is a certain kind of unity of the Bible. The New Testament church understood the history of Israel and the words of the Old Testament as preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ. But what link between Old and New enabled them to do this?

One way of talking about the continuity of the Bible is to speak

in terms of the history of traditions. This conception of the relationship of the Old Testament to the New is a major contribution of Gerhard von Rad to biblical theology.⁶ This perspective shows how it was inevitable that the traditions of the Old Testament would be absorbed by the New Testament, which continued and culminated a process which was taking place in Israel's faith. In Israel the old theological traditions were continually reinterpreted in the light of new events, always with an openness to the future. The history of the Old Testament traditions is a history of promise and fulfilment, with each fulfilment opening up new promises. But the Old Testament ends open to the promise of God's new events. The New Testament continues to interpret the old sacred traditions in the light of the new, but now it is the radical new event in Christ. The New Testament was able to use the Old because the latter was already hermeneutically headed in this direction.

But we must look deeper for the underlying basis for this common history of tradition, for the reason why the Old Testament leads to the New, and why the early church needed the scriptures of ancient Israel to respond to the new event in Christ. That basis is to be found in the understanding of revelation which is common to both testaments, the persistent awareness that God's Word is an historical word. This means that God addresses himself to men both in historical events and in words through and to men. Such an awareness has meant that the biblical faith always expressed itself in historical symbols, usually by telling a story. In the Old Testament it is the statement of God's past and future saving acts, and in the New Testament it is the story of Jesus.

But while Old and New Testaments belong together, they are not the same. This is clear enough on historical grounds. The Old Testament arose out of the faith of ancient Israel, just one of the nations of the ancient Near East, while the New Testament arose out of the early Christian church in Roman times. The testaments are written in different languages and their specific content is different. This is equally true on theological grounds. The Old Testament does not "everywhere speak of Christ," as Wilhelm Vischer has said. And even though it has a bearing on the revelation in Christ, it does not everywhere have the same relationship. But this statement applies to all the parts of the Bible, including the New Testament. Not every part has the same relationship to the center.

6. Cf. especially his *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. II, translated by D M. G. Stalker (New York, 1965), pp. 319 ff.

This implies that it is possible, even necessary, to make value judgments about the various words which comprise the Bible, to be discriminating. And this is not a radical statement at all, but it is a point which has been recognized by many, including Luther when he called the book of James "an epistle of straw."

We all indulge in the same practice in various ways. Our concern here is with finding the appropriate means of or standard for making these judgments.

It is possible to make judgments about the validity of religious symbols on theological grounds. First, they must really point to and effectively mediate the presence of what they symbolize. And second, they must include their own *self-criticism*, the mark of their origin in a human milieu which is not only finite and creaturely but also sinful and self-distorted. By these standards, the cross is the central and basic Christian symbol.

All this implies that one cannot use the New Testament itself as the sole yardstick by which to measure the Old, nor even the central Christian symbol, the cross, for that purpose. For the pre-eminent standard of all religious symbolism is the ultimate reality of God—in Christian particularity, the ultimate reality of the self-giving God proclaimed most completely in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But the Old Testament does have special contributions to make toward understanding that reality. Those contributions stem in large measure from the awareness of the Old Testament word as preparation. It was written by and for and to men looking toward a fulfillment, toward the fuller Word of God. And the Old Testament will remain with us to the extent that we still look forward to the full coming of the Word in our lives, in our time and beyond our time, which means tomorrow, and next year, and the day of the Lord.

II. Biblical Theology as Interpretation

We may turn now to the question of hermeneutic itself by asking again: does the world need biblical theologians? I should make it clear at this point that I understand biblical theology as the discipline which seeks to interpret the symbols of the biblical faith. Thus, if we are correct in concluding that the proper way of speaking of the Bible as the Word of God is to talk about the possibility that the Word of God may come to expression through *hearing* the biblical word, biblical theologians, interpreters, are needed. If the Word of

God is to come to life through the bible, the conditions for that life must be provided by the process of interpretation.

The need for interpretation, as well as the basic problem of interpretation, stems from the recognition that the world of the text is different from our world. This includes the awareness that the text at least in one sense belongs to the past, in that it arose in a different time and environment from our own, and that its language is not our language. Since the Renaissance and Reformation, and especially since the rise of historical critical exegesis, this recognition has led to an effort in biblical theology to distinguish between what the Bible said in its own time and what it says in our time. Such a distinction has by now achieved widespread acceptance.

To distinguish in interpretation between what the text said and what it says is both right and wrong. It is right because it recognizes the difference between the text and the interpreter, allowing the Bible to stand over against its reader. It recognizes the fact that the biblical words are historically conditioned, time-bound words, and thereby makes interpretation both necessary and possible. This awareness makes it possible for the interpreter to submit himself to the text, to see it as something which is different from his own subjective thoughts or feelings.

The positive side of this distinction between past and present word is that it shows that interpretation must always mean translation, that is, the search for the appropriate contemporary equivalent to the ancient expression. By translation here we mean something deeper than rendering the Hebrew and Greek words into the correct English equivalents. Translation becomes the attempt to render the proclamation of the Bible itself into contemporary modes of expression which have the same force and power as the original. There are then two poles in interpretation to which the interpreter is bound: The text itself, including its full historical and theological context, and the contemporary situation. One must not think in terms of mastering these two poles, but of being under them, bound by them. No translation—not even just rendering Hebrew into English—is possible unless one is willing and able to listen, and to listen seriously, to both these poles.

But the distinction between what the text said and what the text says now is also wrong. Too often it has led, especially within the biblical disciplines, to a view of the Bible as an object to be mastered and used. And the understanding of exegesis as the discipline which deals only with the historical or past meaning of the text has pro-

duced commentaries filled with little more than trivia, and a kind of biblical scholarship which is concerned only with a description of what once was, with little or no thought about the contemporary relevance or meaning or truth of the text. Biblical criticism which limits its activity to the past meaning of the text has, of course, made possible a kind of interpretation of the Bible, but all too often it has been a superficial translation.

It may be simply that the distinction between the past and present meaning of the text must be retained, but only if the two poles are held together at every stage of interpretation, from that of technical biblical criticism to dogmatic theology.

The most meaningful way to unite the past and present meaning of the Bible is by approaching it with our theological questions. The most important consideration in hermeneutic is posing the questions which are appropriate to the subject matter. Since the Bible is at every point religious literature, the appropriate questions are theological ones. One cannot even uncover the essence of the past meaning of the text without posing such questions, that is, existentially relevant, serious questions. If one asks of each biblical text what it means to be saying about its particular aspect of the ultimate question, then he will be in a position to move to theological formulation on the basis of the text. If there is a correlation between our theological questions and the biblical tradition, then real translation of meaning may take place.

These questions may inform every stage of the enterprise, even the attempt to date a particular document or book. The search for the date, which at times of necessity must be a very technical pursuit, has more than antiquarian interest if it is part of the search for the full theological and religious context of the material. One example should illustrate the point. Once one recognizes that the books Joshua through II Kings comprise a single history work, it is not difficult to date the final composition of that work to approximately 550 B.C., in the Babylonian exile. But then if we are interested in interpretation we want to know the particular theological crisis the exile created for Israel and for the writer of this work in particular, in order to understand the point of his work. That the exile was a theological crisis for Israel is abundantly clear from the literature of the period. The temple and the holy city were in ruins, and the chosen people of God had been uprooted from their land, the land promised to the patriarchs and given by the grace of God. The historian wanted to know the meaning of this catastrophe, and he set

out to explain it in the light of his particular theological perspective and on the basis of the old theological traditions. Then he wrote his history of Israel from the time of Moses to the exile to show that the exile was the judgment of God in response to a sordid history of sin. In spelling out the problems and the assumptions which informed this work and this historian's particular proclamation—his kerygma, if you will—we have not completed the process of interpretation, but we have begun to provide the framework in which interpretation is possible.

III. The Place of Historical Criticism in Interpretation

Does the world need biblical criticism and biblical critics? If the world needs the Bible, and if the biblical word comes to life through interpretation, then it does need biblical criticism. The main question then turns on the particular role which historical critical methods play in the entire process of interpretation. While we have suggested that all aspects of interpretation, including historical critical exegesis, must be brought together by being informed by theological questions as the point of departure and not only as the goal, there *are* distinctions between various facets of interpretation. There are differences between criticism and theology and proclamation itself. What, then, are the special contributions which criticism makes to interpretation?

On the one hand, its contribution is *constructive*, that is, historical criticism is able to clarify and understand the ancient biblical text in the light of its full context. It is able to say that the text deals with one thing and not with another, and that it stems from one situation and not another. It assumes that the text has integrity, that it has its own word. The first means of access to this word is a knowledge of the linguistic and literary characteristics of the Bible, and a reconstruction of the ancient historical situation. This knowledge and this reconstruction can be achieved only through the rigorous application of the methods of the historical and critical disciplines, including textual criticism, language, literary criticism, form criticism, tradition-historical work, historiography and archaeology.

And on the other hand, criticism has a *critical* role. By insisting upon the integrity of the text, criticism rules out some possibilities of interpretation. That is to say, the interpreter is bound and limited by the results of literary and historical investigation. Criticism thus guards against dishonesty or eisegesis. Criticism is useful and necessary, then, for the good theological reason that if the Bible is in any

sense authoritative, it is the biblical meaning of the Bible which is authoritative, and not some meaning superimposed upon it or read into it.

Furthermore, criticism performs its critical role by making clear the historical relativity of all the biblical symbols. This does not mean that criticism undermines the authority of the Bible, but it does mean that criticism is inconsistent with a particular understanding of the Bible, the one which insists upon the "absolute inerrancy" of the Scriptures.

What, then, is the relationship of criticism to the other facets of interpretation? Our preceding remarks should have made it clear that one can no longer think of the biblical critic preparing and handing over his data to the theologian and preacher. The traditional and still predominant understanding of exegesis which tried to do this simply has not been very successful, and the fault must be laid at the feet of biblical studies. The failure of this approach can be demonstrated by an examination of the Old Testament commentaries available in English.⁷ The pages of the *Interpreters' Bible*, for example, are divided by a line which separates the exegesis from the exposition; and separate them it does. The reason for this separation was not that the expositors were unwilling to read the exegesis, but that when they did they found so little that was helpful, so little that contributed to the translation of the text. Unfortunately, this one example of exegesis without theology could be multiplied many times.

The distance between proclamation and theology and criticism may be narrowed by conceiving of biblical criticism as a theological discipline. This does not imply that the critic must begin with a given set of theological assumptions, or else he gives up his striving for objectivity and dulls the knife of criticism, but it does mean that he is informed at all stages by the theological questions which are appropriate to the material before him. To be so informed and guided implies that the critic ought to unfold the message, the proclamation of the Bible, what is said explicitly. The critic, then, is not interested in reconstructing the history of Israel just for the sake of knowing that history, or in the literary questions for the sake of literature, or in the assumptions and world view of the writers for the sake of a history of thought. We are not denying the great importance of all these disciplines—interpretation is lost without them

7. Cf. especially B. S. Childs, "Interpretation in Faith: The Theological Responsibility of an Old Testament Commentary," *Interpretation*, 18 (1964), pp. 432-49.

—but if one's goal is interpretation, these disciplines are important only insofar as they help to unfold the proclamation of the Bible.

All the technical disciplines of historical critical exegesis, then, may provide the conditions for interpretation. They may be in a sense "preparation" for interpretation and understanding. But criticism can become preparation for interpretation only if it is willing to approach the text with the questions which the text is trying to answer, with theological questions.

IV. The Old Testament Basis for an Old Testament Hermeneutic.

In a sense, the entire Old Testament itself is already hermeneutic, or interpretation. The biblical words are interpretations of the revelation of God in word and event. The biblical writers at all stages see and hear in the history of Israel, in the traditions of the community of faith and in their own experience events and words which they perceive as the self-revelation of God, and they are bold enough to interpret them as such by spelling out their particular meaning. We are saying that there is good biblical precedent for understanding theology as hermeneutic, and therefore it is useful to spell out the general features of the Old Testament's hermeneutic.

We may begin where Israel herself began, with the history of salvation traditions preserved in the Hexateuch. Literary criticism has shown that these books do not contain just one version of the history of salvation but many, various different "sources" and traditions from different times. In other words, the Hexateuch is a veritable history of hermeneutic, of the interpretation of word and event. At the beginning of this history there stands the basic credo of Israel's faith which was a simple recital of what God had done. This credo itself was already interpretation of God's revelation. In the course of history this little credo was expanded both freely and creatively until it finally became the detailed history which we have before us now. It is possible to distinguish some of the stages in this process and see how various men of faith interpreted the words given to them. When the work of the Yahwist, for example, is disentangled from the other material, it becomes clear that he has interpreted the traditions very freely, bringing them to bear on the questions of his own time. Indeed, his work is even more radical, for he has extended the scope of the saving history. In his own time, that history began with the promise to the patriarchs, but to this canonical tradition he has added the primeval history in order to make clear his understanding of the Word of God. Each successive

layer of the tradition approaches the ever-expanding body of material in its own way, always using the old interpretations as the basis for new statements.

In this history of interpretation, the work of Deuteronomy may be the most radical. The concerns of Deuteronomy are those of the preacher who stands before a people generations removed from the saving events, who brings the word to life through preaching on texts from the old historical and legal traditions. When he speaks of the saving events themselves, he is able to talk about them as both past and present. The events happened to your fathers, he says, but they are also *our* events. He wants every successive generation to be able to say, "*We* were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt; and the Lord brought *us* out of Egypt with a mighty hand . . ." (6:21). Furthermore, he is willing and able to re-interpret the old laws for his own time with freedom and independence, often to the point of distorting the original specific meaning of the law for the sake of what he understands to have been the original intention of the law. Even when he does not find it necessary to change the laws he is not content simply to pass them on, but interprets them in the light of his new situation and explains why and how they are to be obeyed.

But this process of hermeneutic, of being bound to *both* the past word and the present reality, is not limited to the Hexateuchal traditions. It is seen also in the historical books of the Old Testament. The existence of these books as documents of faith reflects Israel's awareness that the period of God's activity and revelation did not come to an end with the conquest. Thus new events and new words continually are taken up as symbols of that faith. Even the Chronicler, who writes his history in the period which sees the rise of a kind of legalism, re-interprets the old traditions radically. We might even say that he distorts them under the pressure of his particular theological perspective.

And the prophetic announcements should also be seen as interpretations of the Word of God. The prophets stand rooted in the old words and give a new word, in particular a word for the future which has come to them in their own lives and experiences. They are therefore more than interpreters of tradition; they are interpreters of the Word of God on the basis of tradition. They, even more than the others, understand that the Word of God is a living word, not a dogma. So they hold what has been handed to them, but interpret it freely. And this process of free and often poetic interpre-

tation and actualization of the old words is seen in the Psalms and even the wisdom literature.

So the process that produced the Old Testament was a process of interpretation. The writers from beginning to end were not content simply to pass on what they had received without interpreting it in the light of new situations, new needs, and new ways of posing questions. Neither were they willing to discard what was received. The old existed for them for the purpose of the new, for the sake of the new word which could come to expression through the old. This implies that the Bible is with us for the sake of interpretation, for the purpose of allowing the Word to come to expression in our time.⁸

8. Cf. Gerhard Ebeling, *Theologie und Verkündigung*, Vol. I of *Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie*, 1962, pp. 14ff., and James M. Robinson's translation in *The New Hermeneutic*, pp. 67 ff.

Authority, Hermeneutic, and Church: An Essay on New Testament Interpretation

D. MOODY SMITH, JR.

Associate Professor of New Testament Interpretation

Frequently the New Testament is characterized as the literary expression and deposit of the life and faith of early Christianity. This assessment is true and, indeed, obvious to anyone who has reflected upon the matter. But such a statement does not suffice to explain the New Testament. Although some of the New Testament books are occasional writings, that is, letters or tracts addressed to certain specific situations, by no means all of them are. Moreover, the individual writings cannot be viewed as if they were just what we would normally expect from a religious community with many outposts scattered over a broad geographical area. There is something typically Christian about them. Or, to put it another way, their very existence represents motives and interests which we have come to recognize as typically Christian.

For one thing, the concern for authority, the felt need to speak or hear an authoritative word, is a pervasive characteristic of the New Testament writings, whether they be considered as individual documents, analyzed into their respective components, or taken as a collection. No mode of interpretation which fails to grasp this elemental intention can do justice to the New Testament. For reasons that are both historically and theologically sound, the recent Faith and Order (World Council of Churches) study of the problem of hermeneutics has led now to a consideration of the question of biblical authority.¹ The latter question is, of course, of considerable significance for Christian faith and its theological clarification in our own day, but the linking of hermeneutics and the question of author-

1. See P. C. Rodger and L. Vischer, *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order* (New York: Association Press, 1964), esp. pp. 50 ff., and *New Directions in Faith and Order: Reports-Minutes-Documents* ("Faith and Order Paper," No. 50; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), esp. pp. 32 ff., for the background of the present Faith and Order study on the authority of the Bible.

ity is justifiable also on purely historical grounds because of the very nature of the New Testament materials. Our purpose in this essay is to review certain aspects of the question of authority in the New Testament and to point to some ramifications for the hermeneutical enterprise, especially as they pertain to the place or role of the church.²

1. Sources of Authority in Early Christianity

Although the letters of Paul are the earliest written communications which have survived from the primitive church, one has only to read any salutation to learn that they are more than friendly or business letters from one partner in an enterprise to another: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God . . ." Paul addresses his readers as a man commissioned with a task and invested with authority. When he talks of visiting them, he asks his readers how they wish him to come, "with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness." When he is challenged, he does not hesitate to speak of the basis of his authority: "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord?" Paul regards the Christians to whom he has preached and the churches which he had founded as his peculiar province and responsibility, given him by God, and as an apostle he accepts the responsibility of speaking authoritatively to the question of what the gospel is.

In earliest Christianity there were several possible answers to the question of the nature of the gospel. Some early Christians doubtless thought it was the good news that Jesus would soon return in order to establish his kingdom on earth. At least a few evidently felt the prospect of Jesus' imminent return meant this world and its tasks were no longer to be taken seriously. Some probably saw the chief significance of Jesus' coming in its meaning for Israel: he was indeed the Messiah, as God had shown by raising him from the dead. Since Jesus had taught, and his disciples had cherished his teaching even before his death and resurrection, many continued to see in his teaching the most important factor. Perhaps others were impressed with his power to heal and cast out demons; there were those in the early church who felt that they were also possessed with such remarkable powers.

2. Some of the material in this article is reprinted with permission of the Macmillan Company from *Anatomy of the New Testament: A Guide to its Structure and Meaning* by D. Moody Smith, Jr. and Robert A. Spivey. (Copyright © by the Macmillan Company 1969.)

While all these views were represented in early Christianity, missionary preaching, especially in the Gentile world, tended to concentrate upon Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.³ Doubtless the conviction that God had vindicated Jesus by raising him from the dead, and with him the hopes of his followers, was predominant among most Christians from the beginning. And yet one could scarcely speak of Jesus' resurrection without taking account of his death. Why did he die, and what did his death accomplish? Such questions are not unfamiliar to those who have mourned the apparently pointless assassination of important public figures.

Early Christians understood Jesus' death in at least two ways. First, it was an event which God in his inscrutable wisdom had ordained. Thus passages from the Old Testament were used to interpret Jesus' death. In the second place, it was a vicarious sacrifice, that is, a sacrifice made on behalf of others, his immediate followers initially, but ultimately all mankind. What appeared to be, and at one level actually was, the tragic work of evil or mistaken men turned out to be an event of far-reaching importance for the salvation of humanity. Thus not only the resurrection of Jesus, but also his death, assumed an authoritative significance and function.

In the New Testament Paul appears as the leading exponent and interpreter of the death or, as he puts it, the cross of Jesus. It is the negation of the pride, power and wisdom of this world, the sign of God's mercy and goodness toward those who are willing to give up any claim on such pride, power and wisdom and live by faith.

For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (I Cor. 1:21-25 *RSV*)

Paul's eloquent meditation upon the meaning of the cross sheds light backward on the antecedents of Christianity and forward upon the

3. On the universality and unity of the kerygma see C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936). Bultmann takes a compatible view with respect to the centrality of the cross and resurrection in the Hellenistic community, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I, trans. K. Grobel (New York: Scribner's, 1951), p. 86. Cf. also O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, trans. F. V. Filson (London: SCM, 1951), pp. 81 ff. That the unity of the kerygma throughout early Christianity

shape of the New Testament and of Christian preaching and theology. It also reveals his own insight into the authority of the gospel.

Paul characterizes Jews as demanding signs and Greeks as seeking wisdom. Exactly what he means by "signs" and "wisdom" may be subject to debate, but the general thrust of his statement is clear enough.⁴ "Signs" is a term used elsewhere in the New Testament and in the Old of miracles or other especially significant deeds or events. To say that the Jews seek signs may mean that they seek miracles to validate religious claims. In point of fact, Jesus encountered the demand for signs from some of his countrymen. Paul apparently means that the Jews seek some clear indication that the claims made about Jesus by his followers are true. This is the most obvious sense of his statement.

When Paul speaks of the "Greeks," he probably means Gentiles in general, since Greek language and culture were the common coinage of the day. (But it is not beside the point to note that the Corinthians, to whom Paul was writing, were nominally Greeks, so the contrast of Jews and Greeks rather than Gentiles in general would have been appropriate in I Corinthians.) The important question, however, has to do with the meaning of wisdom. There was a tradition of theological and human wisdom in Judaism (cf. the Old Testament books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes). But Paul has in mind here a general orientation, and it would be wrong to describe the general orientation of Judaism in terms of wisdom. It is rather the Greek or the pagan who seeks salvation through wisdom or knowledge. This trait is by no means confined to the phenomenon we have called Gnosticism, although it is perhaps best represented there. There is impressive evidence of the search for salvation through a quite different kind of wisdom or knowledge in the Greek

is not an indubitable assumption of New Testament criticism and interpretation, however, is amply attested in present discussions of theological variety in early Christianity, as well as by the recent re-publication and forthcoming translation of W. Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*, appendix to the 2nd edition by G. Strecker (Tübingen: Mohr, 1964).

4. On Wisdom in I Corinthians see R. W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 275-305, who is appreciative yet critical of U. Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu 1. Kor. 1 und 2* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1959). A different approach to the interpretation of the first four chapters of I Corinthians may be seen in N. A. Dahl, "Paul and the Church at Corinth According to I Corinthians 1:10-4:21," in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 313-35.

philosophical tradition, especially from Socrates down. Apparently the mystery religions pre-supposed knowledge of the mysteries as necessary for salvation. At a more primitive level one thinks of the knowledge of magical formulations and charms. From the East, astrology, the knowledge of the stars, had an impact upon the Greek mind. The statement that the Greeks seek wisdom is true in a variety of senses.

If Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, what do the two have in common? One might think very little. But over against the cross of Christ the common factor in the demand for signs and the quest for wisdom stands out. Both signs and wisdom put a premium on what is controllable or calculable. The demand for a sign is the demand that a given claim to authority or righteousness be validated publicly in a generally recognized way. The search for wisdom is a search for certainty. Both are in different ways efforts to make the divine accountable and to control the relation to it so that man's best interest is served. The sign makes the one who receives it the judge of its validity. Wisdom is power in any time and in any relationship. Over against signs and wisdom Paul puts the cross of Christ, which he describes as weakness and foolishness. It is important to remember that he means weakness and foolishness by the world's standards, and the world's standards of power and wisdom are false. Yet the contrast which he makes is valid, for the cross upsets all efforts to make the divine reality subject to human calculation and control. It implies the reversal of ordinary standards of evaluation. The one sent from God is crucified and dies, and because he dies God's will is not thwarted, but carried out. By setting the cross over against the religious quests of both the Jew and the Greek, Paul presents it as the symbol of the authoritative and self-authenticating power of the gospel.

Paul's word shows the contrast between the Christian message and the standards and expectations of an unbelieving world. He takes up the theme of the cross, which was given him by history and by the earliest tradition, and develops its meaning theologically. Paul thus represents the course that the main stream of Christian teaching and preaching was to take. His central emphasis upon the cross recurs again and again in the New Testament. One finds it in all the Gospels, in the speeches of Acts, in I Peter and in Hebrews. Paul effectively defined the center of the Christian message, that in the cross of Christ God was acting for the salvation of mankind. This emphasis existed and would probably have prevailed without

Paul, but Paul immensely deepened and enriched the Christian tradition at its source.

Yet the needs of the church could not be entirely satisfied by repeating the message of the cross. From the days of Jesus' public ministry his disciples had remembered and passed along many of the things he said. Thus alongside the proclamation of the cross there existed a tradition of the sayings of Jesus himself. These were regarded in some Christian circles as authoritative words, carrying the weight of divine revelation. Although Paul does not tell us much about Jesus' teaching, on the rare occasions when he quotes a word of Jesus he obviously regards it as decisive. Only after Paul's death, however, were the central proclamation of Jesus' death and resurrection and the traditions of his teaching (and healing) ministry combined in literary works, producing the documents we call Gospels. In principle at least these Gospels represent the two principal foci of authority in the early church and in the New Testament.⁵ We, therefore, can infer that in the process of the composition of apostolic letters and the transmission of the Jesus tradition, and in the later stage which saw the combining of their principal motifs, there was a single fundamental motivation, namely, the desire to give authoritative utterance to the Christian message.

Another important locus of authority in early Christianity was the prophet. Paul speaks of the prophet and ranks him second only to the apostle. The Book of Revelation seems to be the work of at least one such prophet. In the Didache we learn that some prophets were beginning to present problems. What was the extent and basis of their authority? Some of them obviously felt empowered to speak in the name of the Lord, as we see in Revelation (cf. esp. 1:17-3:22). Similar prophetic words of the Lord are probably found also in the Gospels. The author of Revelation did not fall out of touch with the reality of the earthly and crucified Lord and surely the evangelists did not. Still, the danger that the prophetic inspiration or imagination would simply run wild was always present, so it became necessary not only to test every spirit (I John 4:1), but to establish definite norms by which the true, and therefore authoritative, could be separated from the specious. Paul already distinguishes utterances which can only be inspired by the Spirit from those which cannot possibly be (I Cor. 12:1-3).

5. Implicit in this analysis is the acknowledgment of an important distinction between the message *of* Jesus and the message *about* Jesus. Whether Bultmann has drawn this distinction too sharply is a good question, but of its existence and importance there can be little doubt.

The problematic position of the prophet reflects the larger issue of the role of the Spirit as an authority within early Christianity.⁶ This problem had reached critical proportions by Paul's time, as the Corinthian correspondence shows. On the one hand, possession of the Spirit and charismatic deed and utterance were widely regarded as evidence of the activity of God or Christ within the community (I Cor. 12-14). On the other, it quickly became obvious that the authorization of the Spirit could be claimed by anyone for anything. The Spirit was the sensible ground of a new sense of power and authority in the church and at the same time a potential danger to the unity and tranquility of the community. Paul attempts delicately to balance the positive empowering and assuring role of the Spirit against its obvious liabilities and abuses. While the Spirit was doubtless a primitive and powerful factor in the early Christian missionary preaching and community, its utility or helpfulness in resolving conflicting claims and urgent needs which arose in the life and thought of the church as a developing institution in the world was decidedly limited.

2. The Beginnings of the Canon

Together with the kerygma of the cross and resurrection, the tradition of Jesus' words, and spirit-inspired prophecy, there was a fourth locus of authority in early Christianity, namely, the scriptures which Christians now call the Old Testament. By means of these writings the early church sought to understand the event of Jesus Christ, which it regarded as the revelation of God's word. Although the precise limits of the Hagiographa at the time of Christian origins is a debated question, clearly the Law and the Prophets were firmly established as authoritative and holy Scripture in Jesus' day. The use of the Psalms in the New Testament shows that there was also no doubt of their canonicity. The Jamnian (Protestant) canon is a rough, but not misleading, guide to the early Christian view of the extent of the Old Testament.⁷ From the letters of Paul

6. On the tension between spiritual and institutional authority in early Christianity see H. F. von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt und Geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (2. Aufl.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1963).

7. A. C. Sundberg, *The Old Testament of the Early Church* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), disputes the commonly held view that the early church followed a Hellenistic Jewish Old Testament canon, predominant in Alexandria, instead of the Palestinian canon confirmed by Jamnia. Rather, he thinks that the canonical usage of both Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism was relatively broad and loose with respect to the Hagiographa, and that this state of affairs is reflected in the New Testament.

one receives the distinct impression that the Jewish Bible constituted the most easily accessible and applicable source of authority next to the Apostle's own preaching of the cross of Christ. Indeed, the fact that he seeks to support the truth of the kerygma from these writings (cf. I Cor. 15:3 ff., which, although traditional, surely reflects Paul's own view) shows that he acknowledged the prior claim of their authority.

Nevertheless, the need for a distinctly Christian norm or rule (Greek, *kanon*) of faith and life was becoming apparent, and it was already at work in the writing of many of the New Testament books. During the period of the formation of the New Testament, as various books were sifted and collected, this need only became more explicit. At that time, some early writings were eliminated because they were manifestly not the work of apostles or authors with apostolic connections; others fell into disuse, or were considered less profitable, unsound or even dangerous. Gradually a consensus developed on the need for a canon and on the books to be included in it.

Two approximate dates, the end of the first century and the end of the second, are important for understanding the development of the New Testament. By the end of the first century, or soon thereafter, most of the books now in the New Testament had been written. By the end of the second century the principal books of the New Testament were already recognized as part of a canon. We learn from a number of different sources dating from about the end of the second century that Christians throughout the world were using the same authoritative books: the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the thirteen Pauline letters, and at least two of the Catholic or general letters, I Peter and I John. The Muratorian canon, which lists the books accepted by the Roman church; Irenaeus, representing Gaul and the West; Tertullian, the fiery North African; and Clement, the learned bishop of Alexandria, all testify that by and large the same books were in use. A list of canonical books identical with the twenty-seven accepted by almost all churches does not appear until the latter half of the fourth century, but after A.D. 200 the differences were minor compared with the basic agreement among most Christians.

The stages in the development of the New Testament canon from the end of the first century to the end of the second, or from the writing of the individual books until the emergence of an agreed

upon collection at about the end of the second century, are, however, difficult to discern. During this period the history of the canon would seem to be mainly the history of its two primary parts, the Gospels and the letters of Paul. But concerning the collection of these two sets of documents we actually know little.

Some of the letters of Paul seem to have circulated during his own lifetime and at his direction (cf. Col. 4:16). How soon after his death an effort was made to collect his letters is uncertain. We know that about the middle of the second century Marcion, who espoused doctrines the church condemned as heretical, had a canon consisting of the Gospel of Luke and ten of Paul's letters. Yet this bit of information is not too helpful, for it is uncertain whether Marcion's canon was the first ever to have been put forward or merely an adaption of a churchly canon. What does seem certain is that between the end of the first century and the middle of the second Paul's letters began to circulate and that they were regarded as fruitful for reading, if not holy Scripture. Ignatius the bishop of Antioch (flourished ca. 115) mentions "all the letters of Paul" in his own letter to the Ephesian church (12:2) and all Paul's letters are also spoken of in II Peter 3:16 (written ca. 125-50). In the early second century Paul's letters were apparently known as a collection.

As for the Gospels, we again know little about the circumstances of their collection. Although the canonical Gospels (or Gospel traditions) were widely quoted by second-century writers, as late as the last quarter of the second century Irenaeus wrote at some length about the four Gospels and made a point of the appropriateness and the necessity of that number, four. It is as if he were addressing himself to some who thought that four were unnecessary or superfluous. In all probability, Marcion, whose canon contained only one Gospel, reflects the practice of an earlier period in which an individual church, or even a geographical area, had only one. A multi-Gospel canon could have come into use only as the Gospels of various churches were combined. In the process of combination some Gospels doubtless fell by the wayside. In the early Christian writers we catch glimpses of some of these other Gospels, which for one reason or another were rejected in the process of sifting and choosing which led to the formation of what we know as the New Testament.

3. The Significance of the Canon for the Hermeneutical Problem

The New Testament as a collection of authoritative books, a

canon of holy scripture, was born out of a combination of theological convictions and practical needs. But these interests and needs were not simply imposed from without upon the New Testament books. It is true that the Apostle Paul, for example, did not think that he was writing holy scripture when he wrote to the Corinthians or even to the Romans. Yet he was quite consciously asserting his apostolic authority to say what distinctively Christian faith was and what it implied for the life of believers under certain specific circumstances. By the same token, those who preserved the sayings of Jesus may not have thought of themselves as setting up a rival to Moses. Nevertheless, they believed that the sayings of Jesus were faithful guides to the will of God and applied them like holy Scripture to the situations which arose in the life of the church. The impulse to establish a canon and thus provide resources for the guidance and enrichment of the church did not begin with the writing of the last New Testament book, but in some form actually preceded and motivated the writing of most of those books. In this sense, and thus at a fundamental level, there is a unity in the New Testament.⁸

The New Testament as a whole, and in its total historical development, is an effort on the part of the early Christian church to define the faith and indicate its consequences for life. It is intended to lay down certain directions and boundaries, for it is not simply a random or even a representative specimen of opinion. It goes beyond, but does not contradict, the purposes of the individual authors in writing. When we think of the meaning and authority of the New Testament, therefore, we must concern ourselves not only with what the authors intended, but with the meaning of the canon as a whole. Although trite, it is nevertheless true and important that the New Testament is the church's book—inconceivable apart from the early church. It speaks to that church's needs and was composed in and by that church. The New Testament also intends to point to a ground of authority, the good news, beyond the church. This purpose

8. Of course, the various New Testament books do not all say the same thing. In fact, there are real differences and apparent disagreements among them. For the most part, however, *the New Testament books* show an interest in what is apostolic, authoritative, and original. They attach importance to the earthly life and ministry of Jesus, even if—as in the case of Paul—that interest concentrates mainly upon his death. They regard the death and resurrection of Jesus as the central saving event. They look upon Christ and the church as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, and they look forward to the final revelation of God's power and glory. Moreover, they agree in attaching fundamental importance to the moral life.

is implicit in the process of canonization, active in the writing of the individual books, and present even in the pre-literary period of the tradition's development.

Whoever would come to terms with the New Testament must take account of its intention to speak an authoritative word to the church. This authoritative intention manifests itself, not only in the fact that the New Testament canon was formed with such a purpose in view, but in a variety of other ways. As we have already noted, the New Testament presents a three-dimensional perspective in which several loci of authority appear. In addition to the proclamation of the kerygma, the traditioned word of Jesus, Spirit-inspired prophecy, and the Old Testament, one must reckon with the closely related, but nevertheless distinguishable authoritative structures of the church from the apostolate to the ordained ministry, which emerge in the New Testament and through which the authority of the New Testament gospel was mediated. Furthermore, within individual documents, such as the Gospel according to Matthew, multiple layers of authority can be discerned. Beginning with the kerygma of the cross and resurrection and the tradition of Jesus' words and deeds already combined in Mark, Matthew added a collection of Jesus' words, which, judging from its character as well as its use in Luke, already possessed considerable authority in early Christianity. He included also material peculiar to his Gospel, much of it probably traditional, and therefore already regarded by some Christians as authoritative. His final production was intended not only to be authoritative in and of itself, but to convey the authority of Jesus. (Note that in a somewhat less complex literary form Paul's letters convey the apostolic authority vested in him and his proclamation of the cross and resurrection, but based upon the authority of the Lord.) In a work like Hebrews, which does not claim apostolic authority, the situation is somewhat different. Yet it can scarcely be maintained that the author does not wish to convey a definitive and "authorized" message. In this case, however, the Old Testament comes into play more extensively and in a unique way so that it rather than the Jesus tradition or the apostolic kerygma grounds the author's theological exposition. In the Book of Revelation, on the other hand, Old Testament authority seems to be combined with Spirit-inspired prophecy.

There is also the further consideration that between the completion of the New Testament books by their respective authors and the establishment of the canon other stages intervened. As has been

noted, Gospels and letters were collected. Earlier, fragments of Pauline letters were perhaps joined together (*e.g.* II Corinthians and Philippians).⁹ Conceivably some books were augmented or altered editorially (*e.g.* the Gospel according to John). Thus in the New Testament we are dealing with multiple layers and modes of early Christian expression which represent the efforts of the early church to preserve and mediate the authoritative truth it believed God had revealed in Jesus Christ.

4. Church and Hermeneutic

In view of the churchly authority of the New Testament in its historical origin and development, the contemporary discussion of the problem of hermeneutics should not be separated from the question of authority in the church (a broader concept than "ecclesiastical authority"). Therefore the Faith and Order Commission study of biblical authority has quite naturally and rightly arisen out its consideration of the hermeneutical problem. Without implying that this range of questions has been bypassed by those who have already devoted very careful attention to the hermeneutical problem,¹⁰ we now advance several observations or questions on the relation of hermeneutic, authority, and church.

In the first place, if the New Testament writings, in their formative stages as well as their later canonical status were intended primarily as an authority for or within the church,¹¹ something is thereby implied for the scope and range of the hermeneutical effort. Historically viewed, it would appear that the primary hermeneutical task is always the interpretation of the New Testament to the church itself. If this task cannot be, or is not, accomplished, the question of authority becomes a hollow one. In fact, this conclusion is not out of accord with the hermeneutical efforts of the past two decades. Bultmann, for example, has really addressed himself to the

9. Partition theories concerning II Corinthians are widely held. Recently there has been a growing tendency to regard Philippians as a composite document. Cf. H. Koester, "The Purpose of the Polemic of a Pauline Fragment," *NTS*, 8 (1962), 317-332.

10. In a sense the whole hermeneutical discussion of recent years has centered about the problem of the church's speaking of God or the church's interpretation of Scripture. Interest in the question of the nature or identity of the church has not, however, been commensurate with the tacit acknowledgment of the church's role.

11. While it cannot be maintained with certainty that all of the New Testament books were written as church documents, the drift of modern study (form-criticism, etc.) is to see them in that light. Perhaps the most notable exception is Luke-Acts, where apologetic motifs are most conspicuous.

broader constituency of the church, especially to Protestant Christendom, as well as to those actively participant in some arm of the institution. Yet in undertaking to address the total constituency of the church, one does not avoid the necessity of addressing modern man, who, in all his various shapes and forms, is to be found within the parish and, indeed, within the walls of the sanctuary. While Bultmann's conception of modern man and the necessities under which he lives may be subject to debate, his assumption that the gospel must speak to this man, whether in the church or out, is not.

Thus in the second place, we may ask whether the New Testament itself does not in some very basic and essential sense intend to address man in general as well as the church. The answer is certainly yes. More precisely, the gospel enshrined in the New Testament is preached and understood as God's word to the world—Jew and Greek. (The distinction between church and world tends, however, to rigidify in the later New Testament documents.) Still there is some reason to distinguish between the scope of the gospel, certainly universal, and the intended function of the New Testament writings and canon. In its totality, as well as in the intention of most of its individual authors, the New Testament is directed to the church, and is thus not primarily a missionary tract. Therefore, one may with some justification distinguish the hermeneutical task within the church, which always appropriately begins with the canonical scriptures, from the task or proclamation and interpretation of the gospel to the world, which does not—least of all in our day—take the form of the interpretation of these documents. While this distinction may not be fundamental, since the historically intended function of the New Testament writings and canon cannot be separated from the purpose and scope of the gospel, it has a penultimate validity. Perhaps the matter may be stated as follows: the church interprets its scriptures to itself in order that it may understand the gospel and interpret it to the world.

Such considerations raise a third issue germane to the hermeneutical task, namely, the identity and authorization of the interpreting church. The hermeneutic of the Bultmann school, for all its alleged "radicalism," has operated on the very Protestant principle that the scriptures rightly interpreted continually constitute the church or bring it into being. Yet Bultmann and his heirs differ from pre-critical Protestants in acknowledging that from stem to stern the canon is the product of an inner-churchly process, and reflects not only the unity of the gospel and church, but early diversity in understanding and practice. Canonization of such diverse documents was

only possible in the wake of historically unjustifiable harmonization of their differences. Therefore, although for the Bultmannians the word spoken on the basis of scripture constitutes the church, the understanding of scripture as canon is rejected in principle. As a consequence, secondary or negative theological weight is attached to the church and churchly processes which produced the New Testament writings and canon. Naturally, then, the present church does not legitimate itself by asserting or proving its historical continuity with the early church, nor can it discover its authority and unity on the basis of the New Testament canon *per se*, which is to a considerable degree the basis of its diversity. It is not surprising that from the Catholic side this perspective seems to be a sure way of opening the door to subjectivity and chaos.¹² On the other side, Protestants can scarcely overlook apparent discrepancies between the bearing of the New Testament and the ecclesiastical doctrine and practice of Roman Catholicism, a matter concerning which many Roman Catholics are now confronting their church. At the same time, it ought to be acknowledged that the Protestant position regarding the nature and authority of scripture, as well as church, is in a state of irresolution, largely as a result of modern historical criticism. While this situation continues a diversity of hermeneutical methods and results, not only between Protestant and Catholic, but among Protestants can reasonably be expected. For the moment one can only say that while diversity can be unproductive and degenerate into polemics, it is doubtless to be preferred to uniformity for uniformity's sake.

The present state of affairs in the discussion between Bultmannians or post-Bultmannians (who might better be called "radical Protestants"—although not "Protestant radicals") and Roman Catholic theologians serves to illustrate the interdependence of questions of church, hermeneutic, and biblical authority, an important problem area in which further discussion and clarification is desirable and necessary. Presumably the current Faith and Order study, which includes a sizeable Roman Catholic representation at all levels, will be able to delineate the complex interrelation of these issues, although a resolution of all major points of conflict still seems to lie in the indeterminate future—or, theologically speaking, in God's hands!

12. Cf. H. Küng's strictures against E. Käsemann's position in *Kirche im Konzil* (Freiburg: Herder, 1963), pp. 125-155. Note also the different positions on "Unity and Diversity in New Testament Ecclesiology," *Novum Testamentum*, 6 (1963), of the Protestant Käsemann (pp. 290-97) and the Catholic R. E. Brown (pp. 298-308).

Historical Methodology and Biblical Hermeneutic

CHARLES K. ROBINSON

Associate Professor of Philosophical Theology

Historical knowledge (or "belief," if you prefer) is mediated. It is never simply "given" immediately or directly. The historian, in his methodological attempt to reconstruct history, has *no immediate, direct access* to that which he wishes faithfully to reconstruct, whether this be acts of God, divine revelation, miracles, human acts, human intentions, human experiences, facts, or events. This statement holds even for my own attempt to do my own "historiography," if for no other reason than that I must rely upon my own fallible memory supported by other ambiguous evidence.

There are *no uninterpreted* acts of God, divine revelations, miracles, human acts, human intentions, human experiences, facts or events. All the items in this list (which could, of course, be indefinitely expanded) are interpretive categories. To assert that there are instances which appropriately fall under one or another of these categories (or "classes," if you like) already involves a human act of interpretation.

If it is objected that some experiences may be "self-interpreting," the answer is that while the givenness of some experiences may be highly suggestive as regards its own appropriate interpretation, *no experience*—at least no human experience—is *entirely self-interpretive* inasmuch as subjective agency (through active organization and/or through some concrete mode of passive receptivity) affects the meaning-form of the experience. Experience is never mere givenness. Any interpretation at all goes, in some manner, beyond mere givenness.

Again, it might be objected that "facts" and "events," at least, do not necessarily involve interpretation. Otherwise how could we avoid lapsing into subjective Idealism? How could we legitimately allow for the occurrence of events utterly unknown to us and our own continuous search for new facts which are as yet unknown to (hence certainly uninterpreted by) us? This objection may be accepted if the point is merely that we have good empirical-rational

justification for the belief that reality vastly transcends that of which we are aware. There are surely (humanly) unknown realities. However, to hold this view, which I do, is already to assert that an interpretation holds, even though in this case the interpretation is a very general ontological-epistemological one. The evidence for it is overwhelming, but the historical fact that philosophical theories which reject it have been formulated will alone show that the evidence is not entirely "self-interpretive."

In any case, however, the ordinary use of the terms "fact" and "event" involves a partially specifiable degree of definiteness: "fact" usually includes the meaning "unit of knowable reality"; "event" usually includes the meaning "unit of process (or becoming) in a relational (including temporal) context."

The domain of human history is the domain of events insofar as these involve and are involved in the interconnectedness of human life. Historiography is an effort at empirical reconstruction determined in part by rational (namely, methodological, including hermeneutical) principles accepted as immanently governing the discipline, setting certain of its conditions and thereby certain of its limits. If historiography deals with events and if there are no uninterpreted events, historiography is involved part and parcel in interpretation. Styles, modes, categories, dimensions, and emphases of historical interpretations may vary. Historiographical interpretation is, in any case, not the only mode or facet of possible historical interpretation. But historiography is itself involved in interpretation throughout. (Hereafter the reader may read "interpreted" as qualifying every instance of "event." I need not repeat *ad nauseam*: "there are no uninterpreted events"!) And a relatively "meaningless" interpretation of history is no less an interpretation than is a highly "meaningful" interpretation.

However, there is no such thing as "mere" interpretation. Interpretation is always interpretation "of . . .," with some *reference*, at least in intention. The intentional reference of historiography is a contextual interconnection of events as involving and involved in human life. The goal of historiography is the relevant interpretive reconstruction of these event-connections in their appropriate contexts. The questions to be asked in arriving at this goal are: what contextual reconstruction is most plausible and relevant? and what event reconstruction is most plausible? (Insofar as any event may constitute part of the context for some other event or events, the question of "relevance" is also relevant.)

We may now begin to look at the relation of historical interpretation to biblical hermeneutic.

In my attempted historiographic reconstructions of contexts and events I reject (on various grounds) some of the alleged events which were included within some other, earlier traditional (e.g., literal biblical) reconstructions. It is my thesis that *theological significance* may be *altered* by the reconstructing rejection of previously believed events (as also, of course, alternatively, by the reconstructing "acceptance" or "discernment" of other alleged events which are novel to some prior reconstructions: e.g., the conviction that Jesus held some version of ultimate universal salvation). Yet only the most extreme form of biblical literalism imaginable would attempt to hold (and I think the internal consistency could be easily challenged) that the rejection of any alleged event has precisely the same effect upon theological significance as the rejection of any other alleged event.

Let us next look for some *principles* which may help to clarify the relation between *rejection* of alleged *events* and *theological significance*.

(1) In cases in which it seems most relevant to view a number of alleged events as instances of an interpretive class (e.g., extraordinary bodily healings), there is a distinction, as regards theological significance, between rejecting *some* alleged events and rejecting *all* alleged events of that class.

(2) If one finds oneself disposed to reject *all* alleged events of an interpretive class, one should examine the question whether one's rejection is based entirely on empirical evidence or lack thereof, or on some features of one's world-view commitment functioning *a priori* in relation to any possible historical evidence—and if so, whether this prior view-commitment is itself adequately grounded. (The same questioning is, of course, equally relevant for one who finds himself disposed to accept all alleged events of an interpretive class.)

(3) Rejection of some/all alleged events of *one class* does not necessarily involve the same implications for theological significance as the rejection of some/all alleged events of *other classes*: e.g., extraordinary physical events; extraordinary biological healing; extraordinarily important "coincidences" of connections in historical events; extraordinary repentance and conversion; extraordinary steadfastness of faith, love, trust, obedience, and worship; extraordinary experiences of awareness of the intention of God; extraordinary

experiences of the presence of God. (The repeated use of “extraordinary” is not intended to suggest that the “ordinary” is devoid of theological significance, but rather merely to recognize the fact that we are not ordinarily disposed to question or reject the ordinary!)

(4) Interpretive classes (categories) are *not* simply *self-evident* (entirely self-interpretive). On historical and scientific as well as theological grounds, the understanding of the *most relevant interpretive categories* ought on principle to remain open to conceptual reformulation. This is not, however, equivalent to saying that a man—historian, scientist, theologian, or what have you—ought always, for his own personal integrity’s sake, to remain in psychological doubt about everything of importance, including his commitment through, and employment of, basic interpretive categories.

(5) Rejection of an alleged *unique* event may involve different implications for theological significance than does the rejection of some/all alleged events of a class—though it is logically closer to rejection of all members of a class (or of the applicability of a category) than to the rejection of some instances of a class. I am here employing the term “unique” analogically and therefore relatively rather than absolutely. On my view every concretely existing reality is in some measure and manner unique—however small the “degree”—at least as regards its relational context. (Only abstractions can be totally general.) And, on the other hand, no concrete reality is absolutely unique. (If even God were absolutely unique vis-à-vis us and our experience, there could on principle be no such thing as “theological significance” of any kind for us).

(6) Whether or not a particular alleged event (or connected series of events), such as the exodus or the life of Jesus, is best regarded as unique, will be a partially ambiguous question, dependent in part upon relative emphasis upon its *contextual significance for other* events and connected series of events. Insofar as an event or connected series of events seems to be most appropriately regarded as exercising a relatively *irreplaceable* significance for other events and series of events, it is, in that respect, taken as *functionally unique*. Thus the question as to relative contextual uniqueness is a very high-order interpretive question in integrating historical interpretations and theological significance. (The two-edged cut of the “one-ness” of God in monotheism, including Trinitarian monotheism, gives equally basic thrust to the questions of universal God-dependence and of uniquely particular God-dependence.)

(7) The more emphatically *unique* the potential *contextual significance* of an alleged event or series of events, the greater the implications for *theological significance* involved in its rejection (or acceptance or reinterpretation). Intrinsically considered, the alleged event of Jesus' miraculous conception is "more unique" than the alleged event of the exodus out of Egyptian slavery of (some of) the ancestors of the Hebrew people. However, considered in terms of contextual significance for other series of events, just the reverse holds: (some sort of) exodus has an irreplaceable theological significance for the whole life of the Hebrew; whereas the same can scarcely be said for the miraculous conception in relation to the whole life of Christians. (After all, a Chalcedonian or even monophysite Christology does not *per se* involve any view one way or another as to the mode of Jesus' biological conception.)

(8) The *rejection* of *all* the events alleged in the *Bible* would *neither logically* entail nor necessarily *existentially* compel the *abandonment* of theism. (Some men have been, apparently, theists of some sort without any contact with either the alleged biblical events or the traditions about them.)

(9) However, the work of linguistic analysis should alert theism to the possibility of "death by a thousand qualifications." While it is not possible to lay down a logical (or even loosely "methodological") rule as to just which alleged events or interpretive categories of events would have to be rejected before theism becomes rationally and/or existentially untenable, it should at least be clear that (inasmuch as theism—unlike deism or pantheism—involves the view that God is at some—whatever—times and in some—whatever—ways a transcendent Agent immanently involving himself in history, influencing, directing, and re-possible-izing some courses of historical events) an individually and culturally variable "limit" does *function*, "beyond" which the *gradual evacuation* of contents has left the form of theism (if indeed even the form remain) *empty* of living existential *relevance*. A "God who acts," but never, apparently, in any actual instances, is for every practical human purpose "dead."

(10) The rejection of some events within historical reconstruction would necessarily invalidate some *historic* types of theism.

A reconstruction involving rejection of (not mere agnosticism about) the exodus event (broadly taken as the emergence from Egyptian slavery of some of the ancestors of the Hebrew people) would invalidate Hebraic religion in any of its historic forms—including, be it well noted, classical Christianity, whose alleged status

as a "New Israel" presupposes in some sense the validity of the theological concept of a "prior Israel." (The movement within contemporary Judaism whose point of departure is a radical rejection of any sense of divine "election" is—in this context—appropriately self-designated as "Reconstructionist." It has historically reconstructed itself out of any distinctly theological sense of "Judaism.")

A reconstruction involving rejection of (not mere agnosticism about) the event (the having been actually lived) of the life of Jesus of Nazareth would invalidate Christian religion in any of its historic forms.

Not everyone will agree with that statement. I once put to Paul Tillich the following question in a Kearns Seminar at Duke: "Dr. Tillich, I would like to ask you a question regarding a possibility which you as well as I will consider historically unlikely but which may perhaps serve to clarify certain implications of your system. Suppose, at some time in the future, documents presently unknown to us should be discovered which, in the judgment of the overwhelming majority of biblical scholars, pointed inescapably to the conclusion that—not merely was the life of Jesus of Nazareth not of such-and-such a kind, as we had thought—there was no actual living man at all to whose life the New Testament documents witness; but that rather the entire set of New Testament documents was composed *de novo* by a secret religious brotherhood and successfully perpetrated into the tradition stream of history: would this in any way whatever affect the *essence* of Christianity as you understand it?" Tillich's answer (not unexpected by me) was one word: "No." Then he went on for about fifteen minutes to talk about "the new being."

This anecdote at least illustrates that my thesis is not necessarily persuasive to all theologians—nor even necessarily to the great ones!

The question I posed to Tillich was formulated in terms of a possible historical reconstruction: would your understanding of the essential theological significance of one (New Testament) reconstruction be affected by another (Jesus never actually lived) reconstruction? And it is certainly true that the only way (in this life at least!) in which we could ever "get at" the occurrence or non-occurrence of alleged past events is through some form of *historical reconstruction*: we do not have any direct, immediate access to the "pure" occurrence or nonoccurrence of past "events-in-themselves" with which we could "then" compare our reconstructions to see whether or not the two "correspond."

Nevertheless—to carry the "skandalon" (theological and other-

wise) still farther—I hereby lay down the thesis that the ontological-epistemological-existential question still remains as a distinguishable, meaningful, and important question (sometimes even in terms of theological significance): *whether or not* an event or series of events sufficiently like our attempted event-reconstruction was (in some cases, especially as regards theological significance, also “is” and even “shall be”) *actually taking place*. This question does indeed involve a “double” use of “event” (though, be it noted, neither use “separates off” an “event-in-itself” from interpretation).

Ontologically, the intentional-structure of any belief in an alleged event includes within its intention a reality-reference. At the “gut level,” everyone of us knows this—otherwise we could never even distinguish between believing that such and such really has happened and merely imagining or wishing that such and such might have happened.

Epistemologically, our finite fallibility involves the risk of error in all our would-be cognitive acts. The price we human beings have to pay—like it or lump it—for even the possibility of being right is the possibility (with its accompanying epistemological risk) of being wrong.

The distinctive meaning-status of the so-called “historicist” language: “*wie es eigentlich gewesen*” (“how it actually happened”) may be of more than “merely philosophical” (ontological and epistemological) import. Let me illustrate.

I receive a desperate emergency call from home. I need to get home quickly. I know that many of the Durham streets are torn up and impassable due to work on the expressway. A colleague comments that he heard that the work on the X Street bridge was due to be finished yesterday. X Street is the only direct route home. I get in my car and dig out for the X Street route. What am I doing as I zip along ?

I am taking a more (or less) well-calculated existential risk regarding my present and future as well as the present and future of some of those I love . . . on the basis of what? On the basis of an interpretive reconstruction of past history: I believe (with whatever degree of psychological assurance) that the bridge has actually been finished and I am committing myself to acting on the basis of that belief. Now I am right or I am wrong. My “thinking cannot make it so,” as regards either the past events or their relation to me in my present and future.

This belief, as I concentrate on operating the car, shapes, guides,

and possible-izes my present. (The emergency is a desperate limited-time situation. If I did not believe in this moment that I could get home in time, I would be frozen in impotent despair.)

As I drive I reflect also upon the fact that I didn't get a chance to ask my colleague about the source of his report. And I know full well that, in any case, promises for work-completion are sometimes kept and sometimes not. I also see, as I move along, some evidence that counts in favor and some that counts against my belief. Some parallel parts of the road work look completed, but others still appear in disarray. And I am also aware that before I even reach the allegedly completed bridge I may come to a decisive sign which says "DETOUR—NO THRU STREET" to me. Or I may come to a different decisive sign which says "THRUWAY AHEAD" to me. Logically, of course, I could in principle ignore any and all evidence. But I do not ignore the evidence, because I am dead serious. I am not just playing a game.

However, "whether or not an event or series of events sufficiently like my attempted reconstruction was actually taking place" in the past (the finishing of the bridge yesterday) affects not only my present, as I drive, but also, even more decisively, my future (and the future of others). If when I get there, there just ain't no bridge across, I (and they) have "had it."

Yes, I do regard Jesus of Nazareth as a Bridge: his life, death, resurrection, and exaltation as the series of events through which that Bridge (he himself) was actually "constructed and completed."

No, I am not as clear as I might like to be about the "how." But as mediating the transcendent mystery I now see as relevant interpretive categories something like the following:

The only way in which I or any other human being can become ready for everlasting life *as* blessedness is through becoming so perfectly *steadfast* in the basic interpersonal modes of relationship (worship, faith, love, trust, obedience) as to be *beyond downward transformation by any possible temptation* whatever. The perfecting of finite interpersonal life through free individual selfhood cannot but be an uphill battle: the more so inasmuch as tempting-trials for self-centered freedom are constituted not only by experience of evil, lack or "poverty," with the temptation to ultimate despair and blasphemy, but also—and not less so—by experience of good, fullness or "abundance," with the temptation to self- or group-deifying pride and idolatry.

(If God *had* created "us" as angels in heaven or men in paradise,

we *would* have “fallen,” because maturing experience and decision-making responsibility cannot be created *de novo*, even by God. Blessedness, not less than cursedness, is for finitely free selfhood a tempting-trial through the experience and conquest of which alone can possibly come a steadfastly mature selfhood for whom neither abundance nor poverty, neither goodness nor evil, can lead away from steadfastness toward the love of God and love for the neighbor.)

Accordingly, by way of what might be called “modified apocalyptic thinking,” I see our present moving toward a future in which we shall experience such evil, lack and “poverty” as has not before been seen (as intensely) by corporate humanity and also such good, fullness and “abundance” as has not before been seen (as intensely) by corporate humanity.

I can sum up the over-all interpretive context for the theological-interpersonal-historical significance of this life, as I see it, in one sentence: Human life is a *battle* (which God has *already* perfectly won through *one* man, the *Bridge*-man, Jesus) for the achievement and perfecting of worship, faith, love, trust, and obedience in and through an existential context which (in its *good* abundances as surely as in its *evil* deprivations) *predominantly militates against* this achievement, but through which (or through some basically similar context) *alone* such achievement can possibly come to be and to be eternally *steadfast*, so that finitely free personal creatures are *individually* and *corporately ready* for everlasting life as God’s consummation of blessedness *beyond temptation*, and hence beyond ultimate *tragedy*. (The universalism of this interpretation indicates why I call it a “modified” apocalyptic thinking.)

Now this interpretive context has its own merits. It keeps me somewhere this side of complete insanity. Its application in life keeps me busy, and not merely busy but helps me to help my neighbor in the struggle against distortions of both evil and good, in the radically serious battle for the *theistic-humanizing* of life in which man does not destroy his own personalization through blasphemy or idolatry.

I think I am sensitive to relevant “evidence” (though no man can comprehend all the evidence). I have been through crises of non-verification and verification. These crises have contributed very substantially to the shaping of the view I now hold. As of now, I act with conviction. I do believe this vision of life is, ultimately, valid and true. I do not wait merely for “eschatological verification.” I believe this view is being verified in my life day by day. Yet I also

know that, while I do not in fact believe it is so, it is in principle possible that all this "verification" of the theistic and Messianic dimensions of this view is somehow auto-suggested by the view itself.

Hence I acknowledge full well that "*whether or not* an event or series of events sufficiently like my attempted reconstruction was *actually* taking place" in the *past* (God's completion of the bridge through Jesus, the One for all) is the *most decisive condition* of my *future*, and the future of all humanity. I believe that I am, both retrospectively and proleptically, "linked" with that Bridge even now. But there will come an utterly decisive time in which EITHER there will be no Bridge across/OR I will find the true Pass-over.

Hence my own answer to the question I once put to Tillich is: "Yes."

We have for several pages been considering some issues involved in the Christian theological interpretation of history. Let us now return to a more general context of historical interpretation.

The key issue, as I see it, regarding the over-all interpretation (whether religious or secular) of history is the issue of *lawfulness* vs. *creativity* and, correlatively, *closed system* vs. *open system*. Let me sketch in something of what I mean by these terms.

By "lawfulness" I mean existent-becoming through the "immanence" of "principles" within processes. The stress on "immanence" involves emphasis upon "continuity" and "outwardness" (including external accessibility). The stress on "principles" involves emphasis upon "invariance" and "entropy" (as the inertially-ordering tendency of principles to exclude novelty).

By "creativity" I mean existent-becoming through the "transcendence" of "agencies" interactively supervening within the ongoing continuities of processes. The stress on "transcendence" involves emphasis upon possible "discontinuities" (logical, epistemological, ontological, and existential "gaps") and "inwardness" (as distinguished from mere publicly accessible "outwardness"). The stress upon "agencies" involves emphasis upon "indeterminacy" (which, of course, points to only one aspect of the significance of human "freedom") and "novelty."

Now neither the logic nor the ordinary human experience of "lawfulness" as sketched above excludes the concept or the reality of "creativity" as sketched above. *A priori* analysis as well ordinary human experience indicates that the lawfulness of immanent principles and the creativity of transcendent agency may reciprocally complement one another.

The predominant interpretation of "reason" has been to see it as man's autonomous capacity (through the immanence of principles within his own mind) to discern "rationality" (in turn, defined as the "lawful immanence of principles"). In the form of thoroughgoing determinism this prevalent concept of "reason" and "rationality" has allied itself with an alleged "empiricism" (the driving aim of which was to control physical causal predictability and hence to control physical causation) to theoretically-legislate creativity out of the universe. The *a priori* disciplines of logic (including mathematics) and the *a posteriori* successes of classical physics had, already by the time of Hume and Kant, so reinforced this predominant Western cultural *Weltanschauung* as to drive the proponents of genuine creativity into tour-de-force dualisms and reactionisms.

In terms of a world-view which sees the lawfulness of immanent principles as radically excluding any supervention from the creativity of transcendent agency, the universe is seen as an (essentially) one-level *closed* system. All processes in their smallest detail are predetermined and simply unwind (inertially) in time. Any "incursion" of the creativity of any agent (whether the "agent" be a wave-particle, or you, or God) which transcended the invariant, totally-determinate continuity of the one-level process-system would, accordingly, have to "violate inviolable laws" and "rip asunder the very fabric of nature."

That was the "hang-up" (humanistically and theologically) our forefathers were "stuck in." Given their cultural context, that hang-up was inevitable.

Today, however, that hang-up is quite "evitable." For many decades, now, that hang-up is as dead as Marley and the "door-nail." Twentieth-century physics, the most fully developed and most precise of all the sciences, has radically overthrown the deterministic, one-level, closed-system conceptuality of the earlier classical (Newtonian-Laplacian) physics, and replaced it with a revolutionary new conceptuality, which brings back in, as utterly essential, precisely those concepts which earlier generations of physicists had labored so hard to exclude: multi-leveled processes with reciprocally transcendent and immanent interrelations and flexibly open interaction between levels; intra-level and inter-level gaps within continua; complex multi-dimensional (non-Euclidean) spheres of relationality (which transcend our biologically-adaptive three-dimensional capacities of perception, and of imagination rooted in perception, but which have a conceptual precision far greater than the precision of percep-

tion and which are found to be necessary to understand *reality*—even at its merely physical levels); sub-unit inwardness or “interiority” of organization and response, which is only partially accessible outwardly (by measuring-instrument procedures); indeterminacy of spontaneous agency at the very foundations of microphysics (which is, however, an indeterminacy “within limits”—boundary function of Planck’s constant—that functions in complementary relation to invariant principles, with the result that microphysical behavior fulfills lawful conditions even though partially indeterminate); appearance of creative novelty within the entropic tendencies of systems (especially as manifest in the capacity of microphysical realities to remain open toward energy-utilization by biological organisms, which sustain contra-entropic processes without in any way “violating” the Second Law of thermodynamics).

The universe, as seen with the vision of modern physics, is a multi-dimensional system of flexible, mediated functionalities in which the lawfulness of immanent principles is flexibly open to complementary interaction with, redirection by, and higher-level fulfillment through the creativities of transcendent agencies.

This may be “news”* but, after fifty years, it can scarcely qualify as “new news.” The sooner some biologists, psychologists, sociologists, historians, and (ah, yes) theologians get the message the better—unless one just likes to enjoy his hang-up because that’s his “bag.”

Now, as I said earlier, the key issue in over-all historical interpretation is the issue of lawfulness vs. creativity, correlated with closed-system interpretation vs. open-system interpretation.

Historical methodology, as a *methodology*, aims at the *lawfulness* of immanent principles, not creativity (though any sensitive employment of methodology always requires creativity). However, historical methodology, as a methodology, does not involve any assumption or ontological-assertion one way or the other as to whether the lawfulness of history is that of a closed system excluding creativity

* If the news of the revolution really hasn’t reached you, read (read it anyway!) Ian G. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion*, Prentice-Hall, 1966. (Note Barbour’s favorable quotation from Robert E. Cushman’s criticism of Bultmann on p. 434.) If you’ve had introductory college physics read Milic Capek, *The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics*, D. Van Nostrand, 1961. If you’re still breathing and interested in mind “expansion” without the necessity of drugs read Edwin A. Abbott, *Flatland*, Sixth Ed., Revised with Introduction by Banesh Hoffmann, Dover (Pb), 1952. (Note also—and here the Editor speaks—that Ian Barbour is to be the James A. Gray Lecturer for 1969.)

or that of an open system in flexibly complementary interaction with the creativity of transcendent agencies (human, divine, or other).

If the historian takes modern physics as a partially suggestive model, he will operate with the latter conceptual assumption. If he takes scientific *methodology* as (explicitly or implicitly) *legislative* over the possible content of reality (as did the earlier classical physics, and as do, still, many non-physicists among the scientists of today, and as encouraged by *Scientism* generally), he will (try to) restrict his operations to the former conceptual assumption, thus attempting to keep his concepts of possible historical reality within the limitative confines of what is methodologically accessible.

Although the creativity of interpersonal-historical life is not accessible to historical methodology, it is *accessible to the historian*, because the historian is a man, and a man as a man may be *personally engaged* in history. The immanent principles of the lawfulness of any methodology are impersonal and require for their application a measure of *impersonal disengagement* from history (as well as a measure of creative judgment if they are to be relevantly applied).

The key issue of lawfulness vs. creativity and closed system vs. open system focuses, in the domain of history, into the issue of impersonal vs. personal and interpersonal categories for the understanding of "historical event." The key *historical* questions are the impersonalizing/personalizing questions: what/who are we, individually and communally, becoming? may we become? ought we to become? The same questions are the key *theological* questions . . . transformed by being brought into a subordinated relation of dependence upon the ultimate (Impersonalizing/Personalizing) question: What/Who is God?

Hence, in this or any other cultural setting, insofar as history is disengaged, the personal face of God is disengaged. On the other hand, insofar as history is engaged, the personal face of God is at least potentially engageable.

Historical methodology as such requires relative historical *disengagement*. Every methodology, as a methodology, involves (relative) autonomy. Insofar as the relative autonomy of historical methodology functions *alone*, the inevitable result is a cumulative tendency toward *disengagement* from *history* and from the apperceivability of the personal face of *God*.

Once the apple of historiographical knowledge has been eaten, there is an invisible flaming sword which forecloses re-entry into any prior innocence. To attempt to turn back now from the relent-

less employment of historical methodology—far from enabling us with a reclaimed innocence to engage history and the personal face of God—would arbitrarily depersonalize us in our history and in our relation to God. For the lust for *truth*—even *if* it kills us—is an integral part of our fullest human personhood, our richest historical endeavor, and our openly receptive relation to the God to whom we may be committed through Jesus the Messiah.

On the other hand, insofar as historical methodology and its historiographically resultant reconstructions (in all their tentativeness, ambiguity and relativity) are employed not purely autonomously but as *complemented* by and holistically *integrated* with personal and interpersonal historical *engagement* in receptively sensitive openness toward possibilities of creative fulfillment and re-creative disruption through transcendent agency (our own, others', and perhaps an Other's) functionally mediated into the ordinariness of life, then historical methodology may help lead us to historical wisdom—and even to recognition of and engagement with the living Lord of history.

History, Hermeneutics and Homiletics

THOR HALL

Associate Professor of Preaching and Theology

Homiletics, the study of the principles of preaching, is closely related to the study of history and to hermeneutics, the study of the principles of interpretation. There is, in a sense, a trinitarian relationship between the three disciplines: unity and interdependence balanced by differentiation and non-uniformity. It may be argued that historical understanding is impossible without the influence of some interpretive stance, and that it is meaningless without some form of homiletical purpose. Similarly, one can show that any consideration of the principles of interpretation must be pure abstraction if divorced from the actualities of history, and that it must run into sheer aimlessness if separated from the concern for the contemporary communication of faith. In the same way, one can easily demonstrate that preaching, if it is torn loose from history, will lose its reality, and that sermons that have no background in the understanding of interpretation have neither depth nor relevance. It falls on those who will describe the achievements of modern scholarship to analyze the processes by which the recognition of this close interaction of history, hermeneutics and homiletics has slowly come to be recognized. It is our purpose here to relate the story of how the concerns of homiletics have increasingly come to the forefront in the modern study of history and hermeneutics, and at the same time to make certain that the contemporary developments in these disciplines are taken into consideration in modern homiletics and in the understanding of the preaching event itself. We shall consider each of these facets of contemporary scholarship in turn, and in each case our interest will focus on those developments which point toward an increasing interaction and interdependence between the three disciplines.

In general, one may describe the developments that have taken place in each of these disciplines during the twentieth century by way of logical antitheses and a movement toward synthesis. On the one hand one will discover strong tendencies toward empiricism, realism,

atomism, even agnosticism. On the other hand the pendulum tends to swing over toward speculation, idealism, monism and metaphysics. In recent decades, however, each of these dialectical alternatives has become increasingly unsatisfactory both to historians and to theoreticians in hermeneutics and homiletics, and a number of significant attempts have been made to find a synthesis that involves both a responsible recognition of historical realities and an honest acknowledgment of the dimensions of meaning and value. This process has not been without tension and contradiction, and the results are not free from distortion and confusion. But there can be no doubt about the importance of these attempts to integrate events and values, the past and the present, fact and faith.

I

We shall consider first the development of a synthesis involving both the analysis of events and the recognition of values in contemporary philosophy of history. This synthesis has been a long time coming. The twentieth century inherited from the nineteenth a perspective which made it difficult to think that such a synthesis was possible—or even desirable. The legacy of the nineteenth century philosophy of history was in the form of a sharp dichotomy between the historical-critical methods of research and the speculative-idealistic schools of thought. In a sense, the nineteenth century passed on two myths which the twentieth century has not until recently been able to demythologize: On the one side is the idea which was propounded by Hegel, and to a certain extent by Mills, concerning the possibility of identifying certain objectively given universal laws by which historical events are governed and in reference to which they are incorporated into a meaningful whole. On the other hand is the principle which was developed by the proponents of a scientific study of history, concerning the necessity of assuming an attitude of presuppositionless objectivity in relation to historical facts. Characteristically, both of these myths show clear tendencies away from subjectivity. The thrust of the nineteenth-century philosophy of history was toward objectivism, whether it be the objectivism of idealistic metaphysics or the objectivism of historical positivism. There were, as we shall see, certain other tendencies within nineteenth-century philosophy of history also, but these are undoubtedly the two determining poles in the historiological perspective that was inherited by the twentieth century: idealism and positivism.

One should note, of course, that the predominant interest in the

nineteenth-century centered on the scientific respectability of historical study. In this sense, Lessing must be considered more typical of the age that were Hegel and Mills. Hegel's grand universal schemes were, in fact, judged as preposterous speculations from the perspective of critical scholarship; and Mill's idea that historical study functions to explain scientifically the hitherto unknown universal laws, of which particular phenomena are mere instances, was flatly rejected by those who defined history as an empirical science. Lessing's categorical statement that contingent historical facts cannot contain absolute truths of reason expressed well the prevailing notion that the legitimacy of interpreting history from the standpoint of traditional metaphysical presuppositions was now preempted. It cleared the ground for manoueuering historical consciousness away from the philosophy of history and toward the scientific study of history. The strongest aspect of the legacy of the nineteenth century was thus definitely the tradition of historical-critical research.

The extent to which the historians of the twentieth century have been informed by the nineteenth-century perspective is evident in the chasm which exists between those who consider history an exact science and those who are still interested in developing a synthetic understanding of historical laws and meaning. The latter group is now a pitiable minority; the myth of scientific objectivity has been far more persuasively argued—and is more immediately acceptable to the modern mind—than is the myth of transcendent patterns and eternal laws. So strong is the tradition of historical-critical research that modern historical scholarship is for the most part directed toward highly specialized and intensely concentrated fields of study, the typical historian being a scholar who buries himself in detailed research and precise investigations. The material for historical study is so vast that no one can justifiably claim complete comprehension or overall understanding; any such claims must inevitably stand discredited when confronted with the modern standards of scientific respectability. Typical is the reaction to the few twentieth-century historians like G. M. Trevelyan, Arnold Toynbee, Will Durant and Carl Grimberg who continued to make attempts at comprehensive history writing. These men's work is no longer taken seriously from a scientific point of view. It is considered significant in the sense that it popularizes the historical perspective, but it is clearly more in line with art or preaching than with scientific history. The modern historian is urged to abstain from such fanciful endeavors in comprehensiveness. He is taught to resign himself to the study of his-

torical facts and to regard his discipline as a subsidiary of and a supplement to the empirical sciences.

Representative of the two sides of the modern historiological chasm are on the one hand Maurice Mandelbaum, and on the other Collingwood and Jaspers. Mandelbaum, in his book *The Problem of Historical Knowledge* (1938), argues in strict observance of the myth of scientific objectivity against all "relativism" in historical interpretation. In his view, history is a given reality which constitutes the object of scientific research; there is no room for subjective evaluation, or for the development of a transcendent monism by which all contingent events are incorporated in a unified system of meaning. Against relativism, Mandelbaum sets historical objectivity; against monism he presents a theory of historical pluralism which focuses the scholar's attention on actual events and defines historical research as the study of the complex conjunction of factors involved in each event. Collingwood, the idealist, and Jaspers, the existentialist, do not consider individual events or objective facts meaningful in themselves. History has significance, rather, in terms of the ideas behind it or our response to it. The work of the historian, therefore, is not at all an exact science; it is more like philosophy or—less elaborately—personal awareness.

In the chasm between these opposing positions, several significant moves have recently been made, clearly aimed at establishing a synthesis between history as fact and history as idea and meaning. The inspiration is not taken out of thin air. The nineteenth century itself gave room for voices of mediation and for efforts at integrating research and reflection. Neo-Kantian historians like Rickert and Windelband worked in the interest of such a synthesis. So did Soren Kierkegaard and Wilhelm Dilthey. But it remained for the twentieth century to free these men's work from the obscurity of its nineteenth-century setting. Through the mediation of Martin Kähler, for example, Dilthey's analyses of the concept of history were applied to the problem of the relationship between history and *Heilsgeschichte* and were thus passed on to Christian thinkers in the present. Similarly, Martin Heidegger absorbed the Kierkegaardian concept of historical contemporaneity and built upon it a fully developed ontological-epistemological principle which in turn came to have fundamental importance for Rudolf Bultmann and his followers. In a sense one may say that the form-critical approach to hermeneutics was conceived as a modern synthesis of the traditional antitheses, history as fact vs. history as value and meaning.

We shall return to the hermeneutical question in a moment. Here we should note that the synthesis we have referred to does not appear as an isolated event which has no point of contact in the two camps it seeks to bring together. Significant things have happened to the two myths which for a long time dichotomized historical research and historical interpretation, and as a result the twentieth-century understanding of history and historical interpretation has been radically changed. The myth of scientific objectivity has come under close scrutiny recently. Michael Polanyi, in his book on *Personal Knowledge* (1958), argues for example that there is no such thing as a presuppositionless objectivity in the approach to historical or empirical facts. As long as one is talking about knowledge, one must take the knower into consideration. One discovers that when the knower is confronted with an object of knowledge, he is never entirely passive or receptive in relation to it. Knowledge is a personal activity, and there are always tacit, evaluational and commitmental components at play in the act of knowing. Polanyi's "post-critical" perspective represents an important corrective to modern positivism and scientism; it signals a significant recovery of the subjective, evaluational factors in historiology, factors which the nineteenth-century myths of objectivity went to war against.

At the opposite side of the spectrum, purveyors of the myth of the transcendent laws determining historical order and meaning have undertaken a parallel softening of the earlier, more extreme standpoints. Historical idealism, under the influence of Whitehead and Hartshorne and Teilhard de Chardin, has clearly moved toward more realistic concepts of transcendent principles. It is the modern emphasis on the dynamic nature of the universe that has provided a point of contact for an idealism of less abstract and less static orientation. The objective laws of history are now spoken of in terms of process and development, and meaning has become a question of relating to an inclusive environment, natural and supernatural.

It is clear that the modifications that appear on both sides of the historiological dichotomy have had the effect of narrowing the gap between positivistic and idealistic perspectives. There is emerging a new readiness to recognize that history is a many-faceted concept and that historical meaning is a relative and rather personal thing. For theology, this growing consensus has had importance, as in the work of H. R. Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, Alan Richardson, Herbert Butterfield and Oscar Cullman. All convinced Christians, these men attempted to hold together a critical historical orientation and a

theocentric interpretive perspective. However, the movement toward a synthesis of fact and value did not reach maturity until it was undergirded by the philosophy which more than any other single factor has contributed to interdisciplinary understanding, namely logical or linguistic analysis. Itself a child of nineteenth-century criticism and twentieth-century logical positivism, analytical philosophy soon began to challenge the narrow concepts of reality and meaning which characterize logical positivism. Focusing on the meaning of language, the new philosophers learned that there are many dimensions in the human awareness of reality. Language is organized in a variety of "games," each determined by its own specific criteria of sense. There are empirical-indicative, aesthetic-axiological and ethical-imperative language games, and each one is equally valid. Applied to the understanding of history, this means that factual description and evaluative interpretation are two principally different and independently legitimate endeavors, and that they may therefore be held together without conflict within an integrated view of man's historical awareness.

Again we discover that where the synthesis appears, philosophy of history and hermeneutics are closely related. Furthermore, the concerns of homiletics are clearly involved. Theologians who are interested in the problems of communicating Christian faith in the present have found themselves drawn into the discussion of historical fact vs. historical interpretation, and for many the modern understanding of language has become the basis of a new synthesis, clear and understandable to the modern mind. Facts and evaluation can now be understood and held together logically, and when something is understandable it is also communicable. It demands, in fact, to be communicated; interpretation presupposes a standpoint and issues in a conviction, and one who is committed to a conviction has a message. Among many contemporary theologians who represent such an integration of history, interpretation and preaching, Carl Michalson may be considered typical. In *History and Hermeneutics* he sought to synthesize event and interpretation; in *The Hinge of History* interpretation clearly developed into preaching.

The comparative ease with which contemporary theologians can now move from historical fact through interpretation to Christian proclamation ought not, however, to make us blind to the problems involved. The old historiological dichotomy between fact and value is largely overcome, but the sharp distinction between knowledge and faith cannot be ignored. Van Austin Harvey, in *The Historian and the Believer* (1966), is concerned about this. He argues that there is

a basic distinction between the "morality" of historical knowledge and the "ethic" of Christian belief. There is in the modern mind a fundamental conflict between the will to truth and the will to believe. In the latter, faith is celebrated as a virtue, and doubt is regarded as sin. In the former, one considers methodological scepticism sound, and one is distrustful of passion in matters of theoretical inquiry. When Christian theologians tend to "think Christianity and history into each other," they confuse these two orientations, thus confounding both the conscience of the historian and the conviction of the believer. To avoid such confusion, it is necessary to have a clear conception of what is what: what is historical fact and what is faithful interpretation. By first distinguishing between them and then holding them together, says Harvey, it is possible to avoid playing timeless truths and historical events off against one another. One can "think together symbol and history" in a way that is sensible and meaningful, i.e., it is respectable from a historical point of view, understandable from a hermeneutical perspective, and communicable from a homiletical standpoint.

The modern developments in the contemporary understanding of history provide the modern preacher with a significant opening for the Christian message and an important means by which he may move out and take advantage of the possibilities. Yet preachers must learn that history and *Heilsgeschichte*, fact and interpretation, are not identical. The synthesis which the modern philosophers of history are constructing is not a confusing sum of two opposing myths. The modern reintegration of events and values presupposes the critical perspective, the analysis of the dimensions of human perception and human language, and it presupposes the willingness to allow each dimension of life full play on its own terms. It is on these presuppositions that contemporary preachers must also approach their task of preaching Christian faith in the present and thus being faithful to their calling while yet being men of common sense. We shall see, in a moment, what this means for contemporary preaching.

II

The second area of our concern has to do with recent developments in hermeneutics. The twentieth century has brought out several new features in the profile of this discipline, and once again the new is in the form of a synthesis that is designed to smooth over the antinomies of earlier hermeneutical discussions and bring theo-

logians to an understanding of faith which can be communicated sensibly to contemporary man.

The influence of nineteenth-century theology has obviously created certain problems for recent generations of theologians. As in historiology, the legacy of the nineteenth century took the shape of a sharp polarity. On the one hand were the text-critical methods of biblical criticism, and on the other the religious simplicity of evangelical pietism and the dogmatic authoritarianism of orthodox systematic theology. In a sense, the nineteenth-century theological community was split in two large camps: On the one side, the disciples of Strauss, Bauer and Wellhausen, scholars who led theology in the direction of responsible biblical interpretation based on historical-critical and text-critical research; and on the other side, the multitude of preachers and systematic theologians—from Spurgeon to Marheineke—who considered biblical interpretation a matter of spiritual inspiration and theology a pronouncement of transcendent truth. In one respect the two camps were at one, however; both critical exegetes and biblical-systematic theologians were distrustful of subjectivity. The main thrust of nineteenth-century theology—in clear parallelism to nineteenth-century philosophy of history—went in the direction of objectivism, either the objectivism of scientific textual research or the objectivism of doctrinal or revelational absolutism. We shall identify certain other trends in the theology of that age in a moment, but the basic form of the heritage to which twentieth-century theologians were the heirs is the antithesis between biblical criticism and theological dogmatism.

It is only fair to note at this point that the most characteristic—and most significant—nineteenth-century tradition was undoubtedly the endeavor to apply the scientific methods of historical criticism to biblical exegesis, all in the interest of theological reorientation and reinterpretation. So predominant was the emphasis on biblical criticism, in fact, that the critical scholars confronted the theological community with an inclusive criterion by which the validity of theological constructions were to be tested, namely the historical-critical analysis of their textual bases. The aim was this: By setting the particularity and the relativity of the biblical writings over against the universality and the absoluteness of dogmatic speculation, critical theologians hoped to dig through the cumulated layers of theological-interpretive symbolism and get at the factual essence of historical Christian religion. In their view, it was precisely the function of

theology to rediscover the historical foundations of Christianity and to recover the simple religion of Jesus.

Obviously, twentieth-century theology has been seriously affected by the fact that it came out of a split home. In large circles within the theological community, the old conflict between historical-critical exegesis and biblical-theological reflection still prevails. One cannot, for example, talk of twentieth-century theology without considering the mutual exclusiveness and dialectical tension between fundamentalism and liberalism. No synthesis seems possible in that complex of antitheses. On the contrary, the strange conflict—ana-chronistic from any enlightened standpoint—seems to have extended itself both in depth and in frontline in recent decades. Mainline fundamentalism, having once and for all defined its position in terms of an absolute and infallible Bible, considers all theology that tends to relativize the content of biblical revelation and seeks to make sense of faith on the presuppositions of the modern mindset as heresy. Radical liberalism, on the other hand, claims that only those elements of faith that can be made understandable in terms of present categories of thought are relevant to modern theology at all. Biblical criticism, in this camp, serves the purposes of theological eclecticism.

There are other examples of the consequences of the nineteenth-century heritage on the contemporary theological scene. Not far from the surface of the continuing debate lies the old problem of the relationship between scientific biblical research and systematic theological construction. Closely related to it is the question of the relationship between religious tradition and contemporary existence, or between the past and the present meaning of faith. Strange as it seems from a more inclusive point of view, twentieth-century theology provides numerous examples of a complete dichotomy between scientific biblical scholarship and constructive systematic-theological reflection. From the point of view of the former, the theological enterprise is exclusively a matter of idea-historical or motif-genetic analysis of the biblical traditions of faith. From the point of view of the latter, theology is primarily an exercise in theoretical-religious speculation built on the traditional categories of church theology or on the existential situation of modern man. The possibility of a closer integration of these opposing commitments seems often quite remote.

When all is counted, however, it is in no way true to say that these opposing camps represent the mainstream of twentieth-century

theology. Several important events have occurred in the theology of our time, and together they form the basis for a new advance toward the integration of history and experience, the past and the present, critical scholarship and constructive theology. It is all a part of the modern developments in hermeneutics. The hermeneutical renewal which has taken place within this century has provided a new meeting place for theologians of different backgrounds and various persuasions—a place for dialogue and reunification, where neo-orthodox and neo-liberal theologians can come together across the lines of old controversies. There are sharp polarities still in the picture, of course; one may not reasonably speak of a hermeneutical consensus as yet. But there is a steadily broadening highway of methodological unity that runs through the landscape of contemporary theology, and most responsible theologians find themselves drawn to it. Few biblical scholars will now claim that detailed text-analytical or historical-critical work will by itself uncover the essential meaning of Christian faith. By the same token, few modern preachers will suggest that the Bible is such a document as to require faith but not research. The theological community no longer falls into the simplistic error of separating between theological research and theological reflection; it has discovered the hermeneutical principle that to set the two in opposition to each other is to misunderstand both.

We should observe that the synthesis of textual research and theological construction had its proponents already in the nineteenth century. Kierkegaard, Schleiermacher and Ritschl all attempted to integrate past traditions and present meaning; and significantly, all these men made the attempt on the basis of a critical historical orientation coupled with a clear emphasis on religious subjectivity. Their results may not in all respects have been satisfactory, but their method points toward the future. It is precisely the combination of historical criticism and religious existentialism which has provided the key to the development of a modern hermeneutical synthesis.

We shall not need to trace the full story of the development of modern hermeneutics here, but some important steps in the process must be marked. It got its start when Albert Schweitzer presented his study of the historical-critical tradition in Christology, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1905). Schweitzer undertook to show the impossibility of the endeavor to understand Jesus of Nazareth by way of strict historical-critical research. Taking seriously the new understanding of the nature of the biblical sources developed by the text-critical scholars, he proceeded to prove that the historical Jesus

would not only be impossible to identify; he would be a total stranger to our time—a direct liability to Christian preaching—if transferred directly from the first to the twentieth century. The only meaningful relationship we can have to Jesus of Nazareth is a present, personal or “eschatological” one. Karl Barth, in his *Commentary on Romans* (1921), confessed that the consequences of Schweitzer’s work must be taken seriously. He therefore focused on the task of developing a genuine understanding of the Christian message, placing the text-critical approach to biblical exegesis in explicit servitude to systematic theology. Barth purposely chose to study the most systematic-theological document of the New Testament, thus indicating both the biblical character of systematic theology and the theological nature of biblical interpretation. Martin Dibelius, in the meantime, studied what appeared to be the most genuine historical material in the New Testament, namely the sermons of the Book of Acts, and he came to the conclusion that the message of the early church was characterized by certain definite kerygmatic patterns. It represents, he said, history and proclamation joined together according to traditional Hebraic principles of interpretation. This became the starting point of the form-critical school. With Rudolf Bultmann, the perspective was greatly enlarged. Not only the Book of Acts, but the entire New Testament tradition was seen to be structured around a kerygmatic framework. Moreover, the content of the biblical message was found to be so identified with a typically first century religious symbolism as to require translation—“demythologization” and “remythologization”—in order to be understandable and communicable in the present.

Less radical than Bultmann in details of biblical interpretation, but equally convinced of the theological character of the biblical sources, other scholars have followed up and broadened the impact of the new hermeneutic. It is sufficient here only to mention the work of Old Testament scholars like H. Wheeler Robinson, William Albright, and Gerhard von Rad, and of New Testament interpreters like C. H. Dodd, Oscar Cullmann, and John Knox. Systematic theologians have also contributed to the closer integration of biblical study and constructive theology. We need only refer to the influence of Anders Nygren, Karl Heim, and Heinrich Ott in this connection. In recent decades, Bultmann’s own disciples, often in the interest of correcting certain aspects of their teacher’s work, have advanced the form-critical hermeneutical perspective significantly. Theologians like Ernst Käsemann, Ernst Fuchs, Günther Bornkamm,

Joachim Jeremias, Gerhard Ebeling and Herbert Braun typify the strength of this tradition.

As a consequence of the wide influence of these developments in modern hermeneutics, twentieth-century theology can no longer be described by way of the dichotomy of biblical criticism and theological construction. Theologians generally have come to realize that the biblical sources are themselves precisely theology, the product of a faithful interpretation of historical events for kerygmatic purposes. In von Rad's words, the biblical record represents a "Wechselwirkung zwischen Gegenwartereignis und überliefertem Kerygma" (interaction between contemporary experience and traditional proclamation). Biblical exegesis, therefore, can no longer be divorced from biblical theology; textual criticism must itself be recognized as a theological discipline. Biblical scholarship is essentially the study of biblical message or of the religious intentions behind the biblical correlation of history and kerygma, and it uses the scientific tools of historical and textual criticism—both "lower" and "higher" criticism—in the interest of understanding the essential meaning of biblical faith.

At this point it is becoming evident that the developments in modern hermeneutics tie in with the movement toward a synthesis of fact and value in modern historiology as well as with the concerns of contemporary homiletics. We shall turn to the homiletical question in a moment. It remains to be pointed out here that the new hermeneutic, in clear correlation to the perspectives of the new historiology, is operating with a multidimensional concept of history: First, there is history in the sense of events and facts; secondly, there is history in the sense of history writing; and thirdly, there is history in the sense of historical existence. The first is a function of historical actualities; the second involves a principle of selection and interpretation; and the third has to do with personal decision and application. The new hermeneutic makes it clear that the Bible is not concerned with history in the first sense; its perspective is that of historical interpretation and existential application. This may, of course, seem confusing, particularly in view of the fact that the biblical writers tend to express their interpretations in the symbolism of factual narration. However, the new understanding of the biblical message presupposes two methodological principles that are designed to eliminate such confusion: First, the critical approach to historical sources and empirical facts; second, the explicit recognition of the role of interpretation and decision—the existential or

subjective dimension—in faith. It is the critical differentiation between the factual and the interpretive perspectives, coupled with the consistent correlation of the two as differing dimensions of historical existence, that constitutes the genius of modern historiology and modern hermeneutics, and this important methodological discovery has significant implications also for modern homiletics. The purpose of preaching is to present the Christian message in such a way that it makes sense and becomes meaningful to contemporary man. With the new understanding of history and hermeneutics by its side, contemporary homiletics has a bright new possibility to renew itself for its particular task in our time.

III

Twentieth-century preaching has followed the same general pattern of antitheses and synthesis which we have observed in historiology and in hermeneutics, but in none of the other disciplines have the modern methodological presuppositions come so slowly into general recognition as in homiletics. This may have many causes, yet the consequences are very distinct: both the theological community and the modern society in general regard preaching as increasingly outdated. It is riddled with internal contradiction and confusion, beset by contextual problems and tensions; it has fallen upon bad times. Obviously, a great deal of work is needed to bring homiletics into step with its times.

The heritage of the nineteenth century has influenced twentieth-century preaching in several different ways. The prevailing tendency among preachers has been to fall in line with one tradition or another and to follow the available alternatives with the single-mindedness of the simple-minded. In vast circles, the predominant emphasis has been on the social gospel, but here and there one can find equally strong emphases on individual and spiritual salvation. Preaching has been understood by many exclusively in terms of exhortation; by other groups it has been considered entirely a matter of inspiration. Evangelistic preaching has taken an entirely different form from that of the pastoral ministry of preaching. At times one can find the kerygmatic concept of preaching dominating, at times the didactic. All these contrasting views have of course been subjects for debate. Perhaps the most fundamental contrast of all—and one which for a long time tended to split preachers into two opposing factions—was the polarity between the so-called “life-situation” preaching and the “textual” orientation. The controversy had several facets: It

set the concerns of truth and relevance against each other, or it contrasted the absolute and the relative. At times it was conceived as a conflict between the eternal and the contingent, at other times as a contrast between the static and the dynamic. Occasionally the discussion centered on the question of the Word of God vs. the words of men, and on other occasions it had to do with the relationship between biblical exposition and contemporary application. Homileticians were divided also on the practical problems; discussions were lively over the relative values of call vs. theological education, the gift of the Holy Spirit vs. logical and theological understanding, or on revelation vs. skills in communication.

In spite of all the confusing checks and balances that appear in twentieth-century homiletics, there is still one clear dividing line that runs through the picture, namely the question concerning the use of the Bible in contemporary preaching. Even on the superficial level there are distinct differences between the commitments of conservatives and the attitude of liberals—not to speak of fundamentalists and modernists—on this question. But the real issue lies deeper. Both of these groups were confronted with a problem, a new situation, and they were forced to take a stand. Obviously, the understanding of preaching would be affected by modern developments in the hermeneutical and historiological fields; a new understanding of history immediately involves a new understanding of biblical history, and a new approach to the understanding of the Bible must inevitably influence both theology and preaching. The basic problem for homileticians—both theorists and practitioners—was this: What consequences does biblical criticism have for contemporary preaching? It was a problem of principle as well as of practice. The principal question was whether or not the various branches of biblical criticism are at all compatible with the preacher's role as a servant of the Word of God, and the practical question was to what extent one should allow the results of modern biblical scholarship to affect the sermon itself.

Strange to say, this problem created more difficulties for the vast majority of middle-of-the-road ministers than for extremists on the left or on the right. Fundamentalists solved the problem by definition: The Bible is the Word of God, and any historical criticism of its clear and literal meaning is an act of unfaith. To preach the results of such biblical criticism is heresy. Modernists at the other end of the spectrum dissolved the problem also: To them, the church is an instrument for the progressive development of mature individ-

uals and a good society; the preacher must find the Word of God not in the past, but in the ongoing revelation, in the dynamics of history and in the evolving future. Between these standpoints, however, there is a big gray area, where the many who desired to hold together biblical knowledge and biblical faith easily lost their way and found it difficult to establish their identity. With their theological education, preachers were generally given the basic information on the nature and history of the biblical canon. Insights into questions of authorship, dates, readers, literary genres, terminological characteristics, grammar, motif-genesis, etc. were available in a confusing multitude. There appeared to be no end to the research required to understand the biblical sources. Furthermore, as new information came into view, it was increasingly apparent that the meaning of the Bible was quite different from what was the common conception of it. The popular understanding of the Bible, whether devotional, allegorical, moralistic or "spiritual," became more and more difficult to hold on to. A chasm opened up between what was commonly considered biblical faith and what was clearly the biblical truth; critical exegesis even revealed that most of the traditional homiletical material was the result of *eisegesis*, pure and simple. Yet it was precisely the traditional "faith in the Bible" that mainline Protestant congregations seemed to demand. No wonder that the most prevalent question, in seminary classroom as in the preacher's study, was "How do I preach this?"

There were several favorite solutions to the dilemma, some intellectually dishonest, some theologically irresponsible, most of them unsatisfactory. One could, for example, take the side of traditional biblical faith, simply utilizing the results of scientific exegetical scholarship in so far as this does not disturb one's own or the congregation's biblicistic commitments. Many neo-fundamentalists found a certain peace of mind in such eclecticism, but the position is not easily defended. On the other hand, one could side with historical-critical scholarship and make the pulpit a platform for teaching interesting historical lessons concerning and on the basis of the Bible. Vast numbers of liberals managed to convince congregations of their biblical orientation by such means, but the approach is not particularly enriching from a religious point of view. Perhaps the most common way for preachers who desired to do well in the church and at the same time retain some degree of intellectual self-respect was to move the weight of their preaching away from the problems of biblical interpretation or of theology, focusing instead on personal

religious experience and on the consequences of Christian faith in contemporary social contexts. This, of course, solved the hermeneutical dilemma, but only by way of postponement. Under the influence of such experiential and activist—but anti-theological—preaching, a generation or more of churchmen have perhaps had their hearts warmed and their wills trained, but their understanding has not been enlightened.

In view of this crucial homiletical dilemma, it is rather disappointing to discover that homiletical teaching during the first forty years of this century directed itself primarily toward helping preachers master the techniques of effective pulpit performance. Batsell B. Baxter's *The Heart of the Yale Lectures* (1947) is illustrative in this connection. Here, a predominant definition of preaching is one which describes it, in Henry Ward Beecher's terms, as "the art of moving men from a lower to a higher life." The discipline of homiletics, correspondingly, is defined as the study of such elements of public speaking which make for "success in preaching," "influence over people," or "power in the pulpit." The main emphasis, characteristically, falls on "the power of persuasion," and the one element which more than any other is said to be the secret of persuasion is "the power of personality." Ralph S. Sockman, in fact, goes so far as to say that "Not what is said, but who says it—that is the consideration which gives weight to what we hear." The power of personality has to do primarily, according to the Yale lecturers, with such characteristics as "personal attraction," "magnetism," and "character," i.e. "personal piety," "general righteousness of life," or "demonstration and example of the type of life which he would have others attain." Only secondary emphasis is given to "mental abilities" or "knowledge." Says Baxter, "Fewer than twelve of the Lyman Beecher lecturers spoke specifically of the preacher's need for a good intellect. Only two spoke of the matter with any thoroughness." The thrust of these lectures may well be summed up in Augustine's famous statement:

"It is more by the Christian fervor of his sermons than by any endowment of his intellect that the minister must hope to inform the understanding, catch the affections, and bend the will of his hearers."

As the lecturer Freeman said at Yale, "Youthful zeal and enthusiasm may often be more effective than more mature learning with its tempering of enthusiasm."

For a long time, then, twentieth-century homiletics, both theoretic-

cal and practical, has turned away from the questions which the modern philosophy of history and the new hermeneutic have put before it. But by doing so, it has also missed significant opportunities to advance toward the solution of the contemporary homiletical problem. Homileticians have tended to isolate themselves from the very disciplines which could be of most significance to them. They have not always done so by default; more often the preachers isolated themselves from contemporary philosophical and theological movements by design, claiming that it was these movements that created problems for the modern preacher. However, questions concerning the use of the Bible in contemporary preaching or concerning the relationship between critical scholarship and biblical preaching are not simply academic, a result of advancing historical-critical disciplines which those can ignore who are not interested in the theories of modern scholarship. They are problems built into the modern situation itself. Any preacher who is aware of the historical nature of faith must ask the historical question, and any man concerned to address the mind of the times must be involved in the problems of hermeneutics. To refuse these questions is to isolate oneself not only from the scholars of the age, but from the modern age itself.

We should note that homiletics has undergone a significant re-orientation during the last thirty years. Responding to and following up the theological recovery during the nineteen-thirties and forties, homileticians like George A. Buttrick, Paul Scherer, James S. Stewart and H. H. Farmer wrote important books for preachers. Later, relating more explicitly to the modern theological situation, Donald G. Miller, Theodore O. Wedel, Gene Bartlett, James T. Cleland, Helmut Thielicke and Reuel L. Howe undertook to help the preacher come to terms with new trends in biblical and systematic theology, in ecclesiology and psychology. Occasionally, systematic theologians also published sermon collections with a clear contemporary orientation and a high degree of theological sophistication, Paul Tillich, Karl Barth and Emil Brunner among them. And most recently, active teaching homileticians like Edmund Steimle at Union, Merrill R. Abbey at Garrett and Morgan Edwards at Claremont have given explicit attention to the correlation of the contemporary cultural, intellectual and sociological situation and a positive Christian affirmation of faith.

Slowly, then, an attempt is made to integrate the old message and the new times. Preaching is now generally understood as a "bifocal" endeavor, a combination of biblical truth and contemporary

concerns, or of revelation and relevance, the eternal and the now. It concerns itself both with the individual and with society, with the inner and the outer man; and it brings together both faith and knowledge in the interest of kerygmatic proclamation, didactic teaching and paracletic exhortation. This new synthesis of traditional homiletical dichotomies is most promising; but it is also problematical, for it raises again the principal methodological problems which preachers have sought to avoid for a long time. The crucial question now is whether homiletics will be able to relate to the new developments in modern philosophy of history and in hermeneutics, thus developing into a modern discipline of thought, or whether it will continue its intellectual isolation and remain behind in relation to its time and to modern scholarship. In practical terms, the question may be stated this way: Are contemporary homileticians, in seeking to hold together the historical Christian message and the modern situation of man, fully informed of the problems involved in such an undertaking, and are they guided by the significant new solutions that have come into view in correlative disciplines of thought? Or, in more specific language yet, the challenge of the moment is this: Is the preacher of today prepared to identify himself with the methodological presuppositions that are gaining recognition both in the philosophy of history and in hermeneutics, namely the critical differentiation between the dimensions of fact and faith, and the explicit acknowledgement of the existential, commitmental and interpretive nature of faith?

We have observed how historiology in the twentieth century has moved away from the objectivism—idealistic and positivistic—which it inherited from the nineteenth century, and to historical criticism. For homiletics, this is important. Philosophical idealism always had difficulties recognizing the historical particularity of Christian proclamation, and positivistic historicism refused consistently to accept the idea that historical facts have revelational value. In the new critical-historical orientation, however, these problems are solved. One differentiates between fact and value, and proceeds to relate the two as differing dimensions of one and the same event. By this operation—the demetaphysicalization of history and the deobjectification of faith—it is possible for a man to be both a factual observer and a Christian believer, and the Christian preacher has thus found a way to function with complete intellectual honesty as well as in full identification with Christian faith. Furthermore, when the contemporary hermeneutic undertakes to analyze the relationship of historical reality and religious interpretation in the writings of the

Bible, this is again significant for homiletics. It was always problematical for people with a modern mindset to accept the curious mixture of facticity and transcendence which is typical of the biblical sources. But in the new hermeneutical perspective, this difficulty finds its solution. One distinguishes between event and interpretation, and then relates the two as different dimensions of man's involvement in reality. This procedure—the denythologization of biblical symbolism and the radicalization of Christian faith—opens the door for a meaningful involvement in both historical research and theological reflection, and the preacher has thereby gained the possibility of being at one and the same time a man of common sense and a bearer of Christian convictions.

What all this means in the practical context of sermon planning and pulpit procedure cannot be spelled out here.¹ Some principles are becoming clear, however:

1. The purpose of Christian preaching is to bring persons to accept and apply the message of the Old and the New Testament as the framework of meaning for their life in the present.

2. Christian preaching consists in the proclamation of the content, the explanation of the intentions, and the application of the consequences of the Christian message in the present situation of persons and societies.

3. The Christian message consists of a specific interpretation of a particular series of historical events, and Christian faith is formed in interaction with—and is therefore inevitably related to—these particular events.

4. The Christian message is applicable to the present historical situation in the form of a symbolic framework from the perspective of which the Christian believer interprets contemporary existence and relates to it.

5. It is the preacher's task to present the Christian message in such a way that it is neither identified with past history nor torn loose from its historical anchoring.

6. The direction of Christian preaching is twofold: to the biblical tradition, seeking to deepen the understanding of the meaning of Christian faith symbols; and to the contemporary situation, seeking to nurture a greater acknowledgement of the meaning of Christian faith in the present.

7. Christian preaching thus concerns itself with Christian history, and with history from a Christian point of view; the first is a function of the second, and the second is a function of the first.

Reduced to its most essential factors, homiletics is a discipline which must stand with one foot in the Christian message and the other in the situation of contemporary man. This means that the homiletician must relate himself to those disciplines of study which

1. For a fuller discussion of the nature of the sermon, cf. my article "Let Religion Be Religious," *Interpretation*, April, 1969.

can help him understand both of the foci of his orientation. He must be especially observant of such new developments in these disciplines which tend to clarify the relationship between the realities of human experience and the meaning of Christian faith. He must not ignore or minimize the problems involved in holding the two dimensions of his involvement together, and thus too easily "think Christianity and history into each other." The preacher must learn to distinguish, both in his tradition and in the present context of life, between what is common knowledge and what is faithful interpretation; and by holding the two together as different but interacting dimensions within the experience of believing men, he will be able to "think together symbol and history"—faith and fact—and to communicate in the present the same meaning which the Christian gospel had in its original setting.

Black and White Together?

FREDERICK HERZOG

Professor of Systematic Theology

It has been on my mind for some time that I had promised THE DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL REVIEW a systematic theology piece on hermeneutic for the spring of 1969. After all the noise I have been making at Duke about hermeneutic for nearly a decade I probably should be one of the first to deliver a goodly stack of sheets on the subject for publication. But I will probably be the last one to turn in a contribution, and not a very lengthy one at that. Let me hasten to add that this does not reflect lack of concern for the total project so well prepared by Gene Tucker. It also does not mean that I have not made preparations for the writing of the article. But in the past six weeks since February 13, 1969, many of my theological words have broken to pieces. I have had to face unprecedented difficulties of communication, hermeneutical "hang-ups." I notice that others have had similar difficulties. At the core of my communication difficulties lies the realization that if people cannot understand one another, they certainly cannot understand some subject matter in common, say, the Bible. Understanding some common subject matter in the event of understanding one another, this is what hermeneutic is all about. But here on Duke campus in the spring of 1969 we are further from understanding one another than at any time in my memory during the nearly ten years of my stay at this University. It may well be that it now merely became unconcealed how little we really understood one another before, when all was suffused in a glow of fellowship and friendly dialogue. But this insight is cold comfort when we need understanding *now*. Handwriting over the past will not help us on in the task of understanding. So where do we turn?

In preparation for this paper I read *The Pornography of Power* (Chicago, 1968) by Lionel Rubinoff, who in this book works with as clear a definition of hermeneutic as anyone I know of. At least he uses the word the way I have used it in my teaching and writing. His basic idea is as follows: "As opposed to 'causal' or 'scientific' analysis of behavior, which seeks primarily to *explain* particular events by subsuming them under empirically verifiable laws, a her-

hermeneutic analysis seeks rather to disclose the subjective significance or 'meaning' of human behavior. . . . As Sartre has argued, the substitution of *in order to* for *because* (or as a result of) is a matter of the utmost importance. It illustrates once again the difference between the phenomenological approach, which is essentially hermeneutic and which seeks to disclose the human significance of a phenomenon, and the naturalistic approach, which is essentially causal-explanatory." (pp. 86f.) I find significant in this description of hermeneutic especially the emphasis on the role of the person. Hermeneutic is not a mere matter of taking apart a text and putting it back together again. It is a grasping of personhood, human or divine, often mediated through a text, but with the text always functioning as the medium that reveals personhood.

Systematic theology, as I understand it, evolves as a hermeneutic. It is definitely a phenomenological approach to a particular subject matter. It cannot subsume its ultimate subject matter—God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit—under empirically verifiable general laws. It cannot strive for attaining objective scientific knowledge. What it must aim for is personal understanding. In order to arrive at this understanding there must first of all be a disclosure of the meaning of present human behavior, especially in the church. Where I teach theology—at Duke—some human behavior has become enigmatic and puzzling. Systematic theology must try to grasp the dynamics of this behavior as the matrix of its theological work. Underneath the antagonisms between black and white there must be some common human core that offers the basis for new understanding. Understanding is not found by brushing off the differences. It appears as one faces together some hard truths about one another. One must suffer through the differences together. The common solidarity of pain and suffering in the face of misunderstanding is probably the first stage through which we must pass in order that theological understanding may arise.

It may be that in new obedience to our common Lord, Jesus Christ, an overriding reality may compel us to understand one another better. But we have mouthed so many theological phrases without probably ever really seeing each other that the demand of the hour is to take a new look at each other, so that we can engage in a hermeneutic of changing the conditions that made us move apart.

[I want to use the following ideas also in a different context with fellow students and colleagues. So if one of my readers finds in the

pages of the REVIEW what he has already read somewhere else, may he be undismayed: repetition is also the mother of understanding.]

I had initially planned on sharing these thoughts with the Concerned Students of Duke Divinity School [a spontaneous, unofficial organization which sprang into being immediately after the campus disturbance—Ed.]. But I had to be out of town during some of their meetings. The comments reflect several conversations I have had with black and white students in our midst (some of whom are now alumni) about the black-white tensions.

In one or two instances I got the impression that a black student simply felt crushed by the predominantly white setting of our Divinity School. Events following February 13 here on campus underscored the impression time and again.

One thing became clear to me over the past year: integration as such is no immediately effective solution to the race issue, also not in the Divinity School community.

The difficulty in terms of the educational process seems to be lodged in the fact that white Christianity has not identified with black history at any significant point. When the Reformation was developing in Europe, some of the blacks' ancestors were already being shipped across the Atlantic. When Schleiermacher wrote his *Speeches on Religion*, black history in the United States was still slave history.

With what is the black to identify? Before he can identify with white church history he must identify with his own history. But he has no chance to study it in courses alongside white church history.

So in plunging into a white educational setting apparently a tremendous identity crisis develops for a large number of black students. What is more, the crisis is aggravated by the increasing stress on black power in the black community. A white seminary does not specifically discuss black power as a course topic, as little as black history or black culture.

As a consequence we have to face the question of what black students in white seminaries are trained for. A black alumnus said, "Remember, you are training people for jobs, not certificates." Does a black student who has been trained by Duke Divinity School still fit into the average black congregation?

In the encounter with the black student—I will never want to forget—we meet a unique struggle for personhood. It is not that the black does not acknowledge that the white also has a struggle for personhood to contend with. The issue seems to be whether there is

any real outlet for discussing the special "hang-ups" of the black struggle. All counsellors and professors are white.

Some blacks have the impression that there is race prejudice among both students and professors, the unconscious prejudice being even worse than the conscious.

One black student indicated that a professor (whose name he did not mention) told him at the very beginning of his studies that he should face up to the fact that this is Duke and that he could not expect to get the same high grades here that he got in his college. The student seemed rather perplexed about the well-meant advice.

As to social contacts, black students feel that they have hardly any social outlet at Duke. Black tables, etc., are demands that are simple corollaries of this lack of social outlet.

White girls occasionally chat with black students on campus, I was told. But when white boys come near, many of them prefer to move on.

Perception of situations depends on who we are. It is never absolutely objective. So we must deal with the one who perceives the situation and must take his word at face value.

All in all, we should probably make the race issue less central in our conversations. The whites have a responsibility here that may be overlooked most of the time. One black student said: "In seminary, I became an authority on race relations. And that is about all I became an authority in." Obviously the black student wants the white student to converse with him also about things other than race.

"It may be that we are hypersensitive right now as blacks," I was told. But the situation has to be faced by all as it is. The fact of the perception of the black-white antagonism is there. Said one black: "When I came to Duke, I knew Duke had accepted me. But had the white students accepted me?"

If I understand a little of what is being said right now, the struggle seems to be about personhood, human dignity. The black has to find his past—in order to know his personhood. He has to come to know also his present—in order to become a fuller person. So the comment of yet another student remains a judgment: "We get a middle-class, upper-class training at Duke Divinity School." The judgment should be obvious: we are more trained for status than for personhood

Many of the new dilemmas we are facing are related to the increasing consciousness of being black. One black alumnus, who felt that at the beginning of integration at Duke these difficulties had not

been as pressing, explained: "Just when the blacks were about getting what they wanted, they said: 'We don't want to be white.'"

There is at the same time the feeling that the white Divinity School community is taking integration too lightly. It does not struggle enough with the implications of integration for the whole person. A former black student summed up the issue: "Integration at the foot is just as bad as or worse than segregation at the side." If you are allowed into the same room, but the other person does not really see your face and acknowledge you as a person, segregation might still be the lesser of two evils.

I realize full well that the problems at Duke go far beyond reflections like the foregoing. Righting the wrongs of a slave society will take more time than a generation. Feeling guilty does not help at all. What we need to do is to work creatively at new models of better future relationships.

On the surface the turmoil of our University is centered in the right use of power, that is, in the possibility of the student's share in the power lodged in the academic structure. But as I try to look beyond the surface appearances, I begin to ask whether in the Christian context of the Divinity School we must not raise other issues as well. This context is never simply one of scrambling for power, prestige and status. It also contains the criterion of truth that unconceals our foibles and stupidities. The time has come to face some hard truths about ourselves.

In order to give integration a Christian rationale some of us have been appealing to St. Paul's idea that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek. Accordingly we have been claiming that in Christ there is neither white nor black. But in reality there is still very much black and white in Christ—white and black churches, for example. In our religious pollyanna attitude we often fail to see that the hurts and wrongs of the exploitation of the blacks continues unabated, right in the midst of Christian people (as does the exploitation of whites, I know). Our black students often have families and friends that do not receive an ounce of benefit from our liberal opening up of the University to the blacks. The hurts and wrongs done to their loved ones and their people are ever before their eyes. Becoming color-blind—in which I have prided myself—easily can mean becoming blind to the savage struggle those of the other color are still caught in.

Just how much real charity we spend on the downtrodden or the outcast in our society, I do not know. There are still many who

can only be reached by some charity, especially many physically handicapped. But many of us are merely *concerned* about the disadvantaged. And concern is not action. I was appalled to see how quickly the hustle and bustle of our concern during the 1968 Vigil dissipated into doing nothing. Fine attitudes do not make any difference unless they are translated into changing wrongs. Political activity is the main possibility for introducing change. To be merely concerned is a sin against the Holy Spirit.

Finding a new sense of my "white sins" does not mean that I should look away when it comes to the faults of the other color. I am beginning to revolt more and more against making me conscious of the color of my skin as the cause of how sorry conditions are. I did not make the conditions. It does not help to make no distinctions between black and white. We need to see one another as persons, individuals who are responsible for their particular wrongs. There is a saying among some blacks that to the white all blacks look alike. The time has come to tell some blacks that apparently to them all whites look alike. With the present kind of attitude nobody will be the wiser in the long run.

For years many of us have been singing, "We shall overcome." It came to express our Civil Rights theology. We should have known all along that it is poor theology. In any case, I am learning more and more that ultimately *we* will not overcome. God must overcome. *We* are messing things up. But God bears the cross of the present, of black and white alike. We have to open our eyes to what he can do to change our ways and the condition of society. God will overcome.

This does not mean that we should fold our hands and sit back and do nothing. To see what God can do to change our ways means to become more open to what is already happening in society. What begins to puzzle me more and more is the discrepancy between the kind of life we live as a Divinity School community and life as a whole, between the Divinity School culture and secular culture. On all sides we agree that the purpose of theological education is no longer simply and solely to train ministers for the local parish. The times are probably compelling us to see that the Divinity School is the place where a model community must be built, approximately also representing the ratio of the population segments of the area, so that those who are trained here can have a full experience in how the new community that is developing is being shaped and can become leaders who are able to share in the building of new community everywhere.

The Dean's Discourse

Trite as it may have become to say so, it is painfully true that to live and work in the American, as well as the European, university today is to live and work in the midst of revolution. The cult of disarray is only the outward sign, ugly as it is, of the inner revolt against established values—even hygienic ones.

Because of its connotations, ignoring those of 1776, the word “revolution” is misleading. The newsprint and television comprehend and purvey only canned excerpts of the revolution’s spectacular symptoms or, if possible, its violent *exempla*. The fact is that the Student Vigil of 1968 at Duke was too reserved and self-disciplined to gain the attention of the mass media, while the *melée* of February 13 was portrayed as far as Australia in a matter of hours. I was a ringside witness of both. I esteem the rebirth of conscience that, for the most part, animated the Vigil. I entertain only repugnance and consternation for the events of February 13. Their dynamics are vastly too complex to relate here, but the black students were, in my judgment, intolerably in the wrong morally, legally, and prudentially. So are any in civilized society who seek to impose their will by usurpation or by extortion through threat of violence. It is obscurantism and pure sentimental antinomianism that obscures the issue by appealing to three hundred years of wrong. Explanation is never justification. The blacks capitulated at the last moment, but they inadvertently, no doubt, set the stage for a half-in-earnest student showdown with the police, powered by the now endemic animus against the Establishment. This became spontaneously overt in the passion or, better, hysteria of the moment. Except for a few lacerations, the gas seemed to be exhilarating, and the excitement was rather much enjoyed by all. It was a “happening” declared on the spot to be “historic.”

As for the police, the unexpected took them by surprise. In their moment of unwanted duty, they were the luckless surrogates, the symbols, of *the Authority*, smolderingly resented and, on the spur of the moment, defied. But, in truth, *the Authority* which they had the misfortune to stand in for is the whole spectrum of authorities, ranging from parents to President and Congress and not excepting the Pope nor overlooking the Dean. As for the university president, he is only the front-man, in the stereotyped revolutionary imagination, for the power-structure whose sinister resistance to change manifests the intransigent will of absentee lords, known as trustees. But the police stood in for all of those authorities that evening and took the brunt of the repressed dissent that is, in part, the revolution.

Manifestly, this is not the whole story about the revolution in our midst. This is only the phenomenon; the substance behind the appearances needs further probing. Basically, I believe, the revolution is a gradually crystallizing transformation of values. Revolution involves a *metanoia*, a mental about-face, a change of mind. It is bent on disestablishment. It is the product of pervasive disillusionment. This revolution is a revolt against both the satiety and the emptiness of bourgeois, sensate, technologically controlled culture. The Beatniks, the Hippies, the Yippies and the Blacks are its more visible apostles; but they are only the vanguard of a restless generation that finds its ecstatic moments in "happenings" which break through the monotony of a spiritless *status quo* that cannot extricate itself from the fatal absurdity of Viet Nam.

This is the revolution, a revolution of *ethos*. When it becomes "political" it seeks, often with indiscriminating frenzy, the overthrow of established priorities, orders, values, and powers. Become "political," revolution can follow "due process." More often it resorts to varying degrees of militant action, from lawful protest, as in the civil rights era, to change by harassment or by force. In the latter case, revolution becomes manic and in the measure that it feeds on desperation. Respecting, then, the revolution of our time, including that affecting the university, one must distinguish between the revolution of *ethos* and its political expressions; and, among its political expressions one must distinguish between those relying upon "due process" and those disdainful and defiant of the same.

Of this revolution against Establishment or the Authority the American university is a microcosm of the nation, perhaps of the world in our time. In the university, as society's weakest member, the dynamics of disestablishment surface most quickly and flourish because of minimal built-in resistance. The inherited freedoms and orders of academic society were based upon the Western European code of "the gentleman," and now there are only "guys." The university itself, including Duke University, is responsible in part for the fact that it has become very "big business" and, hence, subject to the same tensions that have polarized labor and management in commerce and industry. Among many, the university is interpreted as a tool of "the military-industrial complex" and, perhaps, not without some justification. Subsidy and sale of academic talent to business and government, the fattening of coffers for research, have undoubtedly, since the Second World War, lost to "the academy" a great measure both of its objectivity and immunity, to say nothing of its

gentility. Silently this has happened; more and more Alma Mater has ceased to be, through increasing external dependency, the mistress of her own virtue. And gradually the students have come to comprehend the change of temper and *ethos* in university life, and the university has declined in their respect. Meanwhile, they are themselves the pampered offspring of an affluent society by which they have been deprived of the arduous rigors of either personal survival or strenuous achievement.

All in all, it can be argued that the university has itself greatly participated in the destruction of "the academy," and it is now a sobering question whether the academy can be at all preserved. The real academy is never for sale, but indefatigable American enterprise has contrived at length to justify the resources of the university by finding them, after all, marketable commodities. To say, among other things, that every professor has his price, if true, would be at once a symptom of the disease of the university and a prophecy of the end of the pursuit of truth for its own sake; but such pursuit was "the academy."

The closed universities of Europe have raised the question of the survivability of the university. One can be prematurely pessimistic. Certain it is that militant usurpation, harassment and intimidation are incompatible with the essence of university existence. One or the other must go. The overthrow of lawful authority or the turning of the order of authorization up-side-down in the interest of uncritical democracy hardly comports with the ontological priorities of demonstrated attainment, ripened experience, and garnered wisdom.

At the bottom of it all, I suspect, is this, that until the futility of Viet Nam is retired, with its violation of conscience, the scepticism of youth toward the wisdom of their elders and the propriety of established orders will not recede. Viet Nam is the stubborn and internationally scandalous symbol of the bankruptcy of capitalistic democracy's way of meeting the future or dealing with human destiny by stereotyped and outworn patterns of response. More than anything it epitomizes, sums up, the frustration of the young with the sheer inertia of the Establishment. Unless creativity replaces inertia, Viet Nam may turn out to be the fatal *nemesis* of the American way of life—its dissolution of confidence.

And this has a direct bearing upon the theological school in its role as pedagogue of the Church's ministry. We are engaged, I suspect, in receiving and investing in a growing segment of students whose main reason for matriculation is more nearly despair with

and concern for disestablishment of *the Authority* than with positive commitment to the renovation, reformation, and renewal of the established Church. But theological schools exist for the training of ministers not for purposes of general education. In my mind it has lately become an insistent question whether, let us say, conscientious dissent (*sic!*) and its counterfeit will not erode the integrity of theological education and its schools. The disparity between the professional commitment of the schools and the uncommitment of some students and some faculty constitutes a present crisis in theological education. To say that the prevailing vector of motivation is *disestablishment* is not far from saying that we work in an era of iconoclasm. The Protestant Reformation did not, whatever its surviving positives, avoid iconoclasm as one of its phases. One may hope that some values of the Tradition may be conserved.

Robert E. Cushman

The 1969 Convocation and Pastors' School

The annual Divinity School Convocation and North Carolina Pastors' School, together with the James A. Gray Lectures, will be held at Duke University, October 27-29, 1969.

THE JAMES A. GRAY LECTURER is DR. IAN G. BARBOUR, Chairman of the Religion Department and Professor of Physics at Carleton College. He is author of *Christianity and the Scientist* and *Issues in Science and Religion*, and editor of *Science and Religion: New Perspectives on the Dialogue*. His four Gray Lectures are to deal with Religion and Science.

THE FRANK S. HICKMAN LECTURER is DR. BROWNE BARR, Minister, First Congregational Church, Berkeley; formerly Professor of Homiletics, Yale Divinity School. He has published *Parish Back-Talk* and numerous articles and sermons. He will lecture twice on contemporary Parish Ministry.

THE CONVOCATION PREACHER is DR. ROBERT A. RAINES, Minister, First United Methodist Church, Germantown. He is author of *Reshaping the Christian Life, New Life in the Church, Creative Brooding*, and *The Secular Congregation*. He will preach in the three Convocation Services of Worship, and will lead a Seminar on Tuesday afternoon.

THE BISHOP'S HOUR LECTURER is BISHOP JAMES S. THOMAS, Iowa Area, the United Methodist Church; formerly Professor at Gammon Theological Seminary, and one of the Secretaries of the Division of Higher Education, Methodist General Board of Education. He will give the opening address on Monday afternoon, and will lead one of the Tuesday afternoon Seminars.

THE TENTH ANNUAL ALUMNI LECTURER is DEAN VAN BOGARD DUNN of the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, author of *God With Us*, Part 2 of the Methodist "Foundation Studies in Christian Faith" for Adults. Dean Dunn earned both the B.D. and the Ph.D. at Duke University. He is a member of the Divinity School Board of Visitors.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SEMINARS:

1. BISHOP JAMES S. THOMAS—on Ministry in the Changing Church.
2. DR. ROBERT A. RAINES—on The Minister and the Congregation.
3. DR. W. D. DAVIES, George Washington Ivey Professor of Advanced Studies in New Testament and Christian Origins, Duke Divinity School, will lead a Seminar on The Sermon on the Mount. He is author of the current study book, *The Sermon on the Mount*, and of *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* and other scholarly works.

Acting Director of the Convocation and Pastors' School for 1969 will be Dr. Thor Hall, Associate Professor of Preaching and Theology. The Divinity School Choir will participate in the Chapel services. Other features include a Ministers' Wives Luncheon, the general Alumni Association Luncheon, and the annual Alumni Reunion Dinners, which this year will bring back the Classes of 1934, 1939, 1944, 1949, 1954, and 1964.

Officers of the Board of Managers of the North Carolina Pastors' School for the quadrennium are the Reverend Paul Carruth, Chairman; the Reverend Jerry D. Murray, Vice-Chairman; the Reverend Herman S. Winberry, Secretary; and the Reverend Harley M. Williams, Treasurer. Other members of the Executive Committee are the Reverend James W. Ferree, the Reverend H. Langill Watson, the Reverend S. T. Gillespie, and the Reverend Robert H. Stamey.

McMurry S. Richey
Director on Leave

The Bible and History. Edited by William Barclay. Abingdon. 1968. 371 pp. \$6.50.

The purpose of this work, as set forth in an "Introduction" by the editor, is to ". . . present Bible history within the setting of contemporary [i.e. contemporary with the biblical writings] world events" (p. 17). The various writers attempt to view biblical history against the broader back-drop of world history as that affected and influenced the growth and development of the Hebrew nation and its religious thinking.

There are four contributors to this volume: the late John Paterson, who discusses the "Old Testament World" to the exile in 587 B.C.; Edgar Jones, who discusses the "Exile and Post-Exilic Period: 587-175 B.C."; Hugh Anderson, who discusses the "Inter-testamental Period"; and Gordon Robinson, who discusses the "New Testament World."

As with any work on multiple authorship, there is uneven value in the four sections. The best section by far is that by Anderson dealing with the period between the Testaments. In fact, it is so far superior to the others that one questions whether it should be in the same volume. Much of the other work is characterized by oversimplification to the point of being misleading. Numerous examples could be cited, but the tone was already set by the editor in the "Introduction," when in discussing the biblical view of history he says: "All history, on this view, is God rewarding those who obey him and chastising those who disobey him." (p. 14) Every student of the Bible knows that this is the Deuteronomic "theology" of history (it is not named in the text of the book), but most also know that this

view was seriously questioned and does not represent the thinking of the latter period of Old Testament history or the New Testament view.

A further example can be taken from the section dealing with the New Testament period. In discussing Jesus' ministry and teaching we read that "Mark is a fairly plain, straightforward presentation of the Good News as it was first unfolded" (pp. 284-285). The author does mention the fact that the Johannine account of Jesus' ministry has found greater "historical" acceptance today than in former times. But there is no reference directly, as there does seem to be a need, to the new discipline of Redaction-criticism and/or to the emphasis (now as old as Wrede) that Mark's gospel is highly theological and not simply a "straightforward" presentation of Jesus' life and teaching.

The most unsatisfactory section is the first, dealing with the "Old Testament World." There is here an almost naive acceptance of the biblical record with no discussion of the problems involved, and permeating the entire section is the idea that somehow "archaeology proves the Bible." Coupled with this is a curious selection of persons, incidents, and terminology to illustrate the points made (cf. especially pp. 51, 54, 83).

Each section is accompanied by a time chart, maps, and a selected bibliography which *can* be of value to the beginning student. It must be admitted that the choice of books cited in the various places leaves one, to say the least, puzzled. Why were these selected and others omitted? Why were B. W. Anderson's *Understanding the Old Testament* and Kee and Young's *Understanding the New Testament* not cited in their revised

editions? Why was not Hugh Anderson's abridgement (of his larger *Jesus and Christian Origins*) entitled *Jesus* listed in the New Testament bibliography? It would be more appropriate for the readers of this particular work than the larger more technical one.

The reader will know by now that the present reviewer is quite disappointed in this book. Something like it is desperately needed to re-emphasize the positive importance of history in biblical studies. Unfortunately this book does not fill this need. It is hoped that Professor Anderson will expand his section and publish it separately; otherwise his fine work may be buried along with the rest of this book!

—James M. Efrid

Jesus and The Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity. S. G. F. Brandon. Scribner's. 1968. 413 pp. \$7.95.

Professor Brandon, who is perhaps best known for his work *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (1951), has now made another provocative contribution to the study of Christian origins. *Jesus and the Zealots* raises again the question, dormant now for several decades, of the political involvement of Jesus of Nazareth.

The book falls into seven chapters, with an appendix on Josephus' witness to Jesus. In the first chapter Brandon raises the problem of Jesus' relation to the political events of first century Palestine, on which the New Testament sources are strangely and suspiciously silent. The second chapter is a brief history of the Zealots. Brandon maintains (Chapter 3) that their importance in Jewish history from the time of Judas the Galilean (A.D. 6) to the self-destruction of the Jewish garrison at Masada (A.D. 73) was greater than is often supposed. For their own good reasons Josephus, Philo, and the New Testament have minimized or disparaged the role of

the Zealots in Jewish history. While the sources give little direct information connecting the Zealots with primitive Jewish Christianity, Brandon argues that a proper recognition of the importance of the former and the similar ideological and eschatological views of the latter makes some affinity between them not only plausible, but probable. This affinity, which becomes a main pillar of Brandon's total argument, is suggested in the third chapter and further elaborated in the fourth. It involves, among other things, the assumption of a radical discontinuity between the Pauline version of the gospel and that espoused by Jewish Christians, especially the Jerusalem Church under the leadership of James. The fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the concurrent demise of the Jerusalem Church has meant that we are bereft of documents and direct information concerning this most important segment of early Christianity. For Brandon, however, this situation is no reason for agnosticism. Rather, on the basis of the sources and in the light of the putative political situation of first century Palestine, he proceeds to reconstruct a picture of a militantly "Zionist" primitive Jewish Christianity, which, he believes, somehow had its roots in the political attitude of Jesus himself. Although its messianic hopes had been fundamentally challenged by the death of Jesus as a Jewish martyr, they were revived at the resurrection and focused thenceforth upon his expected return as the Redeemer of Israel and the judge of her enemies.

Against such a background, Brandon proceeds in the final three chapters to explain the relative silence of the Gospels on all these matters. In chapter five he deals with Mark, and the chapter's subtitle already indicates his understanding of that document: *apologia ad christianos romanos*. Mark was written for the church in Rome and was intended to explain Jesus' ministry and death in such a way as to conceal their seditious over-

tones. The author portrayed Jesus (esp. in 12:12-17) as approving the Roman government. The picture of the "pacific Christ" was developed further by Matthew, Luke, and John (chapter 6). Yet there are still traces in these Gospels, as well as in Mark, of a sterner Jesus, whose ministry and death took place within the context of fierce political struggle and national, patriotic hope. In the final chapter Brandon stops short of claiming that Jesus was a Zealot. For example, he says the fact that one of his disciples, Simon the Zealot, bore such a sobriquet shows Jesus' sympathy with Zealot ideals, but at the same time indicates that he did not identify with them. Otherwise, Simon would not have been distinguished in this manner. Yet Jesus' willingness to undertake violent measures (i.e. the cleansing of the temple) to purify and prepare his nation for the coming kingdom of God shows that he was much more the revolutionary and much less the purely religious leader or divine being than traditional scholarship and piety have supposed.

Really to engage the multifarious argumentation of Brandon would require a considerable treatise, if not a comparable monograph. His book is worthy of such a response, but for obvious reasons it cannot be given here. The remainder of this review will consequently be limited to a couple of observations about possible reactions to the book, followed by the notation of some important points of strength as well as vulnerability.

The reaction of traditional Christian faith (and scholarship) will likely be outright rejection of Brandon's thesis (supported by historical and exegetical arguments against it). Modern radical churchmen, however, may see in Brandon's portrait of Jesus confirmation of their own views of the proper and necessary role of Christianity in a revolutionary age. Both reactions are natural and understandable. Nevertheless, Brandon's thesis, which is advanced on purely histori-

cal grounds, deserves to be tested on the basis of consonant, historical criteria before theological considerations are allowed to intrude themselves.

Brandon's views are grounded upon a number of considerations or judgments which can scarcely be gainsaid. Jesus was a Jew. His life and ministry occurred during a time of foreign oppression and consequent political ferment in Israel. In the New Testament he appears as the Jewish Messiah, and he was crucified by the Roman authorities as a messianic claimant. Nevertheless, the relevant New Testament sources tend to shift the blame for his crucifixion from the Romans to the Jews. This shifting of the blame had an apologetic interest, namely, to exonerate Christianity of the suspicion of political sedition in the face of a Roman authority which was none too friendly already. Add to this the fact that Jesus' own proclamation centered upon the kingdom of God, a concept that at least sounds political, and there seems to be ample basis for Brandon's thesis.

Yet Brandon's effort to relate Jesus to the Zealots and to portray him as a proponent of violent revolution faces two distinct orders of difficulty. In the first place, it is in some measure dependent upon a view of the Judaism of the period A.D. 1-50 in which the Zealots occupy a more prominent role than the contemporary sources explicitly indicate or most modern scholars have supposed. Similarly, the alleged affinity of Jewish Christianity with Zealotism is maintained on the basis of a series of inferences drawn partly from the sources, but very largely from the political situation as previously portrayed.

The second order of difficulties has to do with the interpretation of New Testament texts and the understanding of the inner development of early Christian thought. Several examples may be cited. The supposed disjunction of Pauline and Jerusalem Christianity, which enables Brandon to make short shrift of the lack of evi-

dence for his general thesis in Paul's letters, is dubious at best. In instances where Paul refers to tradition, it is apparently tradition shared with the Jerusalem Church (I Cor. 11:23ff.; 15:3ff.), and Paul goes out of his way to maintain the unity of his own preaching of the gospel with that of the Jerusalem apostles (Gal. 2:1-10). Differences there surely were, but the fact that Paul affords no evidence for the differences Brandon imputes to the Jerusalem Church is of greater significance than he allows. Although certain sayings of Jesus (e.g. Lk. 12:49ff.; Matt. 10:34; Lk. 13:36ff.), as well as the cleansing of the temple, imply that Jesus was a vigorous man who expected rigorous trials for himself and his followers, this evidence is not sufficient to support Brandon's portrayal of Jesus as a Zealot sympathizer. Moreover, Brandon either ignores the much larger tradition of Jesus' sayings, in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, in which he renounces violence or categorizes it under the rubric of the "pacific Christ," and implies that it is predominantly a creation of the early church or the evangelists. This procedure is indicative of a crucial methodological deficiency. Brandon neither sets forth nor adopts any objective analysis of the tradition, but eclectically embraces one item from the tradition as historically genuine and dismisses or downgrades another, apparently on the basis of no other criterion than its usefulness for his thesis. There is as great a *Tendenz* in this method as there is in the Gospels! In dealing with the Evangelists, particularly Mark, Brandon is equally arbitrary, setting forth his view of the apologetic purpose of the Gospel for a Roman audience of the period shortly after A.D. 70 with little regard for alternative interpretations or, for that matter, judgments regarding time, place and circumstance of authorship. Finally, although Brandon makes an intensive effort to view Jesus in the light of his historical set-

ting, he ignores the negative implications of the one positive point of connection for which there is very concrete evidence, namely, John the Baptist. For all his eschatological fervor and ethical vigor, John does not appear, either in the New Testament or in Josephus, as an advocate of violent revolution or a chauvinist whose eschatological hopes were inflexibly bound to any *national* group (cf. esp. Matt. 3:9; Lk. 3:8). Was Jesus more closely bound to Jewish nationalistic hopes than John?

I am sure that Professor Brandon would be able to make short work of an objection such as this last, so skillful is he in sifting and evaluating the evidence to the end that it supports rather than undercuts his position. Precisely this skill, however, gives cause for some wariness or skepticism. Without impugning the motives of so distinguished a scholar, this reviewer must nevertheless conclude that his brilliant dialectic and considerable erudition lead him up to, and sometimes across, the limits of credibility.

—D. Moody Smith

A Theological Approach to Art.
Roger Hazelton. Abingdon. 1967.
158 pp. \$3.50.

This book is not easily reduced to content resumé or interpretive summary. Its very charm is in its elusiveness: not the skittishness of unresolved thought but the forthrightness that escapes easy banality. The subtleties and nuances really give the book its character, but they emerge in relation to a workman-like organization and to an evaluation of art as disclosure, embodiment, vocation, and celebration. Do not expect me to outline all of this by way of a review. That is what the book and the experience of art are about.

Roger Hazelton is a gentle and perspicuous person. He can be sharp and even devastating on occasion. He is not verbose or merely chatty. True, he quotes artists, sometimes, but, best

of all, he is true to their honesty in themselves and to the theological insights they so richly convey. Occasionally they do this all unaware, or in spite of themselves; sometime precisely by way of being themselves.

Here are a few examples of the author's insight and expressiveness. On page 20 he says: "Art, then, is disclosure. What is at stake in it is man's inveterate desire to shape the substance of his vision of the world for someone else to see." Again on page 76 he remarks: "A work of art is Christian if it bodies forth and so conveys or opens up the gospel to men and women of any age or place." Furthermore, "There is no virtue in trying to conceive art and faith as two separate things between which some kind of relation may be said to exist. . . . My thesis here is simply that these ways may be seen to come together in the artist's own vocation, as we traced their convergence earlier in his works" (p. 112). And quite luminously: "Art is the bestowal of significance upon the raw materials of our existence; it is celebration in the sense of making known with praise what being human means." (p. 153)

I have been greatly helped by this little book. It is true to art as I know it. I have recommended it to my Sunday School class, largely laymen and laywomen, as also to my University classes. I commend it to you also.

—Ray C. Petry

The American Churches in the Ecumenical Movement, 1900-1968. Samuel McCrea Cavert. Association. 1968. 288 pp. \$9.95.

No single person has been more intimately and continuously involved with the ecumenical movement in America than Samuel McCrea Cavert. Students of church history in this century (which category should include every wide-awake churchman) will be permanently in his debt for bringing together these significant de-

velopments (if only the retail price were not so high!). To combine clear chronological order with the interweaving of intricately complex agencies, personalities and events is a stupendous accomplishment. From the nineteenth-century background, through the tribulations and triumphs of the Federal Council, to the expanding horizons of the National Council of Churches, Dr. Cavert leads his readers with scholarly accuracy and sensitive understanding.

As a reference book for the period this volume provides extensive bibliography, careful footnotes, "thumb-nail" biographical sketches, and an index to every important participant, individual or organization. More valuable still is the author's sweeping perspective over fifty years, enabling him to point out the problems frankly, the achievements joyously, the prospects hopefully. "What has actually taken place within the memory of living men represents such a marked advance that there is no reason to set limits to the possibilities that lie ahead. . . . We may even discover that what we have thus far witnessed in the ecumenical developments of the twentieth century is only a prologue to one of the most creative periods in Christian history." (p. 271)

—Creighton Lacy

A Church Truly Catholic. James K. Mathews. Abingdon, 1969. 160 pp. pb. \$2.45.

To have the James A. Gray Lectures for 1967 available so promptly in an "original paperback" for wider circulation is a rare opportunity. Bishop Mathews has inserted one chapter on "Ministry and Mission" in the midst of his treatments of the contemporary context, United Methodism and ecumenism, worship, and attitudes toward other faiths. The style is vivid, personal, full of illustrations and quotations—eminently useful for discussion groups or elementary introductions to ecumenical challenges.

Not every reader will agree that—
 “the gospel is revolution, if we allow it to be” (16);
 “no man anywhere can nowadays live as if Vatican II had never happened” (53);
 “indeed, COCU confronts us with the most creative possibility in American Protestantism today” (64);
 “there exists in Methodism something less than universal and uninterrupted enthusiasm for COCU and for church union in general” (72);
 “the Christian missionary undertaking . . . for wholehearted obedience to the gospel, for the building up of people, is without parallel in history” (79);
 “the role of the clergy is to equip the layman for the world” (90);
 “the average layman is neither informed about the Christian faith, nor, according to his own admission, is he guided by it to any great extent in his daily decisions” (92);
 “renewal of the church . . . must not be understood as being for the sake of the church; rather, it is for the sake of the world, for mission in the world” (106);
 “Christianity aims not at making the map more Christian but at making Christ more widely known” (146);
 “the same God who has prompted us has also prepared our counterpart for dialogue” (156);
 “a willingness finally to risk even the loss of our heritage in the service of God and man is to find it” (160).

But it is exciting and refreshing to find a Methodist bishop saying these things. We are proud that he said them at Duke two years ago and that a wider audience can now read and ponder them.

—Creighton Lacy

Christianity in World Perspective.
 Kenneth Cragg. Oxford, 1968. 227 pp. \$4.95.

With *The Call of the Minaret* and *Sandals at the Mosque* Kenneth Cragg emerged as the foremost Christian

interpreter of Islam in our day. (See “Islamic Reflections on Contemporary Theology” in *THE DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL REVIEW*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Spring 1966). His more recent writings establish him as a brilliant exponent of a broader mission theology and of dialogue with men of other faiths.

Christianity in World Perspective is a thoughtful and thought-provoking analysis of our ecumenical responsibilities—in the broadest, deepest sense of “ecumenical.” In three probing, illustrative studies the very chapter titles suggest Cragg’s sensitivity to points of contact and potential conflict (or would he prefer us to say “points of traditional conflict and potential contact?”): “Christian Church and Jewish Destiny,” “Christian Creed and Islamic Worship,” and “Christian Symbolism and the African Mind.”

But non-specialists will find even more exciting the foundational treatments of “Nineteenth-Century Mission in Twentieth-Century Perspective,” “New Testament Universality: Precedents and Open Questions,” and “A Theology of Religious Pluralism.” Here he deals gently, perceptively, always biblically, with the tensions between conversion and co-existence, between “superficial neutrality” and “syncretistic disloyalty,” between openness and conviction.

Likewise in evaluation, Cragg offers a concise and devastating critique of secular theologies, while affirming the truly human demands of the Gospel. And in the final appraisal of “Identity and Diversity: The Contemporary Church” he boldly calls into question an exclusive insistence on creedal, doctrinal, ecclesiastical conversion, inquiring whether “a re-orientation of personality into the Christ dimension . . . may not come to pass apart from the formal recognition of Christian dogma” and whether the Christian community may not provide, by deed and word, the “sanction of this newness of life . . . if need be vicariously, for all men.”

Many a line or paragraph in this book demands—and deserves—re-reading, not because its language is confused or confusing (on the contrary, Cragg uses a poetry of expression that is striking), but because of its depth of theological insight and its breadth of human understanding.

—Creighton Lacy

Black Power and Christian Responsibility. C. Freeman Sleeper. Abingdon. 1969. 221 pp. \$4.50.

On both the jacket and the cover of this book *Black Power and Christian Responsibility* are in different type. Whatever the publishers meant to imply by the contrast, this reviewer would analyze the contents as composing two distinct books. No, three, for *Christian Responsibility* is approached primarily through biblical exegesis, but there are a couple of chapters and scattered references to the bases and processes of ethical decision-making. Each of the three topics has merit, each contains some valuable and timely insights, but the "cement" does not hold the pieces together.

Amid a plethora of contemporary writings the treatment of black power is clear, concise and to the point. In the final, briefest chapter (after affirming as his purpose "to develop criteria for evaluating strategies" rather than "to formulate strategies") Sleeper offers a few pages of very specific guidelines for congregations and for individual Christians. His ethical principles reiterate the ecumenical formula of a "responsible society" but do not always relate, convincingly or durably, to either biblical exegesis or white racism. The interpretation of ethics in the Old and New Testaments is never new, seldom profound, not wholly clear, and almost always cluttered with scriptural citations which require parallel study (more useful for a sermon preparation than intelligible reading).

Those who (like students in this critical semester at Duke) yearn for biblical and theological foundations for their moral choices in racial dilemmas will find here some solid aids to formulating their own correlations between black power and Christian responsibility. But the book suffers from superimposed structure and careless statement. At least twice (pp. 186-188) "faith" and "faithfulness" (defined as accountability, loyalty to the community) are used interchangeably. . . . The assertion that "within the Christian tradition *freedom from institutional structures is illegitimate*" (p. 175, italics his) may be true, but if so, it requires fuller elaboration and more relevant targets than "monastic perfection," hedonism, anarchism, and "the false view that individuals are free to destroy and create structures at will". . . . The reader is told repeatedly that "we cannot pursue the issues here. . . ." (though the author occasionally does), sometimes on such tantalizingly crucial questions as the relation between mutual and sacrificial love, the "moral functions of secular communities," or the role of consequences in ethical evaluation. . . . One of the best sections (on "The Phenomenon of Power in the New Testament") affirms that "there is no ultimate dualism" between positive and negative uses, explicitly avoids discussing "ways in which different writers hold the two forms of power together" (p. 137), but outlines the "distortions" first in such a "powerful" way as to suggest that the creative types are the derivative ones, instead of *vice versa*.

Such negative reactions may be due in part to disappointment at promises unfulfilled. Not for "answers at the level of policy or strategy" (these the author disavows for himself and the Bible), but for original, helpful insights into the meaning of Christian responsibility (response to God's action and to community). Sleeper reduces many of the complex problems to neat typologies or five-point out-

lines, but he fails to prove the interconnectedness of selected exegesis and racism as clearly as he apparently assumes. Would that even the criteria for ethical decisions toward black power—or anything else—were that simple!

—Creighton Lacy

Christ and the Moral Life. James M. Gustafson. Harper and Row. 1968. 275 pp. \$8.

Any book on the subject of Christian Ethics by Richard Niebuhr's successor in that chair at Yale Divinity School is bound to be an important work because of the position held by its author. Fortunately, *Christ and The Moral Life*, by James M. Gustafson, deserves much of the attention it will undoubtedly receive, for it is (as a cover blurb by James Luther Adams declares) "a superb book [which] will obviously become a standard volume in Christian ethics."

In content, the book is a survey of the conceptions of Christ as Creator/Redeemer, Sanctifier, Justifier, Pattern and Teacher in the ethical writings of major figures in the history of Christian ethics. The balance of emphasis on these various notions of Christ as Lord of the moral life in the work of Barth, Bultmann, Bonhoeffer, and a number of other modern ethicists as well as giants such as Augustine, Thomas (and the Thomistic tradition), Calvin, Luther and Wesley is cogently sorted out. The great merit of the book, then, is its scholarly contribution to our understanding of what a host of the most important theological ethicists have said about the place of Christ in the moral reasoning of the Christian.

The methodological contribution of the book is more problematic, but it is at least reasonably clear what Gustafson is attempting to do. Proceeding on the assumption that "the basic methods and procedures of theological ethics are no different from

the methods and procedures of other ethics," he organizes his material around the three questions which he contends are central to any ethical inquiry: "What criteria, principles, models, or values do I turn to for guidance? . . . How is my answer conditioned or determined by what I have become and am as a person? . . . [and] What is the nature and locus of value, of the good?" (pp. 1-2) The final chapter offers Gustafson's own ideas about "the differences that faith in Jesus Christ *often does make, can make and ought to make* in the moral lives of members of the Christian community" (italics in the original) as they look to Christ for illumination on the perspective, the disposition, the intention and the norm of the moral life. Throughout the book, and especially in the final chapter, the author is revealed as a man of strong moral passion as well as a scholar of commendable diligence and perspicacity; indeed, those passages in which Gustafson tells us what he really thinks loyalty to Christ calls for are among the most thought-provoking in the entire book.

So much for an evaluation of the book within the circle of givens which it assumes. But if the reviewer were allowed an evaluative word about the approach to Christian ethics present in this book and the function it will serve in the community of Christian intellectuals to whom it is addressed, the assessment would be very different. The investment of academic endeavor in historical scholarship has a much higher priority among religious professionals than it deserves, and when the most respected men in the most prestigious institutions continue to give us more of the same, they perpetuate this deplorable misallocation of mental energy by causing lesser schools and lesser scholars to copy them. Thus the subject of conversation among seminary students interested in ethics continues to be about the latest Writer of an Important Book's interpretation of what Barth

derived from Luther's version of Augustine's doctrine of so-and-so—and the weightier matters of the moral law and ethical action (which are much more difficult to define and analyze) get lost in the shuffle.

Not once, for example, is the question honestly and searchingly raised, "Who is this 'Christ' about whom the theologians speak?" No mention is made of the findings of biblical scholarship, linguistic analysis and the phenomenology of religion which impinge upon this question and suggest, in fact, that it ought to be phrased, "Exactly what sort of phenomenon is Christ-mythology, what function is it playing in our society at the moment, and what function might or should it play?" Of course not—to expect such a question to be raised by the Profes-

sor of Christian Ethics at Yale Divinity School is absurd; furthermore, to raise it in a review is, quite literally, *obscene*: "off-stage." Posing such a question is a violation of professional etiquette and common interpersonal decency, for it is a culpable *faux pas* to question publicly (on stage) the roles people perform in front of the significant others who form the audience without whom they cannot play their chosen part. Yet failing to raise it would be, for this reviewer, a violation of something far more important than good manners, i.e., his understanding of the authenticity called for in the moral life by the anointed one whose contagious freedom started the movement we call Christianity.

—Henry Clark

