

MENNONITE LIFE

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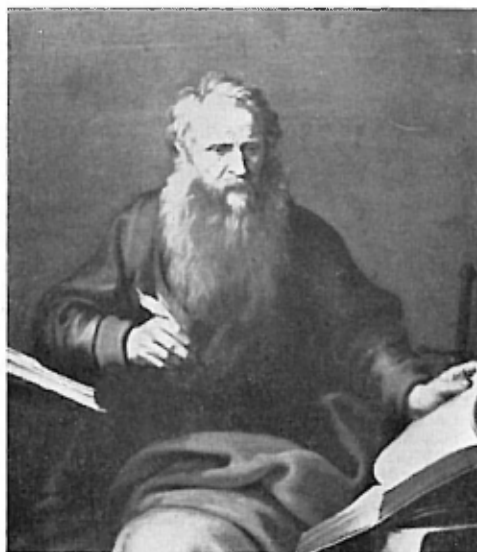
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IN THIS ISSUE

Hans Denck, 16th century
Anabaptist leader and the-

ologian, said about the Bible, "I hold the Holy Scriptures to be greater than all earthly treasures." This has been the conviction of Mennonite people through the centuries; their willingness to leave their earthly possessions every few generations in order to remain true to the demands of Scripture speaks for itself. The family Bible has in Mennonite homes been not merely a pious ornament, but a source of judgment, guidance, and inspiration. ¶ Few of us may be aware, however, that the quotation from Denck is incomplete as cited above. After a comma he adds, "but not as great as the Word of God which is living, powerful, and eternal." The significance of that distinction is that Denck regarded the Scriptures as the vehicle of the revelation of God, but not as the revelation itself which is Jesus Christ. This has not always been clear to Denck's spiritual descendants. In this issue we present a series of articles by Mennonites which discuss both parts of Denck's quotation. The discussion will continue in the July issue.



The Apostle Paul by Lambert Jacobsz.
Fries Museum, Leeuwarden

Some Thoughts on the Bible

By Vernon H. Neufeld

THE MOMENT one expresses some thoughts on the Bible—what it is, what its value and authority are—one tacitly suggests thereby, regardless of one's views, that something is wrong. For we live in a time when there seems to be more discussion *about* the Bible than there is guidance and instruction *from* the Bible. Whereas in an earlier age the Bible was simply accepted as authoritative in the faith and life of the Church, now there is discussion and debate. The Bible is sometimes defended, other times condemned. The enthusiastic discussions often result in more heat than light, the conflicting views create much confusion, and there is a general loss of confidence in and respect for the Bible.

Yet one does not apologize for entering the discussions. There is need to develop an adequate view concerning the Bible, to eliminate some of the confusion, and to restore some respectability to the Bible. It is with this hope that the thoughts in this brief essay are presented.

Popular Yet Disreputable

It seems we have a paradox on our hands: the Bible at once is exceedingly popular and woefully in disrepute. No one will question the renaissance in our generation of interest in and the study of the Bible. The man in the pew can readily point, for example, to the numerous English translations now available, from the Revised Standard Version and the New English Bible to the personal translations of Moffatt, Phillips, and others. Copies of the Bible have been purchased in phenomenal number. A generation ago the English-speaking person knew the King James Version, the German-speaking person Luther's Bible. Moreover, scholars in the biblical fields have made outstanding and far-reaching contributions to the study and understanding of the Bible—in biblical theology, in historical, textual, and literary research. Our century will long be noted for the advances made in biblical studies.

But this is not the full story, for it is also true that a good deal of biblical illiteracy exists among our ranks. Bibles may be purchased in great number, but they are little read and less understood. The Bible has lost or is losing its authoritative role in the Church and home, and in the personal life of the Christian. It has come into disrepute in too many circles, no longer holding the respect and devotion of a previous generation.

What has caused this paradox of popularity and disrepute? One may point, for example, to the secularism and materialism of our age, which have produced in the church a climate not conducive to a need and respect for the Bible. When the deep-freeze is full of food, the closet with several changes of clothes, the garage with two cars, why does one need God or the Bible? When man with his knowledge and machines is solving the major problems of existence, does he turn to spiritual resources? In an age where values are sought in the material realm, in prestige, in security, in position, what chance does the Bible have for a place of importance?

Perhaps even more far-reaching in its effects has been the influence of our scientific age. Inevitably the scientific and critical method has produced a certain aloofness and scepticism with reference to the Bible. The scientifically oriented church member openly or unconsciously questions the biblical accounts of creation, the historical records, the miracles—to cite a few examples. The critical method itself has been directed to the Bible and scholars have scrutinized the historical, literary, and textual aspects of the Bible as they might any other ancient book. These investigations have resulted in a great increase of our knowledge of biblical records and the times they encompass, but it is questionable whether they have brought greater respect and authority to the Bible so far as most people are concerned.

How has the church responded in this materialistic and scientific age of ours and its effect upon the Bible? As is usual in such circumstances, there has resulted both a "liberal" and a "conservative" reaction, with various shades of response in between. On the one hand some church people have gone along with an extreme scientism and have discounted the Bible, concluding that it is but a collection of ancient documents, expressions of primitive religious thought, and irrelevant to the Christian faith. On the other hand, there has been a violent reaction on the part of other Christians, who refuse to view the Bible objectively and to examine the findings of biblical scholarship, but who rather build an uncompromising wall of isolation around the Bible.

On What Does One's View Rest?

It would seem that the most urgent priority in the discussions concerning the Bible is the examination of presuppositions. We need to know the basic assump-

tions, the philosophy, the convictions which are held or expressed before we deal with the finer points of the nature and place of the Bible. In other words, what is the rock bottom foundation upon which one structures his view of the Bible? If the presuppositions do not stand up, new foundations must be sought and established.

Certainly many inadequate assumptions are current, and they are being used in the on-going debate. Sometimes these take the form of doctrinal statements which make certain claims for the Bible: "The Bible is perfect and without error." "The words of the Bible are from God and thus wholly divine." These usually are man-made statements *about* the Bible that express more uncertainty and fear than conviction and belief. They are attempts to reduce to simplicity a very complex matter. There may be uneasiness and some apprehension about an apparent conflict which one intuitively feels between the Bible and the broader expanses of knowledge and experience. Lest the Bible come out second best in the conflict, we clothe it in the safety of high sounding sacred doctrines. If the Christian confesses this creed of the Bible's perfection, we breathe a sigh of orthodox relief. The Bible is safe! The situation is not unlike the regrettable practices in our churches where we tend to be satisfied and content when the young person verbally confesses his faith in the accepted language; when he undergoes baptism at a certain age; when he abstains from the "cardinal" sins, for example, of smoking, drinking, and dancing; or when he registers as a conscientious objector. "He is a Christian!" we say. "The church will go on!" We are content with the "correct" doctrine, ritual, or pattern imposed from without, but we dare not, we are afraid, to allow the individual to consider the alternatives, to make his own choice, to "work out his own salvation." Doctrinal statements about the Bible are inadequate foundations.

At the other extreme, care must be taken lest we accept the conclusion that, since the Bible and science apparently do not agree, therefore the Bible can no longer be valid and authoritative. Our generation has been greatly molded by the scientific approach to truth and, to this way of thinking, since much of the biblical teaching cannot withstand scientific scrutiny, the Bible must be rejected *en toto*. This too is an inadequate presupposition. We must look anew at the Bible in order to see it as it really is; it is not a book on science, on history, or psychology or on any of the present day disciplines of knowledge as we now know them. Suffice it to say here that at least the Bible is a collection of religious writings, which one does not compare, for example, with a modern scientific textbook, anymore than one would compare such a textbook with a book of poetry, a collection of songs, or a personal diary. They are not in the same cate-

gory. The Bible must be considered on its own premises, not on those of the present day.

Is There an Adequate Presupposition?

The question might well be raised whether there is a sound vantage point from which to view the Bible. Perhaps there is no basis upon which all Christians can agree so as to consider with profit the nature and authority of the Bible. It would seem obvious, however, that whatever that common foundation ideally might be, Christians must give the dominant place to Christ himself and not to some theological or doctrinal position nor to some presupposition of modern thought.

This is as it was during the earliest period of the Church. Certainly at that time it was Jesus Christ himself who formed the only foundation. A common faith—trust in and obedience to Jesus as Lord—was the common denominator of all Christians and the basis upon which all else was considered. There was no Bible as we know it. There was only the Old Testament (probably not even the full collection), and this clearly was read, understood, and interpreted from the Christian point of view, that is, with eyes of faith. There was no New Testament during those early years. The common faith and life of the early Christians preceded the writings of the New Testament and, for that matter, to a large extent was responsible for that writing. In the beginning was Christ and faith in Christ. The Church came before the New Testament did. The books of the New Testament were written by men of faith, out of their experience of faith, for the people of faith. They did not worry about an inspired text, about right and wrong views, about a closed canon. They trusted and obeyed Jesus Christ, their Savior and Lord!

Certainly this is where we must begin. The common basis for any consideration of discussion of the Bible must be where it always has been; a commitment or faith in Jesus Christ. It is clear that we can do no less: it is doubtful we can do more. If this presupposition is accepted—that Jesus Christ is supreme, the Lord of all—then there is something to work on, to build upon. Our little human structures of theory or doctrine may crumble about us—perhaps the sooner the better—but the foundation remains. Upon this foundation, the only adequate foundation, consideration may be given to the Bible, its origin, its character, its purpose, its authority. There need be no apprehension, for there is concern only to discover the truth of the Bible, built upon, consistent with, and judged by Jesus Christ, who himself is the embodiment of truth.

If those who follow Jesus Christ can begin here, there is hope that the dialogue concerning the Bible will have positive results, and the Bible will regain the position in the Church it once possessed.

THE BIBLE

ITS ORIGIN, NATURE, AND AUTHORITY

By Clarence Bauman

THERE IS SOMETHING unique about the Bible; when men read it they somehow experience the mystery and miracle of this book. The force of its influence and

the extent of its distribution mark the Bible as superior to any other book. There is hardly a language of importance into which it has not already been translated.



John receives the sealed book from the Lord, Rev. 1:1-3.

The Literary History of the Bible

The Bible is an outstanding literary monument comprising collections of writings that embrace a wide variety of civilizations and cultures from Babylon to Rome over a millennium and a half of international history. While it is not clear when the oldest parts of the Bible were actually penned, some of the songs, laws, and sayings in the Old Testament certainly reflect the culture of the Mosaic period. During the period of the monarchy, beginning about a millennium before Christ, literary activity in Israel received a powerful impulse through kings such as David and Solomon. It is thought that much of Israel's tradition regarding Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and regarding Moses and the events of Sinai together with the struggles that eventually led to the conquest of Canaan were collected and documented at this time. Nothing is known of the northern kingdom of Israel following its annihilation by Assyria in the 8th century. However, after the neo-Babylonians crushed the southern kingdom, there was a powerful renewal of the life and literature of Judah in exile. And when Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. and released the Jews to return to their homeland, the new religious community that rebuilt the wall and the temple undertook to collect and edit the old traditions with new zeal. It was probably at this time that the Pentateuch, the historical books, the Psalter and books of Wisdom received their final literary form. To these were added the post-exilic prophets (Haggai, Zechariah,

etc.), the Poem of Job, and the Book of Daniel. The entire Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek in the 3rd century B.C. and finally canonized around A.D. 100.

This collection constituted the "scriptures" of the early Christians who discerned in these writings the prophecies concerning the Messiah, whose death and resurrection they themselves witnessed. The earliest written proclamations of the Christ-event known to us are the letters Paul wrote to his congregations during the 5th and 6th decades. Next we have the synoptic gospels, the present form of which assumes earlier unknown accounts of Jesus' words and deeds. Mark is held to be the earliest Gospel (before A.D. 70) followed by Matthew, Luke, Acts, John, the so-called Catholic epistles addressed to the whole Church, the epistles of Peter, James and John, the Pastorals and the Apocalypse—most of which were written before the end of the 1st century. The canon of the Greek New Testament was formally fixed at the end of the fourth century, however to this day the Roman Catholic Church recognizes a collection of Apocryphal books not commonly found in the Protestant Bible.¹

The Word of God and the Word of Man in the Bible

Throughout the ages the church has recognized the Bible as holy, not because she was overwhelmingly impressed by its literary quality, but because she heard in its words the Word of God. Christians of all ages have come to this conclusion not through human logic but through inner conviction of the truth to which the Bible bears witness. Through the Bible we are confronted not by its authors but by God Himself.

When we speak of God's Word, we do not mean man's word about God, but a word God Himself speaks to man. Man as such is not able to speak God's Word. In his being man stands divided between creation and redemption, profanity and holiness, sin and grace, and this division cuts into his speech. Man's word is therefore by nature not about God as it ought to be, but about self.

While the Word of God is different than the word of man, it is not totally different, for, whenever God speaks, He speaks in and through man's language. The biblical authors spoke and wrote the Word of God in the language of their time. The origin of the Bible marks the fact that God's Word has become man's word, and its nature reflects the manner in which man's word becomes God's Word. It would be false to argue that the Bible is either God's Word or man's word and, if the former, then every particle of it were divine and, if the latter, none of it were trustworthy. The uniqueness about the Bible is not that the human element is suppressed and the divine takes over, but that both elements are fused into an essential unity. While the divine element remains primary and decisive, the hu-

man element is indispensable both in its active and passive role. The Bible was not written by angels in heaven (as the Moslems claim for the *Koran*) but by men on earth. The Bible is the rule of faith and life for the Church because of its divine origin and its human nature.

In the Old Testament the Word of God came to the prophets and was proclaimed by them. But in the New Testament we are confronted by one who *is* the Word of God, by Jesus Christ, in whom *the Word became flesh* (Jn. 1:14). Thus the Bible declares God's Word to us by attesting Jesus Christ who *is* the Word of God. He is the heart on which everything in the Bible depends and the criterion by which everything must be measured. The Bible mediates the Word of God to us to the extent that we comprehend the Son of God through it.

In a comprehensive way God creates and redeems through the incarnation of his Word. Through the Word He created the world and through the Word He reconciles it to Himself. Between creation and redemption God's Word became man's word in the world so that man's word might become God's Word in the Church. This is the power and mystery of God's dialogue with man in history.

Revelation and History

When God speaks and acts He does so in such a way that His history and our history become a common history. God's being with men in this historical way is what the Bible calls revelation. Revelation is as historical as the nation of Israel, as Cyrenaeus the governor of Syria, or as Pilate who was accorded a place in the Apostles' Creed. We cannot therefore ignore history as do the mystics who claim an immediate God-man relationship that bypasses or transcends history. Every such effort to separate divine revelation from history obscures both the nature of God and our relationship with Him.²

While all history presupposes God's creative will, history as such does not, however, reflect God's redemptive will, for there is much within natural history that contradicts God's redemptive purpose even as there is much within nature that does not reflect God's glory. Divine revelation cannot therefore be identified with history as was the case in Idealism, where humanity at its best was regarded identical with the divine. To confuse humanity with deity, history with revelation, is to deny Christianity's basic fact, the act of God in Christ, by universalizing its uniqueness.

From the Christian perspective, the meaning of history is limited to those events within it which are a transparent medium of divine revelation. God is present and active within the historical process but by no means identical with it. The Bible attests the fact that God spoke and acted in history, and this indeed is the significance which it ascribes to history.

The Bible as Witness to Revelation

The Bible communicates the meaning of life and history by pointing not to itself but to Christ. The Bible is the witness of specific men proclaiming Jesus Christ—prospectively in the Old Testament and retrospectively in the New Testament—as the hope of the world both now and forever.

Designating the Bible as a witness of revelation implies considering together its human distinctiveness from revelation and its divine unity with revelation. As a book the Bible is not identical with revelation, and yet it mediates revelation. Validating the Bible's historicity implies, however, that we must not confuse its "writtenness" with its holiness. What compels us to consider the Bible holy over against all other books is not the manner of its communication but rather the content of that communication. The uniqueness of the Bible lies not in its literary form but in the fact that at its decisive center it affirms the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And what makes the Bible sacred to us is not the manner in which these claims have been communicated to us through oral and written tradition but the fact that we are compelled to acknowledge and submit to these claims.

The fact that the Word of the Lord came to prophets and that the apostles were eyewitnesses of the Christ-event does not mean that they therefore ceased to be human. That the Bible characters discerned the Word of God and saw His glory does not essentially mean that they themselves were caught up into the glory they witnessed. In contrast to the angels, these witnesses continued to be in history, and unlike Jesus Christ they never claimed for themselves divine nature. They retained their humanity as ordinary people precisely in their function as witnesses.

Validating the historicity of the Bible does not, however, allow us to minimize the divine element to which it testifies. We comprehend God's Word only in man's language and God's acts only in history. These are man's, not God's limitations. God chose to conform to them in revealing Himself and continues to do so in communicating His will. When God's Word came to man and became man's word, it did not thereby cease to be God's Word.

The validity of man's word is determined by the historic situation out of which it arises and to which it is addressed. But God's Word judges the human situation and transforms it into a redemptive situation.

By bearing witness of the revelation of God in the past through the Bible, the inspiring Spirit of God prepares the heart of men for present and future revelation. Thus in attesting revelation and promising revelation the Bible becomes revelation.

Although it is not always meaningful or possible to distinguish form from content in revelation, it would not seem correct to say that the Bible is revelation for

the simple reason that the book itself is not identical with the Spirit who inspired it. The Bible bears evidence of the "breath" or "inspiration" of God's Spirit in the obedience of prophets, evangelists, and apostles—and is an instrument of that Spirit affecting similar obedience in the lives of men today. But neither this inspiring "breath" of God nor the obedience of these men is before us because the Bible is before us. The presence of the Bible is not identical with the presence of the Spirit of Jesus, and the fact of obedience to that Spirit is not identical with the record of that fact. Because it is possible to hear the Gospel without obeying it, it is therefore possible to have the Bible without having the inspiration of the Spirit of which it testifies. Luther well said that to have the Scriptures without acknowledging Christ is to have no Scripture.

When God revealed Himself in His Son and continues to reveal Himself by His Spirit through the Bible, the Son and Spirit are identical with the subject and predicate of revelation in a way in which the Bible is not. God speaks through the Bible, but His Spirit is not in the Bible the same way as God was in Christ. The Bible creates the divine possibility of His presence, but the presence of the Lord does not lie in our power as the presence of the Bible does. Therefore prayer to invoke His presence must always have the last word. We cannot force the miracle of revelation to happen, but we can accept the Bible witness that it has happened, trust its promise that it will happen, pray that it might happen, and commit ourselves to the fact that it does happen as we are willing to let it happen.

To ask whether revelation is objective or subjective is somewhat hypothetical in as far as God does not reveal Himself "out there" in the abstract but always to specific people at specific times in specific circumstances. There is little point in discussing whether the Bible is revelation in itself since revelation does not happen unless it happens to someone. But, when it happens, it is ultimately real. The Word of God is, in fact, the ground of all reality including our own and therefore both objective and subjective. Subjectively the Bible is word and objectively it is of God. Various aspects of revelation can be identified, each characterized by this divine union of objective and subjective dimensions. God "revealed" Himself in Christ, He "inspired" the witnesses to witness and to pass on in oral and later written form what they experienced. His Spirit "illuminates" this witness to those who hear the spoken Word and read the written Word. Whether in revelation, inspiration, or illumination, God reveals Himself both objectively and subjectively in the unity and variety of His Being as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The written Word commends itself only to the heart that is confronted by the Living Word. Paul did not meet Christ in the Scriptures until he met Him on the Damascus road. In this respect, the Bible re-

sembles a love letter the message of which cannot be discerned without perceiving the soul of its author. The letter conveys the soul that inspired it, but its inspiration is not identical with its form. The Spirit of God who inspired the Bible frees and compels men to believe not in the church or its Bible but in Jesus Christ through both church and Bible.

The Meaning of Inspiration

In 2 Timothy 3:16 Scripture is spoken of as *theopneustos*³, i.e. God breathed, translated "inspired by God." In the first instance this is not a statement about the Scriptures in themselves nor about the process by which the spoken word was transcribed but about their divine origin. The text says that the Scriptures are of God and therefore profitable as the moral equipment of the man of God. The Scriptures are inspiring because they are inspired, but the inspiration is not an inherent characteristic of the Scriptures but of the breath or Spirit of God. The breath of God through the Word inspires obedience. But this text does not imply that God breathed into the manuscripts (as was said of Adam in Genesis 2:7 who thereby became a living soul). The Scriptures are produced by God's breath, but they neither contain it as a container nor do they perpetuate it as a living soul. The breath of God through (not into) the spoken and written Word produces obedience to the Lord of the Bible. And that, finally, is the inspiration of the Bible.

In 2 Peter 1:20-21 the Holy Spirit is referred to as both the real author (men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit) and as the real interpreter of prophecy (v. 20). The inspiration of the Spirit to speak, write, or interpret does, however, not imply a violation of the genuine humanity of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles. The fact that the Holy Spirit was the real author does not mean that the actual authors did not fully exercise their humanity within the total context of that obedience in which they were involved both actively and passively. There is no reason to assume that the Spirit put "inspired" words into their mouths or even "inspired" thoughts into their minds or that He operated their mouths to speak by divine dictation (as a flute player uses his flute) any more than He activated their feet to walk by divine direction like an automaton. The moving of the Spirit does not imply a forced supernaturalism on the part of the witnesses and scribes. The miracle of the Christ-event was not in the minds of the witnesses who perceived nor in the hands of the scribes who wrote but in the person of the Christ who occupied the cradle of Bethlehem and left the empty tomb in Gethsemane. The people who witnessed and recorded that miracle were no more and no less divine than we who now read that record. And we ought not claim for them what they did not claim for themselves lest we substitute the false offense of a supernatural Bible for the real offense of a human Christ.

God Comes to Man in Obedience

The concern to up-rate the transcribing process reflects our unwillingness to accept the mystery of the rule of God in the hearts of men. When the Spirit of God moves or inspires men to obedience, He does not thereby compel them to deny the freedom of their humanity. Obedience is rendered in freedom or else it is not obedience. Our comprehension of the supernatural is not uniquely Christian unless it includes both creation and incarnation. Our God is too small if we cannot accept His Lordship within the natural order, and He is too far away if we cannot discern His rule among men. The miracle of the incarnation is that God chose to glorify Himself in His humanity, and the miracle of the Christian life is that He continues to do so. Only when the Church loses the compelling witness of the Spirit in its own life, will she feel threatened by historical criticism and seek the false security of humanly verifiable criteria to prove the existence of that Spirit in the Bible.

The inspiration of the Bible does not rest in the infallibility of its authors but in the power of the Spirit to communicate life in Christ. What matters ultimately is not whether David destroyed 700 Syrian chariots (2 Sam. 10:18) or 7000 (1 Chron. 19:18) or whether a particular census in Israel was commanded by God (2 Sam. 24:1) or by Satan (1 Chron. 21:1) but whether the message of the Bible produces Christ. The Bible is more than just another piece of writing by the very nature of its unique message, by the fact that the writers of the Old Testament look forward to the Messiah and the men of the New Testament declare Jesus as the Christ. This testimony is the criterion by which we discern the inspiration of the spirits (1 John 4:1-3). And this is what distinguishes the inspiration of the Bible from that of the creative artist.

The miracle of the Bible is not that infallible men spoke inerrant words—that would be no miracle—but that the Word of God came to and through sinners. To refuse to accept this is to refuse to accept the comfort of the Bible and the promise of its relevance. Like the prophets, evangelists, and apostles we too are fallible men. If God could use them, He can and will speak His Word to and through us, effecting our participation in the witness of His Church throughout the ages. This is God's miracle and our hope.

The human nature of the Bible is in some sense analogous to the human nature of Christ. But we cannot press the analogy beyond the necessity of recognizing the reality of both a divine and a human dimension wherever God speaks and acts in history and men are "moved by the Spirit of God." The very fact that God was incarnate in Christ and not in the Bible suggests that we ought not to press the analogy to imply that the Bible is free from human error as Christ was free from sin. To do so is to fall into the error of Menno Simons who denied the "sinful influence of Mary in the humanity of Jesus so as to establish the

sinlessness of the Church." Apart from the sovereignty and freedom of God there is nothing whatsoever about sinners saved by grace that validates or guarantees the miracle of God's grace. The trustworthiness of the Bible depends neither on its inerrancy nor on our ability to rationally distinguish between its divine and human dimensions and define the nature of their inter-relationship. God Himself establishes and authenticates the reality and truth of His self-revelation as we acknowledge the miracle of the Bible as the basis for our own Christian life. But if we shake ourselves free from the message of the Bible and deny by our lives the inspiration of the Bible, our protestation that the Bible is the Word of God will not carry conviction. "To say 'Lord, Lord' is not enough. What matters is to do the will of God if we are to know His grace and truth—for that is the inspiration of the Bible."⁴

Why the Church Needs the Bible

The Church cannot bypass the Scriptures and go directly to God because the Bible is God's Word for the Church. If the Church were already in Glory, she would not need the Bible, but, as long as she is in history, the Bible is indispensable to her life and mission. The on-going life of the people of God depends on their obedience to the Word of God. The Church of Jesus Christ exists only where a relationship of obedience to His Word exists. A relationship of obedience to the Lord of the Bible implies taking seriously the biblical record and witness of past obedience on the part of the prophets and apostles. But neither the Early Church in this record nor the record itself is to be absolutized, for it is the on-going life of obedience that matters. Such obedience is repudiated when the Church is no longer governed by the Bible but becomes self-governing, when she no longer acknowledges the absolute authority of the Word of God distinct from and superior to her own relative authority under the Word.

The Church that professes to be the Body of Christ does not have her ground of being in herself but in her Lord. In as far as the Church is the Church she does not preach about herself but about her Lord, about the self-revelation of God in Christ, and the meaning of His death and resurrection. The Church whose preaching is oriented about the Bible carries on the tradition of proclamation of her forebears. When today's preachers preach the Gospel, they essentially preach what Isaiah and Jeremiah, what Peter, Paul, and John preached about. This growing community of proclamation is what constitutes the Church's true apostolic succession of faith and loyalty to the great commission. It is a succession of obedience, not of the bishop's office.

True apostolic succession implies that the word of the antecessor is normative for that of the successor. But the actual witness of the prophets and apostles can retain its free and independent influence upon the Church only when it is fixed in writing. In the oral

tradition the Church is primarily in conversation with herself. The oral tradition cannot judge the Church because it is the Church. The Church does violence to the word of those prophets and apostles when it sets itself up as a standard whereby to judge their testimony. The Church cannot judge the Bible. The message of the Bible judges the Church, compelling her to accept the Bible as the basis for her own authority.

The Church that claims to embody in her own existence the source of authority tends to become a self-sufficient memorial society cultivating her own ideals and sentiments. Here there is only conversation within herself but no dialogue with a higher principle outside of herself. The Church is called to obey not herself, but her Lord and to find her directions for the structure of that obedience from the example of the obedience of the prophets and apostles who went before her. It is for this reason that the Church cannot live without the Bible. The Church does not have her life and authority apart from the Word, but through and under the Word. While the confession of the Church is important, it is of relative importance in relation to the confession of the biblical witnesses which it presupposes.

The evangelical decision is always a decision for the Scriptures as the final source of appeal for all questions of faith and life. It is only on the basis of this decision for the Bible that reformation within the Church is possible. The moment the Church wants to be alone with herself and refuses to subject herself to the authority of the Word, she ceases to be the Church. She may have all kinds of activity evolving and revolving within her, she may have action and reaction giving the appearance of some sort of life, but the real life of the Church does not consist of activities or relations but in encounter with the sacred Word. Where such encounter is lacking, whatever else goes on within the Church may be considered more a sign of decay than of life. Conversations conducted in the absence of the Lord are no longer conducted in the Church, for she has ceased to exist when the dialogue between God and man through the Bible is reduced to a monologue within the organization.

The Church cannot live without the Bible because apart from the community of the Living Word of God the creature knows only the solidarity of misery and death. The Church that is governed by the Word of God is governed by the authority of Jesus Christ, and, because it is His authority that she obeys, she does not have to worry about the goal and result of that obedience.⁵

¹Otto Weber, *Grundriss der Bibelkunde*, Chap. 2.

²Gustav Aulen, *The Faith of the Christian Church*, 42 f.

³Eduard Schweizer, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, VI, 452 f.; W. Philipp, *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, III, 775 f.

⁴K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, 533-4 and paragraph 19 in general.

⁵K. Barth, *Ibid.*, paragraph 20.

† ih̄s xp̄s · Matheus homo

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GENEALOGIA

MATTHEI

CHRISTOPHORI



THE TRANSMISSION OF THE BIBLE

By William Klassen

RECENTLY THE DISCOVERY of Abraham Lincoln's personal copy of the Gettysburg Address aroused a good deal of interest. In the field of biblical literature we have never come across such a spectacular find, although recent discoveries do not rule out such a possibility. The inaccessibility of the autographs (that is, the documents as they were written by the authors themselves) makes it necessary for us to speak of a transmission of the text. If we had photostatic copies of all of the writings of the Bible just as they were written by their original authors, we would not need to speak of transmission of the text. It would, of course, be impossible for us to read their language without arduous training; but, at least, there would be no need to look at the transmission of the text. Transmission of a text becomes exceedingly important as soon as we are removed from the original writing. In the case of the New Testament, none of the writings were written later than A.D. 100 and none earlier than A.D. 40. This means that in these sixty years all of our present New Testament came into existence. Since many of the Epistles were occasional writings, no attempt was made to publish them.

Manuscript Copying

As we reconstruct this historical process, it seems logical to assume that as the value of some of the writings of the New Testament was recognized and their applicability to other congregations observed they were recopied in order to provide wider circulation. This process of recopying by hand represents the center of the transmission of the New Testament text. Until the invention of printing in 1460, scribes painstakingly recopied the books of the New Testament word by word.

This was done in two different ways. In several instances we know that a number of scribes sat in one room and one of them read the manuscript while the others copied as he read. Naturally, such a method of recopying a manuscript would introduce many errors because what the reader read was not necessarily what the scribe heard. In fact, through this process many variant readings were brought into the New Testament on the difference between "you" and "we." The Greek word for "we" and "you" sounds almost identical and so certain scribes heard "you" while other scribes heard "we." (e.g. I John 1:4; Col. 1:7, 12, etc.)

← Lindisfarne Gospels, Latin Vulgate, Matt. 1:1, ca A.D. 700.

Another way in which manuscripts were transcribed was thorough individual work. The trained scribe sat alone with a manuscript and recopied it carefully. Anyone who has ever done any recopying knows that such a process introduces many errors into the thing being recopied. First we look but, of course, we may not see exactly what is written; then we have to retain in our memory that which we see; then we must think accurately and transmit that which we have observed by means of our own hand to the paper. The easiest kind of mistake that can be made is to write a line once when it ought to appear twice (haplography) because a line either begins or ends (homoiteuton) like the previous line; or to copy a word twice (ditto-graphy), or to omit a word which appears in close proximity to a similar word. Since abbreviations for such words as man, Jesus Christ, and others were common, it is necessary for us to learn these abbreviations now before we can arrive at the original text.

An additional feature of the writing of the first century is that all writing was in continuous script. This is similar to using a modern typewriter in which the spacer does not work, and we simply type all the words continuously without spacing between them. Naturally, it is more difficult to read when typed in this way, but it is still possible to do so. It introduces difficulties, however, at certain points when it is hard to find out whether a preposition stands alone or is part of the verb that follows it, to cite only one example.

The Translation of the Texts

Another factor was added to the transmission process when the books of the New Testament began to be translated into other languages. Syriac and Latin seem to be the first, although Egyptian dialects and Gothic followed shortly. These translations of the New Testament text, especially when they originated in the second century, are of immense value to us today in trying to reconstruct the original text of the New Testament. Likewise in the Old Testament the versions of Theodotion, Aquila, and Symmachus are invaluable in our understanding of the text, to say nothing of the translation into Greek called the Septuagint which look place several centuries before Christ.

Another source of immense value and an important factor in the transmission of the text are the commentaries. Whether it be the Apostolic Fathers who in the first half of the second century allude to places in the New Testament without directly quoting them, or Marcion who lived in the middle of the second century rejecting certain books as uncanonical, or the later church fathers like Tertullian and Irenaeus, the way in which they referred to the biblical material is exceedingly instructive and helpful in discovering today what kind of a text they used. This process finds its highest point in the greatest biblical scholar of antiquity,

Origen. In Origen's commentaries we can discover not only the Bible which was available to him—the limits of the canon had not yet been fixed—but also the important textual changes of which he betrays awareness.

Standardization of the Text

With the emerging strength of the church and its increasing institutionalization, the transmission of the text also underwent certain changes. In part, because of dissident movements (like Marcion) it became important for the various geographical areas to seek to standardize their texts. Most confusing were the many different textual traditions which came into being, as the writings of the New Testament were translated into a variety of languages. About 385 A.D. Pope Damasus sensed this need so acutely that he commissioned Jerome to bring out a standard version. This Latin version (Vulgate) did much to standardize and condition the textual transmission of the medieval ages. Until the time of the Reformation, the Latin version of Jerome was standard and continues to be that in Roman Catholicism. No great advances were made in the transmission of the text during these years since most of the work was with the Latin text rather than with the Greek.

Codex Alexandrinus. 1 John 1:1 - 2:9.



The Printed Text

This all changed with the Reformation. Prior to the Reformation, the Renaissance had opened up a keen interest in the classics and original languages. As the cry "ad fontes" (to the sources) rang out, it affected biblical studies also; and with the invention of printing it was only logical that someone would propose that a Greek text of the New Testament be published. This happened in the case of Erasmus who in 1516 published a Greek text. Unfortunately, he did not have access to many Greek manuscripts and therefore was severely handicapped in his efforts to publish the original Greek text. Moreover he was in a hurry, finishing his work in less than six months. In several places where he had no Greek manuscripts available, he simply retranslated from the Latin back into the Greek as he assumed the Greek would have been.

In I John 5:7, 8 he at first followed the reading which we have today in the RSV. When someone challenged his text, he said he would put in the longer reading provided one Greek manuscript could be adduced which had this longer reading (as in the KJV). Sure enough, one such manuscript was found even though it was not ancient at all, and so Erasmus supplied the longer reading. Erasmus' significance comes not from the fact that his was an accurate piece of work, but from its influence and the fact that it was the first published Greek New Testament. The first printed New Testament is the Complutensian Polyglot printed in Spain in 1514-1517 but published in 1520.

The Received Text

In 1551 the publishing house of Robert Stephanus in Paris brought out the first Greek New Testament with our modern verse division. Chapter divisions had been supplied as early as the 13th century. At this time also the Greek text known today as "the received text" came into existence, which has had a wide following and extensive veneration in the last four centuries. The designation "received text" originated as an advertising slogan and subsequently became dignified beyond its deserving. This text forms the basis of the King James Version and is one of the poorest textual traditions available to us. Since 1550 a large number of manuscripts have been discovered which date to the second and third centuries and thus are of great value for us in studying the history of the transmission of the text. When we look at passages like Colossians 1:14 in which the RSV leaves out the words, "through his blood," and study this in the history of textual transmission, it becomes clear that these words are a later addition and do not belong to the original text of Colossians. Only one Greek manuscript includes the words. Therefore, the careful textual critical scholar in faithfulness to the original Greek is compelled to omit these words or else be guilty of adding words to Holy Scripture.

The Adulterous Woman

Perhaps the best illustration of textual transmission is to be found in the story of the adulterous woman recorded in John 8:1-11. It comes as something of a shock to people who first read the RSV to find this incident "reduced" to a footnote. Those who read the New English Bible for the first time likewise are baffled that it does not even appear in John 8 but hangs somewhat detached at the end of the Gospel according to John. Yet even the Scofield Reference Bible has the honesty to admit that this section "is not found in some of the most ancient manuscripts."

The textual critic in analyzing this material has several stages of work. First of all, he must ask in what geographical areas of the church this material is found. He discovers that those manuscripts which come from Antioch and Constantinople do have it for the most part, yet even here it often appears with an asterisk or an obelisk, marking the difficulty that the scribes saw. It is found in D which is an important fifth or



Copying manuscripts. St. Benedict and the Barbarians.



Alcuin's revision of the
Latin Vulgate, Wisdom
1:1-6, 9th century.

sixth century manuscript. A number of Latin manuscripts have it including the Vulgate and the Palestinian Syriac. One manuscript has it following John 7:36 and another manuscript has it after John 21:24. A group of manuscripts have it after Luke 21:38. It is omitted entirely by the earliest manuscript of the Gospel of John most recently discovered (The Bodmer Papyrus, p. 66 photographic reproduction) and by all of the major early manuscripts from Egypt, including apparently the commentators, Clement, Origen, Tertullian, and others. This has led many modern editors to put it in double brackets and others to place it at the end of the Gospel.

In studying this section, the second step is to look at its contents. We ask ourselves, what was it in the early church that caused some people to object to its presence, and others, in effect, to vote for its presence in Christian literature? As we approach it in this way, we discover that the Greek style is such that it is very difficult to assume that John could have written it. It is a much more difficult Greek style than we have anywhere else in the Gospel according to John. Furthermore, it could very easily be placed at the end of the Gospel without disrupting the train of thought in John 7:52-8-12.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that

the story correctly represents the way in which Jesus would have dealt with such a case. Here, of course, people differ in their approaches. There were people in the early church who urged that Jesus would not have taken such a soft line toward this woman and, therefore, did not feel that it correctly represented the spirit of Jesus. When we argue in this way, however, we have come from the more or less objective study of textual criticism to subjective factors. We are, in effect, comparing our view of Jesus with that of someone else. We are no longer allowing this passage to tell us what Jesus was like. The fact that no early Greek manuscript has yet been discovered which includes this story would rather argue for the position that it does not belong in the Gospel of John. This, of course, is not to say that it never happened because that is another question. Here other aspects need to be called into play. One can believe that it did take place, and that it was written by someone other than John but gradually in certain areas found its way into John's Gospel because scribes felt this is where it belonged. Its presence in Luke in some manuscripts and in other places of John makes it necessary for us, however, to designate clearly the problem we have here in textual transmission. It should certainly be placed in double brackets wherever and whenever it is left here in the Gospel according to John.

Getting at the Original Text

What is the possibility of reconstructing the original text? This possibility changes with each document in the New Testament, but it is now generally recognized that when Westcott and Hort entitled their New Testament "The New Testament in the Original Greek" they were too ambitious. We can approximate what the original reading was but we can never be sure that we really have attained it.

This does not mean, however, that textual criticism is a purely negative task, shaking our confidence in the accuracy of our Bibles. For one thing, there is an enormous wealth of material available to us to reconstruct the text of the Greek New Testament. Secondly, the number of variants available to us are really not very great. We have, for example in the papyrus fragments, which are the oldest material available to us, around 70 papyri containing either whole books or fragments of books of the New Testament. We have 239 uncials, only one of which is, however, complete. These uncials are written in large letters and, therefore, date prior to the ninth century. We have 2,491 minuscules (manuscripts written in small letters) of a slightly later date and about 1800 lectionaries, that is, collections of Scripture readings used in worship services. If we compare this with other classic pieces of literature, for example, the Bible of the Greeks, the Homeric Poems, we have 288 partial papyri, two uncials, and 188 minuscule manuscripts. In the case of Plato, we have 23 manuscripts; Thucydides, 21 manuscripts; Hesiod, 20 manuscripts; the Annals of Tacitus of books 11-16 we have only one manuscript; and in the case of the Epistle of Diognetus, we have no manuscript at all because the one that was known and available perished in the 1870 Strasburg fire. Thus, by

comparison, the multiplicity of Greek documents for the New Testament is indeed outstanding.

The transmission of the text is what makes it necessary for us to study it to try to ascertain what the text really says. In some cases this is quite simple. For example, sometime ago an article in the constitution of the Bethel College Mennonite Church read, "We believe in the immorality of the soul." It took no great wisdom to ascertain the true original text. Likewise, in a public relations pitch from a seminary mention was made of their "conservative theology." Again, it took no great wisdom to conjecture that probably the original reading was "conservative theology."

In analyzing the text of the New Testament, the task, however, is considerably more complex. When we are confronted with a reading supplied by Marcion, a heretical teacher of the second century, are we to take it as the original reading or as an attempt on his part to change the text to suit his theology? This question would need to be asked of every church father. There are certain points at which it is clear that Marcion is grinding his own ax. At other points this is not nearly as clear.

Finally, it needs to be observed that the text available to us in the Greek New Testament is a remarkably firm one. On the major assertions of the Christian faith there are no textual ambiguities. Textual criticism, therefore, does not destroy one's faith, but can strengthen it. However, it does not encourage us to place our faith in particular verses or versions, or particular sections of the Bible, but it urges us to place our faith in the God who not only sent Jesus Christ, but moved followers of Jesus Christ to record their experiences and encounters with him in such a way that it continues to inspire and lead us today.



Washington Manuscript of Mark 16:12-17 with additional saying of Christ. 4th to 5th century.

The Scholar and the Bible

By David Schroeder



St. Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai, where Tischendorf found the Codex Sinaiticus in 1859.

WHO IS A "SCHOLAR"?

It is obvious, to begin with, that to be a scholar with respect to the Scriptures has meant different things in different periods of history. To the Jewish scribes it meant learning the tradition (the law and the interpretation of the law as handed down from Rabbi to Rabbi); for the Church Father it meant the ability to give an adequate apology for the Christian faith; and at the time of the Reformation it meant a knowledge of the classics and the biblical languages.

The term "scholar" is used to refer to the person who has acquired some of the technical or scientific skills or disciplines required in the study of the Scriptures. Thus, for instance, if a person has acquired proficiency in Greek and has learned how to collate ancient Greek manuscripts in the area of textual criticism, he would be regarded as a scholar regardless of how much or how little he would know of New Testament theology.

Several misunderstandings or dangers must be avoided, however. Not everyone who has studied theology and has received some kind of degree in theology is a scholar. A man may earn a degree in archaeology but this does not yet say that he is an archaeologist. To be considered a scholar in this area he would need to acquire skill in the methods employed in that particular science.

It is evident furthermore that the disciplines now associated with biblical studies are so many and so varied that a single person can gain proficiency in but a few areas. No one can presume to be an authority in all the disciplines now used in biblical studies.

Another danger to be avoided is that of identifying good or poor scholarship with a man's piety or theological position. For instance, a non-Christian with a thorough knowledge of languages and accuracy in his work is to be trusted in Bible translation more than the man who may be a pious, fundamental Christian but lacks the necessary knowledge and skill.

It will be understood, therefore, that the term "scholar" is being used to describe the person who has acquired the knowledge and the skill to be proficient in at least one of the many disciplines now associated with biblical studies. This links the word directly to what is known as the critical study of the Scriptures, and purposely so. To be a student of the Bible and to avoid or bypass the real benefits of modern critical studies would be to reject a God-given possibility to gain a fuller and deeper insight into God's Word.

The Rejection of Critical Studies

Not all our readers may be inwardly convinced of the need for the critical studies of the Scriptures. Indeed, a person can be just as sincere and just as obedient a Christian without a critical study of the Bible. On the basis of this observation, however, the assumption is often made that critical studies are unnecessary

or even detrimental to the faith, and many conservative Christians have reacted negatively to all critical studies. Such a conclusion and such a reaction is unwarranted, however, and does not consider the debt the person who does not study the Bible critically owes to the critical scholar. All modern translations and all the commentaries (other than perhaps the strictly devotional) depend on a wide base of research and critical study.

One of the reasons there has been a negative reaction against biblical criticism in conservative circles may be due to the use of the term itself when it is interpreted as indicating a negative attitude to the Scriptures. "Criticism," however, indicates nothing more than a careful examination of all the data and phenomena associated with the recording, preserving, and interpreting of the Scriptures. We will be using the term "criticism" strictly in the technical sense of subjecting the Scriptures to a careful scrutiny on the basis of the various disciplines (linguistic, historical, etc.) involved in studying the various aspects of the Scriptural accounts.

Another reason why critical studies were rejected by a large segment of the Christian church was the fact that the method employed in the study and the results of "findings" gained on the basis of those methods were not clearly distinguished. Since the "findings" were often contrary to the dogmas of the church the easiest reaction was to have nothing to do with the "method." This would be tantamount to saying that since the first results of surgery were negative (i.e. the patients died) we should have nothing to do with surgery and there should be no surgeons.

Even today higher criticism is often viewed simply as an attempt to undermine the truth of the Scriptures. This position is then bolstered by pointing to scholars who, on the basis of their observations, formulated theories which were not in accord with the basic tenets of the faith. Seldom, however, is there any equal reference to the many scholars who used the same methods but came up with theories that supported what the church already held, or of the cases where the scholar was later proven right and the church was wrong. It will be impossible to give fair consideration to biblical criticism without recognizing the fact that the instrument of criticism (the individual discipline) is neutral and that it is often the faith or beliefs (basic assumptions) of the scholar which determine the actual outcome of the research. Thus it is possible for one scholar to reject or to correct the "findings" of another scholar without rejecting the method or the individual discipline involved.

In many instances the conservatives who rejected the methods of critical studies thereby also rejected the only means available to them to correct the "findings" of critical studies which they knew to be false. They rejected the means by which they could have spoken

effectively to liberalism. Since they rejected the method as well as the findings of higher criticism the church had to wait a long time until the correction eventually came from within liberalism itself.

The Necessity of Critical Studies

The difficulties that we have had in the past in accepting critical studies can be overcome if we recognize that biblical criticism is not something extraneous or foreign to proper Bible study. If we are at all concerned about careful biblical exegesis and exposition we must of necessity enter critical studies on three separate levels.

No one will deny the necessity of engaging in *textual criticism*. It is involved in all attempts to establish the original wording of the biblical text. Through textual criticism an attempt is made to restore the original wording of a document where this has been altered in the course of copying and recopying. In none of the biblical books do we have the original autograph. The original wording can be reconstructed only by a careful study and comparison of the copies-of-copies that have been preserved.

A host of separate disciplines are employed in textual criticism. All possible sources such as the extant manuscripts (papyri, uncials, minuscules and the lectionaries), Versions (translations of the Bible into other languages e.g. Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament and Vulgate, the Latin translation of the Bible) and quotations made by ancient writers as well as inscriptions, are employed. Textual criticism demands not only linguistic skills in the biblical and related languages (i.e. various versions) but demands skill also in detecting voluntary and involuntary errors in the manuscripts (verbal criticism), in establishing the history, development and authority of the various families of manuscripts (external criticism and internal criticism), and in making decisions individually on each verse of the text in the light of all the evidence. (The findings of scholars will vary in proportion as they give one or the other of these disciplines greater emphasis.)

All our modern translations of the Bible and commentaries on various books of the Bible rely on the best results of textual criticism. Because of this we must in all careful exegesis of necessity give preference to moderate translations of the Bible in which the results of textual criticism have been employed to best advantage.

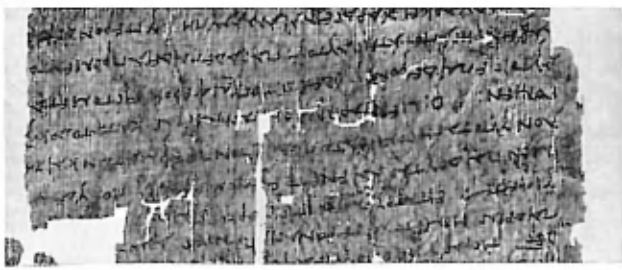
A second level of criticism has to do with *literary, historical and form criticism*. This level of criticism is necessary because the revelation of God in act and word came to and through man at specific points in time and place. Thus, the language that Jeremiah spoke was the language of his day and age and what he said must first of all be understood in terms of the meaning of words and the thought patterns of his day.

Literary criticism can help answer the question whether a book of the Bible is a unified work or a composite and it can help us to determine the sources which lie behind the biblical text. The literary critic makes his observations in terms of changes in vocabulary, literary style, point of view or on the basis of repetitions and digressions evident in the writing.

Together with literary criticism, historical criticism is involved when we ask questions of the genuineness of authorship. Many books of the Bible do not give the author (e.g. Hebrews). Ecclesiastical tradition has, however, named an author but this needs to be checked and verified. Historical criticism investigates the data of the book (internal evidence), the total writings of the author and of the canon and contemporary writings (external criticism). History, comparative religions, and archaeology are helpful here in checking differences and agreements between the book and secular writers. Once we can spell out accurately the background against which an author wrote (the occasion, the nature of the heresy or the persecution involved, who the hearers were) we can with greater accuracy exegete the book.

It is known today that in the Old Testament as well as in the New there existed a period during which much of what we now have in the Bible was transmitted simply by word of mouth. Thus, for instance, Luke sets himself to prove the oral and written tradition and to write an orderly account of the events that had transpired (Luke 1:1-4). Out of such tradition Paul can also use words of Jesus not recorded in the Gospels (Acts 20:35). Form criticism helps us to investigate the writings in their life setting, that is, in the context in which they originated and in the case of the gospels and other sections of the Bible in their pre-literary state (such as songs, doxologies, etc.). It often acts as a good corrective to literary criticism or may give specific answers to the problems raised by the literary critic. Thus, for example, the literary critics long asked whether Peter copied from Paul or vice versa (since I Peter and Colossians contain similar materials). Through form criticism the answer has been given that neither copied from the other but both resorted to a standard form of teaching or using paraenetic materials (some suggest it concretely in the form of a catechism) used in the early church.

A third level of biblical criticism is that of *biblical theology*. This particular discipline has not always been seen as a critical discipline but it rightfully belongs in this category. Without it the value of the other levels of criticism, especially the second level, is lost. The methods of literary or historical criticism treat the Bible as what it incidentally is and not as what it essentially is. Thus literary criticism, if it becomes an end in itself, treats the Bible as literature only and historical criticism, if it stands alone, treats the Bible only as an historical record. The Bible is



history but not history for history's sake. Biblical theology is the constructive and positive phase of biblical criticism without which the values of the other disciplines will not come to full fruition.

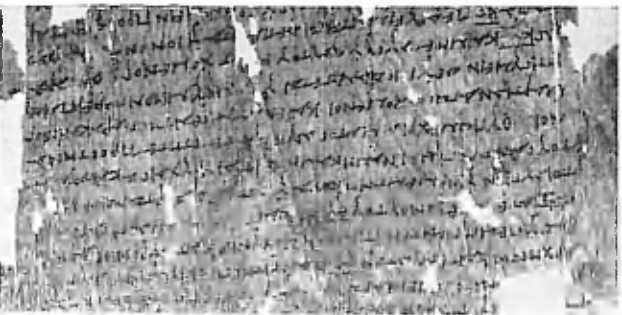
The Limitations of Scholarship

From the above it is clear that the critical study of the Scriptures has a central place in the exegesis and exposition of the Scriptures. This is so in spite of the fact that critical studies have specific limitations which must be recognized and acknowledged.

First of all, the critical methods or disciplines, in so far as they are scientific disciplines, share the limitations of all scientific methods. 1) In every scientific method we are forced to concern ourselves mainly with externals: the things that can be seen, weighed, measured in one form or another. 2) Prior to the use of any such objective methods the objectives that the scholar has in mind influence his choice of material and method and therefore of necessity also his findings. (You can find only what your method and your instruments are capable of revealing.) 3) There must always be an interpretive principle which links fact to fact and makes it meaningful but this principle of interpretation can be gained from other than Christian presuppositions. 4) The scientific disciplines can describe external developments and movements but cannot judge as to the truth or falsity of statements of faith.

Let us illustrate some of these problems in the three levels of criticism mentioned above. 1) The textual critic can establish that the last part of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:13) "For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen," is not in the original text of Matthew's Gospel. The critic, however, cannot with the same critical method answer the question whether God intended that particular passage to become a part of the text. Thus even after the scholar has done his work important decisions need to be made which are made largely on the basis of faith-presuppositions. (Note that the modern translations carry this verse in the footnotes.)

2) In a similar way historical criticism can prove, to the degree of probability possible in historical research, that Jesus lived but cannot with the same empirical methods prove or disprove the divinity of Christ. Historical criticism may establish that the disciples believed Jesus to be the Son of God, but the same method cannot establish empirically that he was in fact the Son of God.



3) In the area of biblical theology we must interpret all the facts established by the empiric disciplines. To do so we must first of all have a principle of interpretation—an hypothesis which will account for all the data observed. This principle is however never chosen on the basis of empirical methods but on the basis of the presuppositions of faith. Thus, if a person is a humanist, he will at best be able to view Jesus as an ordinary man, albeit a genius; if he is a Christian he will interpret the data presupposing a divine revelation and a personal commitment to Jesus as Lord and Saviour. This then permits him to see Jesus as God incarnate.

The Christian scholar's greatest difficulty will be the maintenance of honest and objective attitudes using the empirical methods of criticism (archaeology, etc.) knowing that he may not always be able to harmonize these findings with his faith. There are times when he must raise one of three possibilities: 1) either his findings are wrong, 2) his interpretation of the Scriptures is wrong, or 3) both may be wrong. Thus there are times when he cannot immediately bring his findings into harmony with what he holds in faith to be true.

The most serious problem of the scholar is that his methods of study allow him to observe only the natural processes but do not permit him in a similar way to observe transcendental factors. He can describe the history of the canon but he cannot describe with the same empirical methods the faith that it is the Spirit of God working in and through the church that established the canon.

Some scholars no doubt have become so enamored by their ability to describe the human and the natural associated with the biblical accounts that they have lost sight of all transcendental factors. This must not, however, be ascribed to biblical criticism as such. It must be ascribed to the assumptions of faith that such scholars bring to the materials.

Conclusion

The above means simply that we need to be more appreciative of the real contribution to biblical studies being made by the scholar, and to recognize the value of a wide range of disciplines in our study of the Scriptures.

We need to accept the values of critical studies recognizing that they are a necessity to careful exegesis. At the same time we must be careful not to attribute a significance to the findings of the scholar, which they do not have when used in a carefully constructed biblical theology.

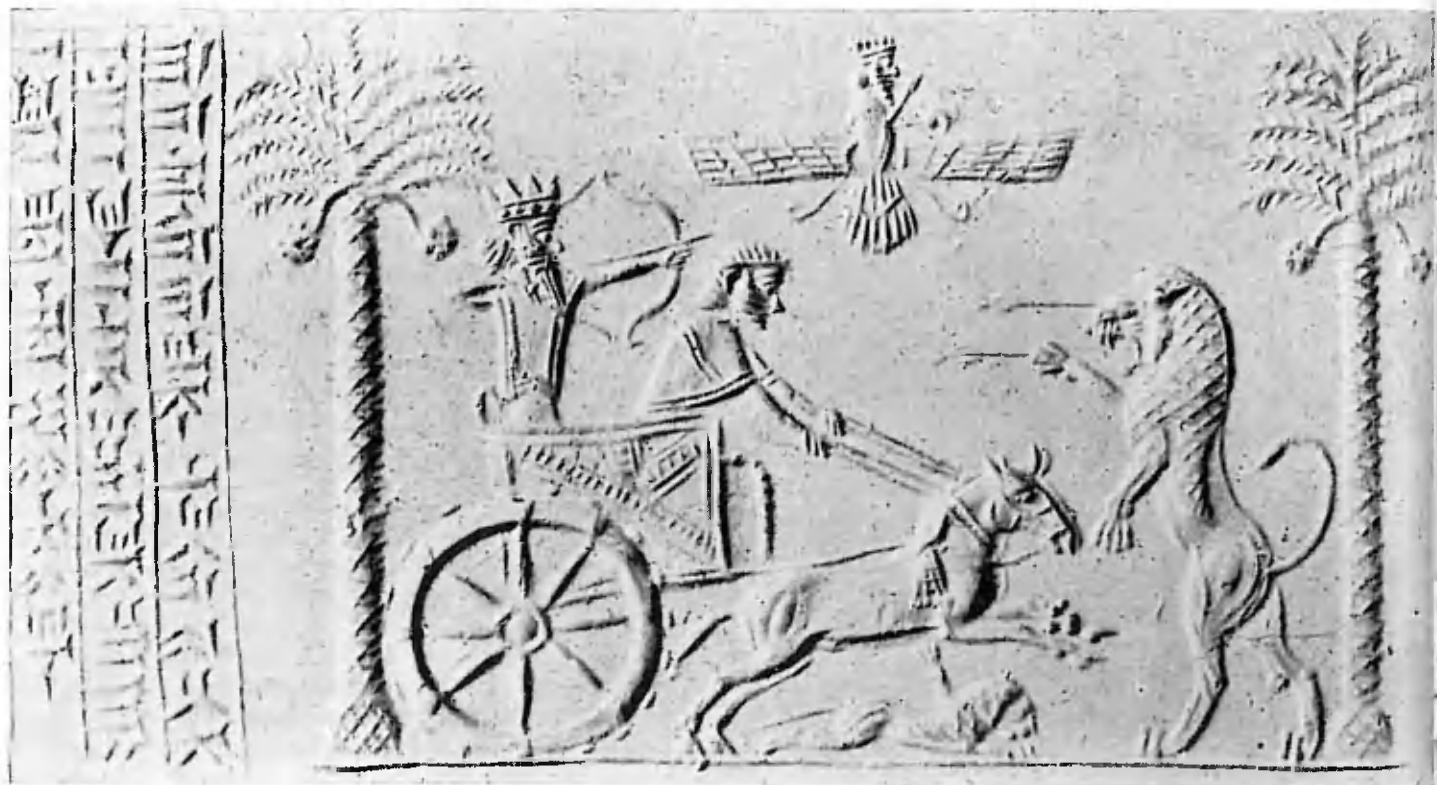
The scholar has been called to a specific task in relation to the Scriptures. We should make it possible for him to do his work and should encourage those who have specific gifts in specific disciplines to use them to God's glory. Let us challenge young people also in this area to "study to show (themselves) approved unto God."

Papyrus of Hebrews 12:1-11. 3rd to 4th century.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

By Waldemar Janzen

Darius of Persia hunting lions. Cylinder-seal 500 B.C.



I.

UNTIL LESS THAN a century ago the Bible seemed to be a lonely voice from a hoary past. In its scanty allusions to other nations, cultures, and religions could be found, but very little extra-biblical knowledge was available about them. Today the Bible has context. It can and must be read against the background of a rich knowledge of the Ancient Near East. The world in which the Hebrews moved and in which the Bible was written has been opened up to our view, and suddenly the Bible has become a rather modern book when we realize that the invention of writing in Mesopotamia and Egypt preceded the time of Israel's deliverance from the Egyptian bondage by about as long a span as that which separates Christ's ministry on earth from our own century. Israel's covenant with God at Sinai came, not at the beginning of time, but in a fullness of time.

This placing of the Bible into its context has been achieved through the labors of the archaeologist. Ar-

chaeology in the strict sense is the study of the *material* remains of the past. In a wider definition—the one adopted here—it includes the *written* remains that have been unearthed as well. It has progressed from a treasure hunt for museum pieces to a systematic and respectable science.

The archaeologist digs up most of his materials from the ancient ruins. Three basic principles determine his digging operations: (1) ancient object tells its story only when studied in the exact location where it is found. (2) Ancient towns were destroyed from time to time, and were generally rebuilt later on the same site, so that a modern archaeologist who digs a city mound or "Tell" from top to bottom encounters progressively older layers as he moves deeper. (3) There were changing fashions in ancient times. The style of houses, city walls, temples, etc., but above all the style of pottery utensils changed from one century or half-century to the next.

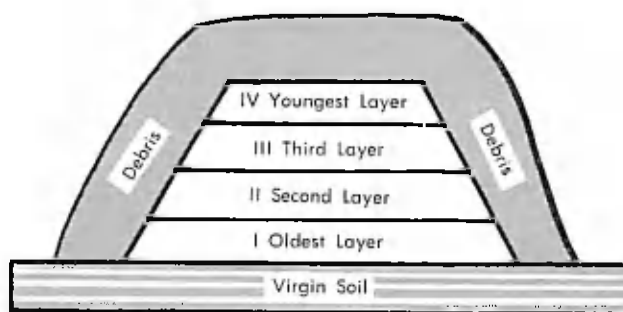
Jehu of Israel doing homage to the king of Assyria. 841 B.C.



Schematic Cross-section of a Tell (Mound):

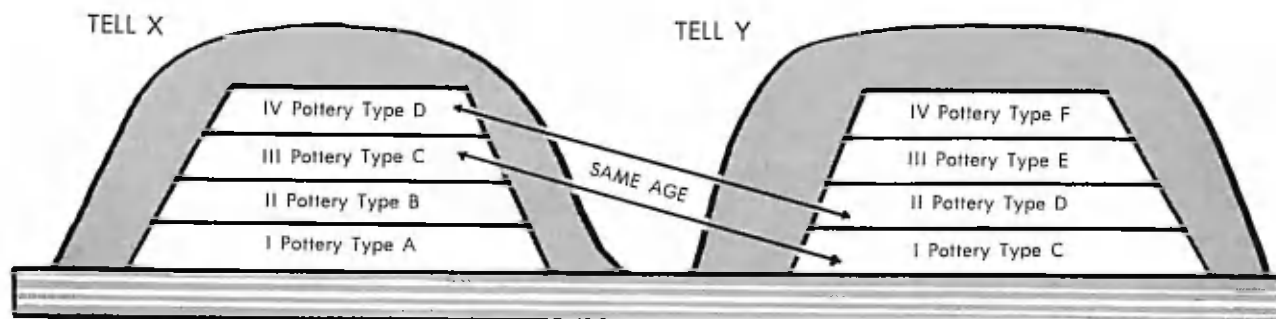
Pioneer work in systematizing this method of "stratigraphical digging" (uncovering of successive strata or layers) was done in Palestine by men like C. S. Fisher in the 1920's and early 1930's. When W. F. Albright had published his excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim (Biblical Debir) in the early 1930's, a systematic basis had been laid to which others could relate and compare their finds. Thus a comparison of pottery style and other remains may show that a certain level in one Tell corresponds to a certain level in another, indicating that the two must be of approximately the same age. (Our sketch illustrates this). This makes it possible to establish a relative chronological relationship between the two. Coins with figures of known rulers, inscriptions which point to a certain period, and many other factors may make an absolute dating possible also. These materials are then studied in relation to what is known of that particular city from the Bible or other ancient writings.

Besides this systematic unearthing of ancient occupational sites there are chance finds in unexpected places. The Moabite stone and the Siloam Inscription are some examples, but the most amazing discovery out-



side of a Tell is that of the famous Dead Sea Scrolls in the caves of the wilderness bordering on the north-western Dead Sea.

Of course, archaeological searching is not limited to Palestine, but extends throughout the Ancient Near East. Many of the finds of special importance for our study of the Bible come from the lands surrounding Palestine proper. We shall now turn to a cursory survey of some of the more significant discoveries both within and without Palestine.



City Y was first built at a time when city X had existed for some time already and had been destroyed and rebuilt twice.

Scroll of Isaiah found near Dead Sea, 1947, showing Isaiah 40:2-28.



II.

A selective list of *documentary* finds, in the historical order of the biblical events upon which they have particular bearing, may well begin with the Nuzi Tablets. Excavations of ancient Nuzi, a town south-east of Nineveh flourishing in the 16th and 15th centuries B.C., have yielded clay tablets containing laws and customs that throw considerable light on the Patriarchal stories. These tablets, together with other materials from the early and middle second millennium, make it clear now that the Patriarchal stories fit well into the time where the Bible places them but would be out of context in later periods. The widespread view that the Patriarchal stories reflect the climate of a much later time must therefore be rejected.

When C. F. A. Schaeffer began to dig up Ras Shamrah, the ancient Canaanite city of Ugarit, on the Mediterranean Coast of Syria, extensive parts of an ancient temple library of approximately the time of



Pottery jars like those in which Scroll of Isaiah was found.

Moses came to light. Since the Canaanites of these northern areas were generally akin to the Canaanites of the South whom the Israelites conquered under Joshua and later, the new knowledge of Canaanite life and religion gained at Ugarit makes it possible to know just what temptations the Israelites faced from the time of the Judges to the conflict with Canaanite Baal-worship under Ahab and Jezebel and also later. We now understand much better why prophets like Hosea warned the Israelites so insistently to turn from Baal worship, the Asherim, the high places, the "sacred" prostitution, and other features of Canaanite religion.

Space permits only brief mention of the Samaria Ostraca from the last days of the Northern Kingdom, the Lachish Letters from the time of Jeremiah, the Babylonian Chronicle, and the Elephantine Papyri from Persian times. These and others contribute to

our understanding of the life and history of the Hebrew people, of specific biblical events and references, and of the Hebrew language of the Old Testament.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Most sensational and widely known are the Dead Sea Scrolls, documents and fragments found in the caves of the northwestern Dead Sea area since 1947. The tremendous impetus exerted by these biblical and other writings—some of them a thousand years older than our oldest previously known Hebrew Bible manuscripts—on biblical scholarship has been tremendous, and the books and articles published about them run into the hundreds, if not thousands. Their importance pertains more to the New Testament than to the Old. After vastly exaggerated initial claims as to their revolutionary meaning for the understanding of

the New Testament have died down, their contributions to our Bible knowledge will find their way into commentaries, dictionaries, and other biblical literature in a gradual way and will enrich our appreciation of the New Testament very significantly, though not in the sensational forms projected at first.

In the main, we will have to see Jesus and the early church against two backgrounds now, namely that of the legalistic piety of the Scribes and Pharisees known for a long time, and that of the end-time-conscious ("eschatological") expectancy of the Essenes, now identified with the people of Qumran, the owners of the Scrolls. It is clear already, for example, that the Gospel of John is rooted deeply in Jewish soil of the first century A.D., rather than in the Greek climate of the second century, as has often been suggested before we knew more about the Judaism of the first century. A word of warning to our readers is in place: Be very critical of *sensational* books and statements on the Scrolls; do not let them confuse your thinking and do not accept their claims. The reliable literature on the subject has a sober tone.

While the discovery of large bodies of written material always confronts us with a sudden and unexpected glimpse into the past and is therefore hailed with much fanfare and sensational build-up in the press, it should not obscure the importance of the innumerable less sensational results of archaeological research. Much of our knowledge of the Ancient Near East has been gained in gradual, painstaking and persistent search of the ancient remains. Such work has been done and is continuing at the various sites that have been chosen for systematic excavation.

Some of the more important excavations in Palestine have been those of Tell Beit Mirsim (biblical Debir) by W. F. Albright, of Megiddo by C. S. Fisher and others, of Jericho by J. Garstang and later by Miss Kathleen Kenyon, of Hazor by Y. Yadin, of Tell el Farah (probably biblical Tirzah) by R. deVaux, of Tell Qasile by S. Mazar, of Balatah (biblical Shechem) by G. Ernest Wright, and just very recently and still largely unknown, those of Masada by Y. Yadin, and of Philistine Ashdod by D. N. Freedman. Others could be added. Especially important, though different in not focusing upon any one Tell, has been the archaeological survey of the East Jordan country by Nelson Glueck.

III.

The Christian is concerned, above all, with the impact of this comparatively new knowledge upon his understanding of the Bible as the Word of God. Conservative Christians have tended to react emotionally to archaeologically gained insights, and that in two ways: 1. Some have asked with suspicion: "Has not the Bible shown the way of salvation clearly to all those who approach it with a receptive heart at all times? Can the discoveries of our time add anything

important that Augustine, Luther, Menno, or our own pious grandparents and parents did not already have?"

2. Others have hailed archaeology enthusiastically as a source of objective "proof" for the truth of the Bible.

Both reactions are misleading. The first does not take the objective content of the biblical message seriously; it looks only to the effect on the believer. Even a poor sermon can initiate faith in its hearers. But this does not excuse the preacher who neglects his preparation. Throughout church history the Bible has been understood sufficiently to yield its saving message to those who hungered for it. And yet it would be sheer irresponsibility on our part if we were not to make fullest use of the helps available to us in order to understand the biblical message as clearly and correctly as possible not only in its major message, but also in all its details.

What Archaeology Can Do For Us

But the enthusiasm for "proving" the Bible as "true" by archaeological means is as unwarranted as the attitude of suspicion. What can archaeology do for us? Some aspects have already been mentioned. Others may be added:

1. Archaeological knowledge has placed the Bible into its context within the Ancient Near East by making that context known. God's message in the Old Testament was an "incarnate" message, given within and through the realities of history rather than abstractly and with fairy-tale remoteness from real life. At first this realization will tend to appear as devaluating and humanizing the Bible, just as Christ's humanity has been a stumbling block to many of the hearers of the gospel. But as we treasure the coming of God's Son into manhood as one of the dearest truths of our faith, the Word incarnate in Israel's real history will, after an initial hesitancy on our part, enhance its meaning for us.

2. Archaeological knowledge has enriched our understanding of the Bible in countless historical, cultural, and linguistic details. This contribution can be assessed fully only by the scholar who struggles with the unknown features of the Hebrew language, or attempts to fit together obscure historical details, or wishes to explain long-forgotten customs. The English reader, whose eyes move easily over the smooth text of his King James or Revised Standard Versions or the various commentaries, hardly realizes the obstacles faced by the translator and the interpreter. He will have to accept the experts' word of assurance that the new discoveries have helped immensely in the unlocking of the biblical message.

3. The discoveries of archaeologists have provided us with some weapons for the defense of certain truths that have traditionally been held by the Church. Here again the simple Bible reader who has accepted the traditional positions and has never been confronted with the various attacks upon these positions will

hardly appreciate the weight of the new evidence fully. Let me give one example. Ever since the publication of Julius Wellhausen's famous *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (1883) it had become widely accepted that Moses could not have given the Law in any real sense of the word, nor that Israel could have worshipped one God from the beginning of its history. All religions, it was held, develop from animism (primitive spirit worship) to polytheism (worship of many gods) to henotheism (worship of one god, though not to the exclusion of belief in others) to monotheism. The religion of early Israel must therefore have been a very simple and primitive one, and what we read in the Old Testament must represent a much later stage of Israel's history, which was then read back into an earlier time. Now the tablets from Ugarit mentioned above, as well as other material about ancient religions, make it clear that Moses' time was one of high civilization and of elaborate religious systems in which the Old Testament accounts are not at all out of place, and that Wellhausen's system of religious evolution must be rejected.

In some instances the discoveries support traditional positions, as just illustrated. But in other instances they make it necessary to revise traditional positions. Then we have a choice between one position that is better supported but new, and another that has been shown to be untenable but is hallowed by its age. The Church has often sided with the traditional interpretation of a Bible passage against the newer but more correct interpretation. That is cowardice and false piety; it is self-defeating, for the truth will win its way. Today we hold that the earth is round and moves around the sun in spite of the Church's initial opposition on allegedly biblical grounds. We should search for the truth and let archaeology be a help in this search. Too many Christians hail it highly when it "proves" what they would like to have proved, but reject it scornfully where it yields results that are unwelcome.

4. Finally, there is the question of "proving" the Bible to be true, if one can speak at all of "proof" outside of the exact sciences. Such "proof" can pertain only to the human side of the Bible, and therefore never to those aspects which are most important

to the believer. If, for example, an inscription were found with a record of Abraham's journey from Mesopotamia to Canaan, it would be hailed as a tremendous discovery. Yet it could not at all prove to the believer what is most important to him: Did Abraham go at the command of God, or did he simply make the journey as so many semi-nomads of his day also did?

Archaeological knowledge can enrich and correct our understanding of the Bible. It sometimes supports traditional interpretations and at other times challenges them. It can remove obstacles to belief and in this way help to strengthen faith, but it can never provide proof for that which must properly be accepted by faith. The basic decisions are still ours: Many heard Jesus preach and saw him perform mighty acts, and some believed.

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(Continued from page 96)

ability to teach and inspire through the spoken and written word. The above books consist of selected editorials from the *Gospel Herald* and the *Menmonite* and serve as tributes to the two respective editors.

In content the two volumes come to grips with the affirmative aspects of the Christian faith and life. As devotional aids and instructional handbooks they should find wide use and acceptance. The journalistic skill of both men is impressive in the facility with which they use the English language. They are master stylists using a pure, simple and direct English with a rich use of active verbs and phrased in pleasant cadences.

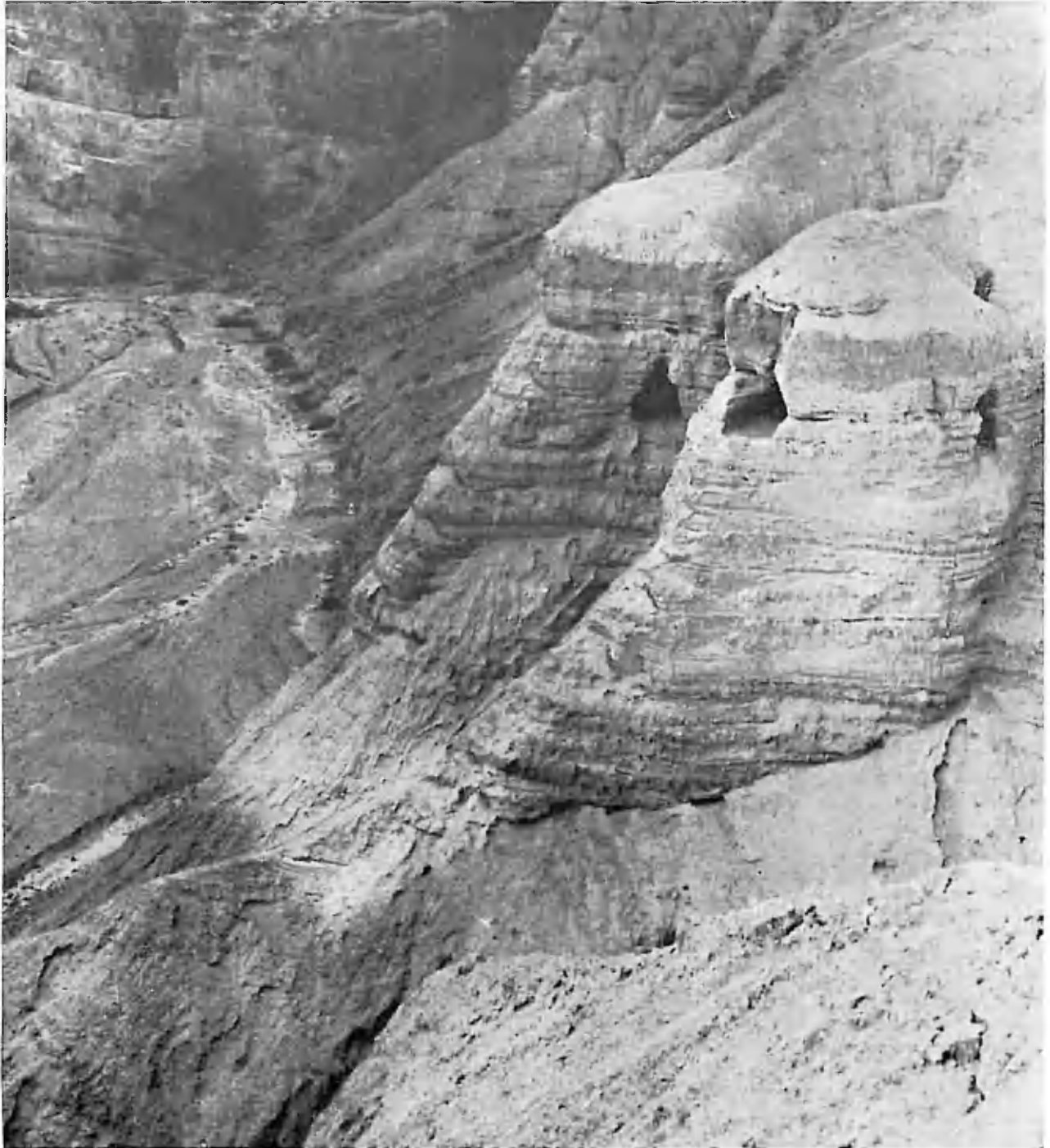
In many ways the two volumes will be found to be complementary. As the titles would seem to indicate, Smucker's book deals more directly with matters of faith with chapter titles such as "I Believe," "The Claims of Jesus Christ," "The Lord's Prayer" and others. Erb takes hold of the expression of faith with chapter headings such as "Dynamic Living," "In Christ," "Conscience Sharpeners" and so on. Faith and Life are not mutually exclusive as a discussion of faith must end in life and the problems of life are essentially problems of faith. Both books are useful to ministers in teaching a dynamic use of simple and dignified English as well as in making plain the mysteries of the Christian faith.

BETHEL COLLEGE

John F. Schmidt

JEWISH AND EARLY CHRISTIAN

Cave No. 4 near the Dead Sea where important scrolls were found.



INTERPRETATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

By Howard Charles

"A BOOK," SAID F. W. FARRAR, "needs for the most part but little explanation in the age to which it is addressed. It may be assumed as a fundamental principle that an author writes for the purpose of being understood . . . But as the centuries advance books require an interpreter in proportion to their depth and sacredness."

Such a book is the Old Testament. It emerged during a particular period of history in the ancient world and was regarded as containing a message of special significance for the successive generations of men. But if it was to speak meaningfully to people living in other eras with new experiences, interpretation was necessary. The message originally spoken in a given historical situation had to be freshly expressed in ways which were understandable and relevant to the new situation.

Biblical interpretation, therefore, is almost as old as the biblical message itself. Even before the materials that now form our Old Testament were reduced to their present written form, the need for interpretation was felt. The prophets had to make clear the meaning and relevance of that core of Mosaic revelation that was associated with the very beginning of Israel's national existence and religious faith. Following the exile this need was sensed even more acutely. The Jews now had to live in circumstances quite different from those previously known. From the days of Ezra onward the Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament gradually developed into a formal discipline with an ever expanding body of resultant materials.

The Jewish approach to the understanding of the biblical materials was based upon the firm conviction that they were divinely given and therefore were authoritative for the faith and life of the people of God. Judaism never doubted this fact. The ways, however, by which this God-given revelation could be brought to bear effectively upon the contemporary generation were not uniformly conceived nor statically employed in the period between Ezra and the first century A.D. It would be wrong to separate the approaches too sharply for they had more or less in common. Yet it is possible to speak of three types of biblical interpretation which we may associate respectively with Alexandrian, Rabbinic, and Sectarian Judaism.

Alexandrian Judaism

Almost from the time of its founding by Alexander the Great, Alexandria was one of the great cultural

centers of the Hellenistic world. The Jews who early settled there adopted the Greek language and were intrigued by various facets of Greek culture. Not only did they translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek but they employed Greek methods of interpreting them, notably allegorization. The best known representative of this approach is Philo (ca 20 B.C.—ca A.D. 50).

Philo as a Jew had no other desire than to be loyal to his ancestral faith. But he wanted to make it possible for his Jewish contemporaries to live with that faith while adopting the prevailing thought forms of Greek philosophy. Furthermore, he was anxious to commend the religion of his forefathers to his pagan friends. With this twofold objective in mind he set about interpreting the Old Testament allegorically. In this way he was able to dispose gracefully of many of the crudities of the Old Testament which were offensive to the cultured tastes of the Greeks. Likewise by this method he was able to prove that the best in Greek philosophy was already to be found in the Jewish Scriptures.

What is allegorical interpretation and how did Philo employ it? This approach seeks to get behind the literal historical meaning of the text to uncover hidden spiritual truths. Perhaps an example may make clear how this is done. When God told Abraham to look up and count, if possible, the number of stars, for so his descendants should be (Gen. 15:5), He was not really interested in communicating to Abraham the extent of his progeny. On the contrary, Philo said, "He wished to picture the soul of the Sage as the counterpart of heaven, or rather if we may say so, transcending it, a heaven on earth having within it, as the ether has, pure forms of being, movements ordered, rhythmic, harmonious, revolving as God directs, rays of virtue, supremely starlike and dazzling" (*Quis Rer. Div. XVII*). In such fashion Philo found spiritual meaning in each detail of the sacred text. He, of course, determined what meaning in each case should be assigned to the text in question. There is no limit to the possibilities of this type of interpretation except that imposed by the mind and imagination of the interpreter himself.

Rabbinic Judaism

Although the use of allegory was not unknown among the rabbis of Palestine, they preferred to treat the text with more regard for its literal meaning. They

were not interested in pursuing abstract ideas or in pondering philosophical questions but in providing practical guidance in matters of conduct. They believed that the well-being of the Jewish community was closely tied to faithful adherence to the way of life prescribed in the Law. Their primary concern, therefore, was with the definition and application of Law.

The Mosaic Law was both incomplete in its coverage of human conduct and historically dated in form. Consequently there grew up through the centuries customary ways of doing things both in the area of cult and ethical practice which were not directly grounded in the written Law. But by virtue of their traditional character and antiquity they came to possess binding validity. It was the task of the scribes, the legal experts in Judaism, to find scriptural support for these traditional practices and to remove through exegetical ingenuity whatever contradictions existed between such conduct and the Law. For example, the Decalogue prohibited all work on the Sabbath day (Ex. 20:8ff.; Deut. 5:12ff.). Whatever may have been the practice of Israelites in their simple nomadic life in the wilderness complete cessation of activity did not seem practical in their later and more complex life in Palestine. Having accepted in principle the legitimacy of a certain amount of Sabbath day activity a twofold problem remained. On the one hand, how could such desirable conduct be legalized; on the other hand, how could the prohibition be meaningfully applied to the regulation of work so as not to have a completely open Sabbath? The answer was given by the scribes who eventually succeeded in evolving more than fifteen hundred laws which were designed to spell out the meaning of the Mosaic prohibition.

Now the exegetical work of the rabbis was not carried on in a wholly capricious way. It was controlled by certain rules of interpretation. The formulation of seven such rules was attributed to Hillel about the beginning of the Christian era. These were later expanded in number although without much addition in substance. These rules possessed in themselves a certain logic but application frequently was characterized by an arbitrariness that at times bordered on the fantastic. The end product was a system of casuistic law which in effect obscured the divine intention in the giving of the Law.

The interpretive labors of the scribes were not confined to legal portions in the Pentateuch. They also gave attention to non-legal material both in and outside of the Pentateuch, illustrating and sometimes supplementing it with legendary details. The purpose of these homiletical commentaries was to make the biblical text more useful for spiritual edification. The total mass of exegetical and homiletical material produced by the rabbinic exegetes is amazing. For the most part, however, it is of more interest to us in illuminating the

Jewish mind than in unfolding the true meaning of the Old Testament.

Sectarian Judaism

With the discovery of the wilderness ruins of Qumran and the fabulous library hidden in the surrounding caves new light has been thrown on another aspect of the Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament. The men of Qumran if anything were more intent upon the study of the Scriptures than the Pharisaic scribes. According to their own testimony some of their number were always engaged in biblical study around the clock throughout the year. But their approach to the Old Testament differed in its main thrust both from that of Philo and the rabbis. Unlike Philo they were not interested in discovering timeless spiritual truths in the Old Testament. They differed also from the scribes in Jerusalem in that their study was not predominantly controlled by the desire for legal definition. On the contrary, they were captivated by a live sense of history and the belief that the biblical message was finding fulfillment in the events of their own time.

The mentality that controlled the biblical exegesis at Qumran may be summarily stated as follows: God has a purpose in history, namely, to establish His Kingdom in the End-Time. He revealed that purpose to the prophets whose writings, therefore, have to do with the time of the end. But this revelation and especially the time of its fulfillment could not be understood by men until the coming of the Teacher of Righteousness in the End-Time who would provide the authoritative interpretation. That teacher had now come and imparted to the community the true understanding of the Scriptures.

To be sure, their exegesis of the Old Testament is quite atomistic, concentrating on words and phrases and frequently disregarding syntax. It displays no serious concern for laying bare the original historical meaning of a passage. When the literal sense cannot serve the interpreter's purpose, he may resort to allegorical interpretation. But the interest in fulfillment brings an eschatological dimension into their work. This gives to their exegesis a vitality which is lacking in the work both of Philo and the rabbis.

Jesus' Approach to the Old Testament

When we turn from the types of Old Testament interpretation surveyed thus far to Jesus' approach to the Scriptures we encounter something new. He shared, of course, many things in common with His contemporaries in His belief about and use of the Old Testament. He regarded it as the Word of God. Like them He was no literary nor historical critic but accepted the prevailing opinions on matters of authorship, date, and similar problems. Occasionally He employed the more or less subtle rabbinic methods of

exegetis (e.g. Mk. 12:26; Jno. 10:34). The way in which He regarded Old Testament Scripture as finding fulfillment in contemporary events is reminiscent of Qumran (e.g. Mk. 14:27 referring to Zech. 13:7). But for all of these similarities there are deep and significant differences.

Unlike Philo, Jesus took Old Testament history with utmost seriousness. Nowhere in the Gospels is there the slightest indication that He treated the Old Testament as hunting ground for alien Greek ideas or as a repository of general moral or spiritual truths. It is the record of God's intervention in the affairs of men through word and deed for their salvation. God is at work on the stage of history and men decide their destiny in response to His action.

Jesus' approach to the Old Testament differed also from that of the rabbis. Scribalism tended to view the Old Testament as a flat code book. The historical covenantal context in which the Law was originally given was obscured. Along with the loss of this frame of reference was the tendency to absolutize the Law. One of the results of this process was the growing inability to distinguish between the trivial and the more important obligations in human conduct. Indications of this plight are found not only in the Gospels but also in such later rabbinical utterances as the following: "Take heed of all that is written in the Law, for you do not know by which commandment life may come to you." "Be as zealous about a light as about a heavy command, for you know not the reward of the commands."

Jesus refused to venerate the Law as an end in itself. He saw it as related in a subordinate way to the covenant relationship. It was meant to give guidance and shape to Israel's response to the God of the covenant. The primary form of this response is love for God and one's neighbor. It is from the central stance that the sundry directives found in the Law are to be understood and evaluated. This is to restore a sense of perspective and once again to see laws in the light of a transcendent relationship.

The Gospels make it clear that Jesus rejected the oral tradition which had grown up alongside the written Law and to some extent overshadowed it. But He also regarded the written Law itself as historically conditioned and therefore less than a perfect transcript of God's will for men. This is illustrated in His treatment of the Mosaic legislation regarding divorce. Jesus found God's real intention expressed in Gen. 2 rather than in Deut. 24:1-4. Other examples of this critical approach to the Law are found in such passages as Matt. 5:33ff. and 38ff.

Although we noted above some kinship between Jesus and the exegetes at Qumran in their mutual interest in the matter of fulfillment, the similarity is only superficial. Actually there is a basic difference between them in the way in which they view the fulfillment of the Old Testament. The Qumranites did not claim

that the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures found their focal point in the Teacher of Righteousness and were brought to fulfillment in him. What they did assert was that special enlightenment was given to him for the purpose of understanding the secret purpose of God hidden in the Scriptures and the time and manner of its fulfillment.

Jesus, on the contrary, undertook not only to interpret the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures but to fulfill them in His own person and ministry. This is the significance of His claim in the synagogue at Nazareth when after reading the passage from Isa. 61:1f., He said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk. 4:21). He knew that He was the agent for the establishment of the Kingdom of God (Lk. 11:20; 17:21, R.S.V.). Scripture found its inner meaning and fulfillment in relationship to Him.

In a word we may say that Jesus' use of the Old Testament reveals a profound understanding of its true nature and purpose. Leaving aside His awareness of His own unique relationship to it, His approach to the Old Testament was fresh and dynamic. He saw in it far more than a quarry for securing proof-texts to throw off at the devil or the Pharisees or a series of prophecies which would provide a sort of chart for the understanding of end-time events. To Him it was the witness to the outworking of God's purpose in the midst of history. In its pages He heard the voice of the living God speaking to His own soul. This was not the result of a magical or mechanical use of Scripture but the outcome of a discerning spiritual approach. In the crucial moments of His life He heard God's word in Deut. 6:16 rather than Ps. 91:11f. (Lk. 4:9-12) or Zech. 9:9 rather than Ps. 2:9 because behind the eye and the ear was a heart in which the love of God dwelt.

The Early Church and the Old Testament

The Old Testament continued to be the Scriptures of the early church even as they were of Judaism. But the approach to these writings was quite different from that of Judaism. The basic reason for this difference was the Christ-event. In a striking passage Paul refers to the significance of Christ for the understanding of the Old Testament (2 Cor. 3:14-16). The non-Christian Jew read the Old Testament with a veil on his mind, that is, without being able to perceive its real meaning. Only when a man has come to know Christ and has His Spirit in his heart can he truly understand its message. From the post-resurrection stance, with eyes enlightened by the gift of the Spirit, old facts took on new meaning. One need only compare the writings of Judaism (Talmud, Philo, Dead Sea Scrolls) with the New Testament to observe the radical difference.

From a rather broad perspective two general observations may be made on the way in which the fact of Christ changed Old Testament study in the New Testa-

ment Church. *First*, the Old Testament came to be viewed as a prophetic witness to Christ. The early church in this matter, of course, was only following a clue already provided by Jesus. But its application had important consequences. For one thing, it meant a selective approach to the Old Testament. Certain tracts of material appear to have been largely neglected while attention was focused on others which were regarded as particularly fruitful for illuminating the significance of His mission (e.g. Isa. 6, 11, 40-66; Jer. 31:10-34; Zech. 9-14; Psa. 8, 22, 110; etc.). Furthermore, this way of looking at the Old Testament provided a point of reference that gave cohesion to much that hitherto was considered more or less heterogeneous data. Such figures and conceptions as the prophet of the end-time, the messianic king, the lowly servant, the son of man, the word of the Lord, wisdom, the priesthood, to mention only a few, were all drawn into orbit in relation to Christ. Finally, the fulfillment of the Scriptures in Christ transcending as it did the original thought forms in which it was cast provided a norm for the reinterpretation of much found in the pages of the Old Testament. Thus, for example, the church was seen to be the ultimate fulfillment of those passages that looked forward to a glorious kingdom that was yet to be.

Second, the Old Testament as prophetic of Christ and His mission was seen in the light of His coming as having been preparatory, incomplete and in some respects obsolete. Important as the Sinai covenant was with its corpus of law and its cult, it had now been displaced by the new covenant. Valid as the institutions, types and symbols of the Old Testament had been, they were nonetheless shadows in relation to what had come in Christ. Promise had passed into fulfillment. A new era had dawned in God's dealings with men. The realization of this fact had important consequences for the understanding of the function of the Old Testament in the faith and life of the church. Paul saw that the Law had been our "custodian until Christ came . . . But now that faith [or Christ] has come we are no longer under a custodian" (Gal. 3:25f.). "Christ is the end of the law" (Rom. 10:4). Paul, therefore, disallowed all attempts to regulate man's relationship to God by reference to the Law. Likewise, the author of Hebrews knew that the sacrifice and intercession of the great High Priest has forever abolished the need for the sacrificial system so carefully prescribed in the Old Testament. This does not mean that the Early Church now wished to dispense with the Old Testament. But while holding firmly to it, they saw its character and role in a new light.

Within this general framework of Old Testament interpretation attention may be given to particular methods of exegesis. Again only a few observations can be made. *First*, the New Testament authors handle the text of the Old Testament with considerable freedom. Instead of following one text they choose ap-

propriate renderings from a variety. Pertinent passages from several sources sometimes are merged to support the point in question. Even the grammar of a given passage may be adapted to the requirements of the immediate situation. Frequently interpretations that are useful for the moment are formulated which are contrary to the original historical meaning of the passage.

Second, occasional use is made of extra-canonical materials in the interpretation of Old Testament passages and events. An interesting example of this is Paul's use in I Cor. 10:1-4 of a rabbinic supplement to the story of Israel's wilderness experience. According to rabbinic lore the rock-well that miraculously supplied the Israelites with water on one occasion subsequently followed them throughout their wanderings. Philo already had taken note of this Jewish story and interpreted the mobile rock as referring to Wisdom. Now Paul also picks it up but he applies it to Christ.

Third, to some extent continued use is made of certain Jewish and rabbinic methods of exegesis. Paul, for example, makes occasional use of allegorical interpretation (e.g. 1 Cor. 9:9f.; Gal. 4:21-31). His use is more restrained than Philo's and in the latter passage he is not oblivious to the historical character and significance of the story. When compared with Philo it is allegory with a difference. Again, Paul can make a point on the number of a noun as he does in Gal. 3:16. Obviously Paul was aware that the word in question ("offspring") was a collective noun in the original passage (Gen. 12:7). But the form nonetheless is singular and thus could be adapted to an individual reference. Paul's exegesis in this case, therefore, begins from a Christian base and proceeds by a typical rabbinic method to arrive at a Christian conclusion. It is a case, as Luther said, of "the painting of a house which had already been built."

From this brief survey it is clear that the early Christian interpretation of the Old Testament to some extent reflects the thought-forms and mentality of the first century. For this reason we would find it difficult to follow these first interpreters in all details. But surely the main outlines of their approach are still valid. The Old Testament is a book of promise that finds its ultimate meaning in the pages of the New Testament. It is to be taken seriously as a book of history, but it is the record of "holy history" through which God continues to speak to men of faith about ultimate realities. Although it is not the final word of God to us, it is nevertheless indispensable for the understanding of the gospel even as the gospel is the key that admits us to the true treasure of its pages.

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From Ignatius To Wyclif

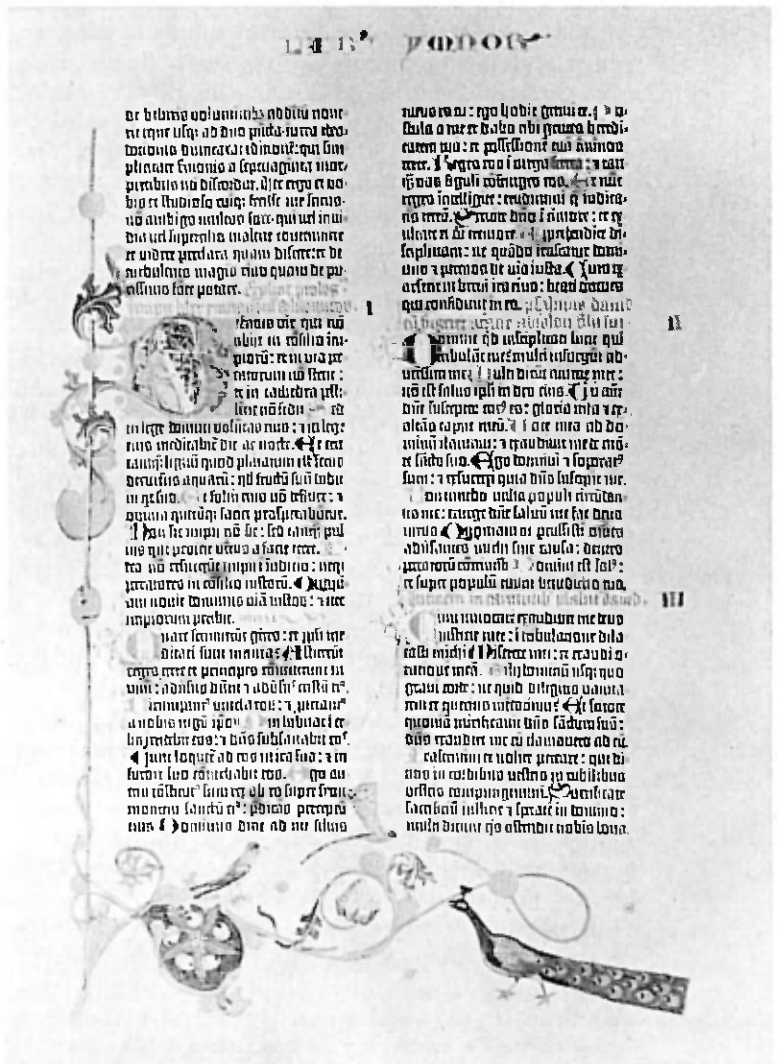
By Cornelius J. Dyck

IT IS CLEAR that there must have been a great many different interpretations of the Scriptures in the vast span of centuries from the second to the fifteenth. Still, it is likely that there were not as many as we might expect from the perspective of our individualistic, multi-religious twentieth century. Relatively few people actually had opportunity to read the Bible before printing became popular in the fifteenth century. The manuscripts were bulky and quite expensive. Many people did not know how to read. The Church was not really concerned about Bible reading and, after A.D. 500, did not even encourage the clergy to serious biblical studies.

This does not mean that the people were completely ignorant of the biblical message. There was considerable Bible reading in the worship services, and some did understand the Latin. Moreover, preaching was in the vernacular, and was frequently based upon the passages which had been read previously. In the later Middle Ages friars and other wandering teachers added to the popular knowledge of the Bible. Then too, the Church taught that God was physically present in the Lord's Supper and so spoke to his people directly. The real Bible of the people, however, was the pictures and scenes painted on the walls of the churches, the woodcuts depicting lives of the saints, the windows portraying biblical events. These they could understand and, sometimes, even purchase in miniature imitation for their homes. Unfortunately tradition and superstition were far stronger than knowledge among the laity and most of the clergy as the Middle Ages drew to a close.

For these reasons the history of biblical interpretation centers primarily in the work of a few Church Fathers in each of the centuries. While space does not permit discussion of these men in detail, it may be helpful for our understanding to introduce a few of them briefly before turning to specific issues in the second part, and in part three to a discussion of the major answer given to these issues. It was this answer

Page from first Bible printed by Gutenberg in 1455, containing Psalms 1-4.



which prepared the way for our own use and understanding of the Scriptures today.

Early Church Fathers

In A.D. 144 a wealthy and very able preacher came to Rome from the Black Sea area and asked permission to preach among the congregations of the city. Permission was granted, but very speedily withdrawn when the Church discovered that the new prophet Marcion rejected the entire Old Testament and everything that sounded Jewish to him in the New, including the first two chapters of the gospel according to Luke. The answer of the Church, particularly through Justin Martyr (d. 165) and Irenaeus (d. 202), lay in affirming the validity of the Old Testament for Christian faith and in beginning to define the content of the canon of Scripture. While this battle was still going on two rival schools, one at Antioch and one at Alexandria, began to raise issues of interpretation which are still being discussed today, involving particularly the question of how literally the Christian can and should interpret the Scriptures. At Alexandria Origen (d. 254), one of the most brilliant minds of all time, edited and taught for over thirty years, finally dying from the result of torture. To him the literal meaning was only the beginning of interpretation. At Antioch John Chrysostom (d. 407), the Billy Graham of that time, and Theodore (d. 428) of Mopsuestia, urged a literal reading, with attention to grammar and historical context.

While this was going on Jerome (d. 420), the scholar often pictured together with a lion, prepared a fresh translation of the Old Testament and edited the Vulgate, making it the official version of Roman Catholicism to this day. At the same time the learned and pious Augustine (d. 429) of North Africa, wrote *On Christian Doctrine*, a handbook on biblical interpretation. To his scholarly work he added a great personal testimony of faith and experience in Christian living. We are still indebted to him at many points today, particularly through Martin Luther, who rediscovered him in the sixteenth century.

Most of the scholars of the Middle Ages were more concerned with the writings of the Church Fathers than with original study, but a few did significant work on the Bible. Gregory, sometimes called "the Great," (d. 604) belonged to the former. His exposition of the book of Job reads like one of Grimm's fairy tales. But John the Scot (d. late 9th century) and Radbertus (d. ca. 685) dug into the Scriptures with an honest and searching mind. Though they were called heretics in their day we consider their work a significant breaking of the shackles under which the Bible lay captive during these centuries. They had, of course, profited from the work of others—the Venerable Bede (d. 735) and Alcuin (d. 804) together with others of the "Carolingian revival."

The years from mid-fifth to the eleventh century are known as the Dark Ages. During these years most of the would-be scholars had fled to the monasteries

as the only places of security and culture, but their libraries were limited and they had little scholarly exchange with others. They had even less contact with the outside world from which they had escaped to save their souls. In the liturgical atmosphere of these monastic communities time stood still, and with it scholarship, with some exceptions. The Bible had not changed, why should interpretations change? It was, in any case, not as important to understand its message as to accept it and use it in the six or more worship services held daily. But in their disciplined lives these monks proclaimed a vital truth—that the first need of the Church is not more knowledge, but more obedience. Yet no new understanding of the Scriptures arose even in Berenger of Tours (d. 1088), nor in Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109). It was enough that western culture was being preserved. The little progress others had made seemed to be lost.

But things began to change in the twelfth century. Abelard (d. 1142), and his mortal enemy Bernard (d. 1153) of Clairvaux did verbal battle over the Scriptures and their meaning. Where the former brought a new critical and historical approach, Bernard defended a mystic piety which saw the Bible foremost as a devotional book. Yet from it the latter drew his inspiration for the launching of the second Crusade, for the writing of hymns (Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee, O Sacred Head, Now Wounded) and many other activities. This new and spiritual piety was given wings in the teaching of radical Joachim of Flora (d. 1202). In teaching that the age of the Father (the Old Testament), and the age of the Son (the New Testament), had given way to the age of the Spirit he literally took the lid off Pandora's box. Not the Church, but the Spirit was now to guide into all truth concerning the meaning of Scripture. Many followed him, particularly among the Franciscans, and later even an Anabaptist here and there. This gave the Scriptures "a nose of wax" (Luther), depending on which spirit moved the interpreter. All external controls to the understanding of the biblical message were now rejected.

But the spiritualism of Joachim was to be undone by three stalwarts of the same twelfth century, the Victorines—Hugh, Richard, and Andrew. Without knowing about the earlier Antiochenes these men began to give attention to the literal sense and to historical relationships. They came to the Bible without an "axe to grind," asking only for the meaning of the text. In doing this they separated theology from exegesis, allowing the Scriptures to stand alone without pressure to make them say what the Church wanted them to say, as had been done so long. The Bible, studied under the guidance of the Spirit, was to be their primary authority in place of Church or Spirit alone. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), the greatest theologian of the Roman Catholic Church, continued this

literal approach, but the distinction between the authority of Scripture and the authority of the Church was lost in his writings. Under the impact of Aristotle, discovered by the Crusaders and freshly translated, the grammatical approach became brittle and lifeless in scholasticism. The evangelical John Wyclif (d. 1384) broke this stranglehold in England, but it remained for the reformers of the sixteenth century to restore the Scriptures fully to their rightful place in the life and scholarship of the Church.

Relationship of Scripture to Tradition

A primary problem confronting biblical interpreters from the second to the sixteenth century was the relationship of Scripture to tradition. During the first century the faith was handed down primarily as a living tradition by eyewitnesses and people who had known the eyewitnesses personally. As time went on, however, this tradition became blurred. Judaizers and anti-Judaizers threatened the Christian understanding of the Old Testament and its fulfillment. By the second century the Church was growing primarily through converts from the gentile world, new believers who had little knowledge of or interest in the Old Testament. Heresies arose through variant interpretations. New gospels and epistles began to circulate as Scripture among the churches.

The answer of the Church to these threats came in two directions; on the one hand it defined the limits of the canon, on the other it stressed the importance of tradition. Though the New Testament canon was not closed officially till late fourth century, the main body of New Testament writings was receiving general acceptance long before that time, but this also accentuated the problem of tradition. It was not too difficult to answer those who placed the Church (i.e. tradition) above Scripture by saying that it was the cradle in which Holy Writ was born. To these Irenaeus responded that the Church had been preceded and brought forth by the living gospel and that this gospel must rule the life of the Church, not vice versa. The real problem grew out of the defenses of the orthodox. The variety of interpretations clamoring for acceptance led the Fathers to stress the traditional interpretation or Rule of Faith, as they called it, even though this tradition was not very old. What it lacked in age it made up in its origin in the doctrines of the apostles themselves.

This stress upon apostolic succession by Ignatius (d. 117) and Irenaeus was carried further by Tertullian (d. 220) in his assertion that the Scriptures belong to the Church only and can, therefore, be interpreted only by the Church. He agreed with Irenaeus that the Scriptures can be interpreted rightly only in the Church, within the context of faith and fellowship. Those who break this fellowship cut themselves off from the Spirit and consequently misinterpret the

biblical revelation. In this way all schismatics are heretics. Augustine later reaffirmed the impossibility of arriving at a correct understanding of the Bible alone—love of God and neighbor are pre-conditions for understanding the Scriptures and, he added, never tamper with the authority of the Word of God. Unfortunately, he himself failed to distinguish between the authority of the Church and the authority of the Scriptures, following Irenaeus and the others in their obedience to the traditional consensus. The defense of the Scriptures thus led to their captivity, a captivity which sparked Luther's revolt against the Pope as the jailer.

Others had, of course, prepared the way of studying the Bible. Roger Bacon (d. 1292), for example, guaranteed to teach enough Hebrew or Greek for reading purposes in three days, but he did not specify the method. The Victorines had emphasized the literal-grammatical and historical approach to the Scriptures, the mystics pointed to the personal-devotional use of the Scriptures, Aquinas to the need for intellectual respectability in biblical studies. It remained for Luther, however, to free the Scriptures from the control of the Church, making every plowboy his own interpreter under the guidance of the Spirit. This thousand-year captivity of the Bible through the efforts of its defenders reminds us of the aphorism attributed to Voltaire, "O Lord, protect me from my enemies, and save me from my friends."

Allegorism

An equally serious problem arose when allegorism became the accepted method of interpreting difficult passages in the Old Testament. The answer of the gnostics to Old Testament problems in the first century had been to claim a secret, superior revelation. In the second century Marcion rejected the entire Old Testament as has been stated. The Fathers saved the Old Testament by forming the canon, but how should they interpret it? Allegorism provided the answer. If the Bible was the Word of God and not the word of man, then it would be impossible for mere man to simply read and take it at face value. There must be a deeper, divine meaning to it all. In the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas was to say that the literal meaning was the whole meaning and that the spiritual meaning was contained in the events—the holy history which the literal words described—but it took a thousand years for this doctrine to emerge. In the meantime the interpreter looked for the hidden meaning as the real message of Scripture. Being unaware of the possibility of progressive divine revelation, allegorism ignored the historical elements almost completely, seeking a variety of relevant meanings for here and now in every Old Testament passage.

In part this was the familiar problem of letter and spirit. The Middle Ages distinguished the two just

as they did body and soul; the letter was the body for the spirit, treat it roughly that it may give up its true meaning. In part this method was a heritage from Platonism through Philo (d. A.D. 20), in part the legacy of Montanism though the Church had rejected it as heresy. A clear corollary of allegorism was the conviction that the interpretation of Scripture required a special gift of grace, that the Holy Spirit speaks through the mouth of the interpreter as he spoke to the writers. There is a picture of Gregory (d. 604) writing a commentary with a dove sitting on his shoulder holding its bill to his ear.

Allegorism helped the simple and the learned. Augustine could not become a Christian until he adopted this method, yet the simple hearer could work at the faith on his level. Allegory came to the rescue of the inexplicable by saying: it really means this. In fact, both Origen and Augustine believed that the Holy Spirit had deliberately made many passages of Scripture obscure and hard to understand in order to (a) keep men humble, and (b) to make them work hard at their faith. This spiritual understanding could occur at many levels which, however, came to be grouped under four headings by the fifth century and controlled exegesis almost to the time of Luther. These four senses of Scripture were the (1) literal (2) allegorical (3) anagogical, and (4) tropological.

The letter shows us what God and our fathers did;

The allegory shows us where our faith is hid;

The moral meaning gives us rules of daily life;

The anagogy shows us where we end our strife.

The classic illustration of this method of interpretation is connected with the word Jerusalem. Literally, it represents a city by that name. Allegorically, it means the church. Anagogically it is the heavenly city. Tropologically, it is the human soul. In this manner most texts could be used to tell a story, teach some doctrine, stress some moral principle, and warn of judgment. Thus Augustine interpreted the parable of the Good Samaritan to mean that the traveller stands for Adam, Jerusalem for the heavenly city from which he fell, Jericho for his resulting mortality, the thieves for the devil, the Samaritan for Christ, the inn for the Church, and so on. In discussing Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Ignatius compares church members to stones of a temple, as Paul does also, but adds that these stones are hoisted to the top by the engine Jesus Christ, which is the Cross, while the Holy Spirit is the rope and faith the windlass.

While this method is dangerous in the hands of the best, it becomes devastating when used by the unlearned and egotistic preacher or scholar. Even Augustine, while stressing the need to interpret Scripture by Scripture as well as by tradition, considered the Bible a quarry from which all manner of stones might be extracted. The manner of extraction was not too important, provided you got the stones to fit into the build-

ing. In adhering to traditional interpretation the Church thus perpetuated the allegorical symbols which were already present in the second century and insulated itself from the real biblical meanings. It must be remembered, nevertheless, that many biblical passages are themselves in symbolic language and that an allegorical reading may come as close to the truth intended as would a literal reading.

Typology

A related problem arose in the typological method. The Fathers also believed this method to be found in the writings of the apostles themselves. Typology was dedicated to proving the similarity of the two testaments, assuming that the persons and events of the Old Testament were prophetic indications of similar people and events in the New Testament. They read the Old Testament as a Christian book. Taking history very seriously, they believed fully that the total Scriptures told of one divine plan for mankind, and that God had given many pointers to Christ along the historical path. The two covenants were really only one continuing covenant, with the references to Christ being read forward or backward as the case might require.

While staying closer to the literal, grammatical meaning based on the historical event this method, nevertheless, led to fanciful interpretations, in part through an excessive literalism. Justin wrote that as Noah was saved by wood and water, so Christians are saved by the cross and baptism. So frequent were such references it appeared as though every piece of wood in the Old Testament was a prophetic reference to the Cross of Christ. In interpreting the story of Rahab the harlot, Origen goes on to say that the spies are forerunners of the Lord, Rahab represents sinners (!), her scarlet thread hung from the window is a type of the saving blood of Christ, and safety in her house means salvation through the Church. Yet typology was probably closer to Christian meanings than allegory. It vindicated the Old Testament as a part of Christian history and preserved the Christian understanding of the providence of God from the beginning of time, though it exaggerated the prophetic references of the Old Testament.

Interpretation and Authority

While all this looks as though the Scriptures were being seriously undermined, there was no intention to do this. They were, in fact, held in very high esteem in an almost unbroken line until the age of rationalism. The Bible, interpreted by the Church, is the source of Christian teaching said Clement (d. 215); it is the decisive criterion for dogma, according to Origen; the Scriptures are "fully sufficient for the proclamation of the truth" declared Athanasius (d. 373); and Augu-

stine believed that "in the plain teaching of Scripture we find all that concerns our belief and moral conduct." This conviction continued through the Middle Ages, Aquinas himself writing that "if we detract from the authority of Holy Scripture in the slightest degree, then nothing can be positively certain in our faith" (Con. Gent. 4:29). In spite of this it remains obvious that it was the Church which put the Scriptures into prison for a thousand years. If there is a moral to the story it might be that good intentions are never enough, least of all in biblical interpretation.

There were men in most of these centuries, fortunately, who saw the danger facing the Church through biblical misinterpretation, and who did their best to protest. The scholars at Antioch were among the first. They rejected most allegory, distinguished between the Old and New Testaments, studied the original languages and did thorough grammatical work. As a result they were not as subject to tradition as Alexandria. But Theodore was considered heretical because he introduced literary criticism, and Chrysostom was more preacher than scholar. Jerome likewise rejected the allegorical in favor of the historical, literal. Even though Augustine began with the historical-literal, he always ended with allegory. An unknown man whom history calls Ambrosiaster (4th c.) was very critical of the allegorical and typological methods. Yet these methods survived because they were the handmaidens of simple preaching, and because they provided a way of escape for the learned, as has been indicated. The Church blessed these methods, giving them apostolic status.

The twelfth century Victorine revival of scholarship did not know about the Antiochenes. They became dissatisfied with the glossaries which scholars had provided for difficult passages, and with the compiled excerpts from the Fathers which were to be read together with the biblical text. Neither were they satisfied with the dialectical method of Peter Lombard and Abelard, their contemporaries. They took the literal and historical dimensions so seriously that they were charged with being more Jewish than Christian. In order to understand the message, they said, the student needs to know not only the language but also the men and their culture. Through their work postilles or commentaries arose to replace the earlier glossaries, which were suspected of glossing over important truths. There is a direct line of indebtedness from the Victorines to biblical scholarship in our day.

This line passes through Thomas Aquinas; however, under the impact of Aristotelian philosophy new stress was placed upon the specific, literal text without allegory or symbolism. Yet when this discipline was pursued for its own sake in scholasticism, it led to hair-splitting and wrangling over insignificant points reminiscent of Jesus' words about straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. An analogous situation might be seen in the nineteenth century in Albrecht Ritschl

who theologized without participating in a worship service for over twenty years. In another sense the scholastics were not really biblical scholars but technicians and, some of them, philosophers. Where the Victorines, for example, had established exegesis as an independent discipline unafraid of the theological requirements of the Church, Thomas replaced theology with philosophy, building his system upon Aristotelian categories. We are, nevertheless, indebted to him at many points, not least in the assertion that the literal sense conveys the full intention of the writer and that the spiritual (divine) dimension is contained in the event being described, and in its significance for the believer. Scripture was no longer a divine encyclopedia written in a code which the exegete was to discover, but a collection of divinely inspired writings, whose authors and context one needed to study together with the text in order to understand the meaning.

This line from the Victorines, finally, also passes through the great Bible scholar Bonaventure (d. 1274), through St. Francis (d. 1226) and a host of mystics in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries who read the Scriptures devotionally and with much prayer. In John Wyclif (d. 1384) the new age begins to dawn. With his stress upon reform he urged upon all men, even kings, the need for Bible study. Not to know the Scriptures is not to know Christ, he asserted. His launching of the Lollard movement was based upon the conviction that all can understand and apply the gospel message if they can read it. To him the reading and preaching of the Word was more important than the sacraments, and the Wyclif Bible was the first in the English language, prepared by Oxford scholars under his guidance. Though he was to be exhumed as a heretic, the reformation flame had been kindled. The Scriptures were indeed to be seen rightfully as a mighty river in which a gnat could swim and an elephant could drown (Luther).

In his *Christian Doctrine* Augustine refers to the seven rules of interpretation laid down by the Donatist Tichonius and, after discussing them, concludes with a timeless exhortation to all interpreters: pray earnestly as you begin to interpret that the Spirit may guide you and keep you from error (4:15). And then he adds another little note: a godly life makes it easier for the people to understand our interpretation (4:27).

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THE BIBLE AND THE REFORMATION

By *Alvin Beachy*

A THEORY THAT remains widely prevalent among Protestants of all shades of theological conviction is the mistaken one that prior to the Reformation of the sixteenth century the Bible was a badly neglected and almost forgotten book. In one sense, nothing could be further from the truth. In all of the great universities of medieval Europe biblical studies were regarded as the highest form of learning. Both Martin Luther and Balthasar Hubmaier received their doctor of theology degrees while they were still within the fold of the Roman Catholic Church and were completely loyal to her authority.

It is in this word "authority" that we find the key to an understanding of the crisis that brought on the Reformation. Early in the fourth century the Scriptures had been canonized under the authority of the church, and thus the authority of Scripture, as one source of divine revelation, was thought to be derived from the authority of the church. Scripture and tradition were thus regarded as two equally authoritative sources of divine revelation in the pre-Reformation church. The coming of the Reformation precipitated a crisis, which had been felt as a latent one from the beginning of the fourteenth century onward. Father George H. Tavard has shown how one devout churchman in that era maintained that if it should happen that the entire church would become totally corrupt, then the church would have to turn for renewal to the Scriptures rather than to tradition. This, in principle, placed the authority of the Bible above that of the church, but the question remained until the eve of the Reformation largely an academic one.¹

Luther Bible, 1684. In Bethel College Historical Library.



Martin Luther

The major difficulty in the church prior to the Reformation was not so much neglect but rather an allegorical interpretation of the Bible which was deeply influenced by monastic asceticism. It was Luther's break with this monastic asceticism which led him to repudiate the authority of the church as the sole interpreter of Scripture. In the course of this repudiation Luther was driven to search for a hermeneutical method of his own. Everyone is prone to interpret the Bible from the point of view of that which was central and formative in his or her own Christian experience. For Luther this was the liberating discovery that justification is by grace through faith. He learned that grace is prior to both works and faith, whereas the asceticism which he so rigorously tried to follow in the monastery placed works before grace. On the basis of this experience Luther later divided the Scripture into commands and promises or Law and Gospel. The function of the commands of the Law was to reveal to man his helplessness in sin, while the promises encouraged him to throw himself, without claim of merit, upon the mercy of God.

Luther was firmly convinced that Christ in his atoning work is the only justifier of men, and the touchstone by which he gaged every book in the Bible was how straitly that book urged Christ. Luther was especially fond of the Pauline letters, particularly Galatians and Romans. He once made the statement that of all the books he had written he valued his *Commentary on Galatians* above all. In addition to this, Luther more than once made the statement that he found more of the gospel within the Pauline letters than he found within the gospel records themselves. For Luther the heart of the gospel was found in the good news that God loves sinners and that we love God, because He first loved us. Luther found the record of what Christ had done and said in the four Gospels, but he found the interpretation of these words and acts more clearly stated in the epistles.

Luther thus interpreted the Bible from a Christological point of view with heavy emphasis on the redemptive work of the incarnate Christ. This approach to the Bible enabled Luther to find Christ in the Psalms and to evaluate the Epistle of James as an epistle of straw. One can easily see from the above comment that Luther was not one who regarded the Bible as a book which had to be interpreted as an infallible authority in every instance. There was a strong element of subjectivism in Luther's hermeneutical method. Those books are to be most highly regarded which most strongly urge Christ. The Bible as the Word of God and Christ as the Word of God were not identical in his thought. He spoke of the Bible as the crib in which Christ lies, and he also referred to it as the sheath in which the sword of the Spirit is held. As the crib is essential for the baby's

welfare and the sheath for the sword's protection, so the Scriptures are the means through which men find Christ, but they are not to be equated with Christ himself. In reference to the two definitions of Scripture that have just been mentioned however, it should be said that Luther thought of them as being true only with respect to the original languages of Greek and Hebrew. God caused the New Testament to be written down, because everything would be wild confusion if the message were only contained in men's heads. It is certain, said Luther, that unless the languages remain (and by this he meant the original Greek and Hebrew) the gospel must finally perish. The Bible is thus seen as a vehicle that is absolutely necessary to maintain and transport the central message of the gospel from one generation to the next, and yet it is not in all cases identical with that message itself. Luther's attitude toward the Bible was thus a considerable distance removed from that of modern fundamentalism, which in its extreme reverence for the text of the Bible often approaches bibliolatry, in which Christ as the Word of God is displaced by the Bible as a book.

John Calvin

John Calvin through his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* has had as great an influence upon the Reformed tradition within the Protestant Reformation as did Luther upon the Lutheran tradition. Although Calvin was a second generation reformer, his work within his tradition so overshadowed that of his predecessors, Zwingli and Bullinger, that when we think of the Reformed tradition, we also think of Calvin.

Although Calvin and Luther differed markedly from each other in the manner in which they interpreted the Bible, they were alike in one respect. Both men had drunk deeply from the deep well of the writings of Augustine. Calvin, like Luther, had found in Augustine's view of the bondage of the will and the doctrine of double predestination liberation from the merit theology of the late medieval church. If God will grant His grace to man only after man has first put forth some moral effort, then ultimately our trust is in man rather than in God. On the other hand, if man can only respond after God has granted His grace, then there is among the elect neither a basis for boastful pride nor the fearful attitude that is inevitable within any merit system. The only proper attitude of the elect before God is one of complete humility in the face of the decree of divine election and complete confidence in God's ability to carry out that decree. This confidence set one free from needless anxiety and thus released tremendous energy for creative tasks.

John Calvin's approach to the interpretation of the Bible is best described as a thoroughly systematic arrangement of the whole content of the Bible within

the framework of Augustinianism. Since there is more than one theological system within the Bible, this arrangement is sometimes forced. Although the theology of both Luther and Calvin was fundamentally Augustinian in character, the approach of the two men was radically different. Luther found a great liberation from the world-denying asceticism of the monastery in what he liked to call the freedom of the gospel. His reform movement was in part an effort to free the church from the narrow restrictions of these ascetic practices, so that men might enjoy without a sense of guilt the good things which God had made for their enjoyment. Calvin, on the other hand, was converted from a brilliant young French law student to a serious-minded Christian, who found the church without sufficient discipline. His first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and every subsequent revision thereof was presented by Calvin to supply what was lacking in the church as he knew her.

Calvin maintained that the Bible rather than the church was the center of authority, since the Scriptures contained all that was necessary for salvation. He also rejected the then held Roman Catholic position that the church alone had the right to interpret Scripture, saying that God through the Holy Spirit was the author of the Scriptures and those who are taught by the Spirit feel an entire acquiescence to the Scriptures.

Calvin's identification of the Bible as the Word of God with Christ as that same Word was thus somewhat closer than that of Luther. In part, this was due to Calvin's contact with Anabaptist visionaries who claimed that individual revelations granted to them were on a level of authority equal to that of the Bible. At least this is what Calvin understood them to say, and he found within the revealed truth of the Bible a safeguard against fanaticism of this type. Because he made this identity between Bible and Christ so close, Calvin's hermeneutical method seems at first sight less christo-centric than that of Luther. This is further revealed in the fact that in his ideal city of Geneva the pattern followed was that of an Old Testament theocracy rather than the New Testament *koinonia*. His resort to the use of force in the torture and death of Servetus shows that Calvin neither understood nor trusted the voluntarism, which is so essential if the New Testament concept of the church is taken seriously. Calvin, however, felt the influence of the Anabaptists sufficiently that he deemed it necessary to devote one entire chapter in the *Institutes* to the similarity between the old and the new covenants², whereas the stress of the Anabaptists was on the difference between the two Covenants.

Despite what has just been said above, however, it should be stated that Calvin's aim was to interpret the whole Bible Christologically. He thought of Christ in his three-fold office as prophet and priest and king, and under one or the other of those categories Calvin

could make out of every text in the Bible a chariot that carried him straight to Christ.

The Anabaptists

The Early Anabaptists were also children of the Reformation, and the points at which they differed from its leading figures like Luther and Calvin are best understood in the light of their different approaches to biblical interpretation. For the purposes of this paper let us say that Anabaptist hermeneutics fall, broadly speaking, into two separate groups. One group developed a hermeneutical method known as that of the inner and outer word, while a second developed what is better described as the hermeneutic of the old and new covenants. The chief concern of the former group was to make a distinction between that which is divine revelation in itself and that which comes into being as a result of an attempt to witness to the fact that divine revelation has indeed taken place. The chief concern of the latter group was to stress the superiority of the new covenant to the old in such a way that the old was not discarded but seen rather as the necessary preparation for the new and better covenant.

Hans Denck is one of the more able spokesmen for the hermeneutic of the inner and outer word among the Anabaptists. He was deeply influenced by the strand of mystical piety which found expression in the writings of Johannes Tauler and other anonymous writers within the Rhine groups of the Friends of God. Characteristic of this mysticism was a deep distrust of all things external and deep desire for the direct communion of the individual soul with God. The distrust of things external was a quiet protest of the people against a highly institutionalized and authoritarian church, which dispensed salvation in a mechanical way through the distribution of the sacraments, while the cry of the heart is ever for personal communion. These people did not leave the church but found within their own private devotional lives that direct personal communion with God, which the formal worship of the church failed to supply. The *Theologia Germanica* was a product of this type of mysticism, and it was a favorite with Denck to the end of his life.

Coupled with this strand of mysticism in Denck's thought, there was also a strand of Neo-Platonism, which was decisive in shaping Denck's own formulation of the inner and outer word approach to the Bible. He shared with the other mystics a distrust of things external, because they could not speak directly to the soul. The Bible, insofar as it was made of paper and ink, participated in the nature of external things. His Neo-Platonic bent made it logical for Denck to identify the *Logos* of Neo-Platonism with the pre-existent Christ or *Logos* in the Gospel of John. John 1:9 describes the *Logos* as the light which imparts a part of his reasonable being to all men. Denck's problem was

this. If Christ as the eternal Word of God existed before the Bible came into existence, how can one speak of the Bible as the Word of God without dishonoring Christ? Are there then two Words of God?

Denck's solution of the problem may not be satisfactory to us in our time, but the problem he struggled with remains forever basic to sound biblical interpretation. He felt that it was the eternal Christ within every man, which drives that man to read the Scriptures, in order that he may there find testimony to that which has already been revealed to him by the inner Christ. At this point Denck approached or anticipated Pascal, who said that he could not have sought and found God, if God had not first sought and found him. Denck valued the Scriptures above all human treasures. He believed that the Holy Spirit was the author of Scripture, and he urged people to study the Scriptures. At the same time he cautioned against the danger of being diligent in one's study of Scripture and yet cold in one's love toward God. We are to think of the Scriptures as a letter from God; but as we would not value a letter from a friend more highly than we would value the friend himself, so we must not value the Scriptures more highly than God. To do so is to make an idol out of the Scriptures.

In summary, one may say simply that Denck did regard the Bible as a witness *to* divine revelation, but he did not regard it as identical *with* divine revelation. One can illustrate it in this way. It is possible to believe that the exodus of Israel from Egypt was an act of God and that the book of Exodus and the whole of the Old Testament is in a way a witness of this faith. In the same way it is possible to believe that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself and that the whole New Testament witnesses to this faith. Yet the Old Testament is not the exodus and the New Testament is not the incarnation. It is absolutely necessary that we study the record in order to understand the events that led to this faith and that through this study enable that same faith to lay hold upon us. But as long as we operate within this framework, we shall not fall into the error of worshipping the Bible as a book rather than the living God, who speaks to us through that book.

Melchior Hoffman spoke of the inner and outer word of Scripture in a way that was very different from that of Hans Denck. He meant by the inner word not the inner Christ but the hidden allegorical meaning of Scripture that is hidden underneath the dead letter. We shall not treat Hoffman's views exhaustively here, but he is important as a transitional figure. His understanding of the relationship between the inner and outer word is best illustrated by reference to a grain of wheat. As it grows upon the stalk upon which it finally matures, the single grain is encased within many husks. When these are removed, the kernel with the life germ within it is found at the center. So the true interpreter of Scripture must be able through a process of allegori-

zation to strip away the dead letter and arrive at the hidden kernel of eternal meaning.

Hoffman's method of allegory was sometimes wild and unrestrained. Nevertheless, he introduced a method of biblical interpretation, which with some significant modifications had widespread influence among the Dutch Anabaptists. To Hoffman must go the credit of introducing the idea that the Old Testament was a covenant of promise, while the New Testament was a covenant of fulfillment. To read the Old Testament was to read God's promises in the light of the moon, that is, in shadow and reflection only, while to read the New Testament was to read them in the light of the sun, that is, in the light of fulfillment. The proper interpreter of Scripture said Hoffman, must ever be aware that the Scriptures have cloven hoofs. They consist of thesis and antithesis, of promise and fulfillment, of shadow and the reality that cast the shadow.

Sometime after Hoffman's death an allegory of the tabernacle, in which he had divided Christians into three classes following the various divisions of the tabernacle, caused much disturbance among the Dutch Anabaptist brotherhood. Dirk Philips wrote an interpretation of the tabernacle himself, in order to correct the abuses caused among the brotherhood by Hoffman's work. The Epistle to the Hebrews was the model which Dirk used. Although he admitted that he had gone considerably beyond the author of Hebrews in his use of allegory, he justified his method on the basis that the times and conditions demanded this of him. Allegory must be decided on one side by Old Testament history and on the other side by Christian unity, held Dirk. Hoffman was wrong in ascribing any allegorical significance to the outer court of the tabernacle, since no sacrifices were conducted within it. The true interpreter must limit his allegory of the tabernacle to what took place within the courtyard and the holy of holies, and he must remember also that the New Testament speaks not of two or three grades of Christians but of one fold under one shepherd. When, however, the two divisions of the tabernacle are properly interpreted in their allegorical sense, they point toward the two divisions of the Bible, the New and Old Testaments. The holy place and the sacrifices in it which are repeated daily represent the Old Testament and are but the shadow of the good things which are to come in Christ. The holy of holies and the yearly sacrifices offered by the high priest alone, represent the New Testament and the sacrifice to end all sacrifices by Christ, the great high priest, who being sinless does not first have to make an offering for himself but can become both priest and victim.

Dirk thought of the Bible as divided into law and gospel. The law has the shadow of the good things which are to come, while the gospel is the reality of these things themselves. The law in turn has many types and ceremonies, which all have an end in Christ.

but the gospel is the firmly established truth which will abide forever. The law (when understood literally) is the letter which kills, but the gospel is the Spirit which makes alive. It is, however, only the literal meaning of the law which comes to an end in Christ. If the Old Testament is properly interpreted allegorically, the New Testament is thereby established on a more firm foundation. Dirk thus for the most part restricted the use of allegory to the Old Testament, while he generally interpreted the New Testament quite literally.

At a later time Dirk applied the method of biblical interpretation he had developed in refuting Hoffman's allegory to the tabernacle in a most thorough-going manner to the whole of the Old Testament. The occasion was the circulation of Bernhard Rothman's *Restitution* among the Dutch Anabaptist brotherhood, long after Rothman's death. In his *Restitution* Rothman had argued that on the basis of the Old Testament Christians had a right to resort to the use of the literal sword to restore Christ's kingdom. Dirk, in order to refute this, wrote what he called a *Spiritual Restitution*, in which work the whole history of Israel is spiritually or allegorically interpreted as a foreshadowing of the life and work of Christ.

First page from Greek New Testament by Erasmus 1522. In Bethel College Historical Library.



As this hermeneutical principle is applied in practice to the whole of Israel's history, beginning with Abraham, the spiritual Abraham becomes God, the Father. The two wives of Abraham become the two Testaments. Hagar represents the Jewish people and the Levitical priesthood with its imperfect sacrifices and ceremonies, which could justify no one. Isaac represents Jesus Christ, his supernatural birth and his work as head and founder of a new humanity. The hermeneutical principle here illustrated in Dirk's interpretation of the spiritual or allegorical significance of Isaac is then applied to all the leading figures of the Old Testament. The ladder in Jacob's dream is a type of Jesus Christ, who is the only way to the Father. Joseph in his sale into slavery to Egypt is a type of Christ in the humility of the incarnation. His elevation to power, second only to that of Pharaoh, foreshadows Christ in his exaltation in glory at the right hand of God, while Samson in his exploits of strength is a type of Christ, the true spiritual Nazarene, who on his cross carried the sins of the whole world. And as Samson in his death destroyed more enemies than he had within his life, so Christ, the spiritual Samson, in his death overcame the devil and vanquished death, for his death is the death of death.

While Dirk's method of allegory may seem strange and unsatisfactory to us, he felt that through this method he had established "our most holy Christian faith more firmly, because," he said, "we openly see and understand that all which we believe and confess is first portrayed by God with many beautiful figures and afterward by the Eternal Truth, that is, through Jesus, is made clear, testified to, and established."²⁸ However strange or inadequate Dirk's method may seem to us, his aim was to present Christ as Lord even of the Scriptures. His aim, I think, was correct even when his method was wrong.

Menno Simons did not fully approve of the method of biblical interpretation developed by his friend and fellow elder, Dirk Philips. At one time he told Dirk to stop using this method, insisting that the Scriptures were single rather than cloven footed. However, Menno was more deeply influenced by this method than he himself knew.

Ordinarily Menno subordinated the Old Testament to the New by stating simply that what had been permitted to Jews under the old imperfect dispensation was forbidden to Christians under the new and perfect dispensation. Where ministers within the state or magisterial churches justified the participation of Christians in warfare through appeals to the examples of Moses and Joshua, Menno replied that Christ had given Christians a new commandment and girded them with a new sword. Swords of iron Christians now leave to those who are unable to distinguish between swine's flesh and human flesh. When the appeal in the support of the use of force was to the example of Abraham, who pursued the kings who had kidnapped

his nephew Lot in Genesis 14 with an armed band and rescued him, Menno replied that this was permitted to the literal Abraham, but the spiritual children of Abraham (that is, the Christians) are not asked to assist their brethren in an evangelical manner, that is, with the offer of food and shelter for those driven from their homes by persecution, even though the penalty for providing shelter for those driven out by imperial decree was death.

Menno made the Old Testament subordinate to the New, not by allegorizing the former, but by placing the authority of Christ's word and example above that of Moses and Joshua. One must follow the plain words of Christ rather than a few obscure passages. If one follows the plain words of Christ, one can discover from these his basic intention, which in the obscure passages either remains hidden or is the reserve of that which we find in his plain words. When, however, the Old Testament is interpreted, the true interpreter must be careful to interpret it in such a manner that the figure of the Old Testament, when applied to the truth of the New, will reflect the reality, the image the being, and the letter the Spirit. Menno's thrust here was directed against John of Leiden, who claimed that he himself was the spiritual King David, who should bring joy to all the world through the establishment of the city of Munster as the New Jerusalem. Menno maintained that David prefigures Christ. For Menno reality and truth were found in the New Testament, where it is not alone Christ's words which give guidance for the proper interpretation of Scripture, but his life as well. Menno's hermeneutical method, like that of Dirk, may seem unsatisfactory to us at many points, but it was Menno's way in his time of affirming that Christ is Lord even of the Scriptures themselves.

In Pilgram Marbeck we meet yet another Anabaptist, who also espoused the two covenant concept in which the Old Testament is regarded as a covenant of promise, while the New Testament is regarded as a covenant of fulfillment. Pilgram Marbeck, like Dirk Philips, based his method upon the Epistle to the Hebrews and

his bold declaration that Christ was the initiator of a new and better covenant. The Epistle to the Hebrews seems to have been a favorite for this reason with more than one Anabaptist. Marbeck, however, arrived at his two covenant concept not so much by way of allegorizing the Old Testament as by simply regarding it as preparatory and incomplete. Believers in the Old Testament were believers in hope only, because the atonement had not yet been made, and the Holy Spirit had not yet been given in His fullness. Marbeck found, or thought he found, scriptural support for such views in I Peter 3:18ff and in John 14:25-27. The Old Testament patriarchs within their lifetime, said Marbeck, did not actually receive or experience the forgiveness of sins, only the promise that their sins would be forgiven, when Christ through his passion and victory inaugurated the new dispensation.

Although Marbeck made this sharp distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament as a covenant of promise and a covenant of fulfillment, he did not hesitate to refer to the whole Bible as the Word of God. For this he was severely criticized by the spiritualist, Caspar Schwenckfeld, who said that Marbeck spoke as though there were two Words of God, and thus dishonored Christ, who was the only Word of God. Marbeck replied that he did not refer, when he spoke of the Bible as the Word of God, to a book which consists only of paper and ink. He knew very well, he said, that apart from faith the Bible is no more the Word of God than any other book, but in the presence of faith its words become bearers of meaning and revelation.

In this brief and sometimes overly simplified survey we can see that the attitudes toward the Bible during the Reformation were many and varied. This knowledge should make us more tolerant of different views of the Bible within our own time.

¹See George H. Tavard, *Holy Writ or Holy Church; the Crisis of the Protestant Reformation*, London: Burns and Oates, 1959.

²See *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. II, Chapter 10, "The Similarity of the Old and New Testaments."

³Dirk Philips, *The Spiritual Restitution*, BRN, X, p. 375.

Mennonite Research In Progress

THE JULY 1963 issue of *Mennonite Life* reported about various research projects in progress. Preceding April issues since 1947 contain similar information. This listing lays no claim to comprehensiveness. The editors of *Mennonite Life* would be pleased to receive information on further research projects, whether already completed or currently in progress.

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The magazine articles have been mostly restricted to non-Mennonite publications since complete files of Mennonite periodicals, yearbooks, and conference reports are available at the historical libraries of Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas; Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana; Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio; and the Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana.

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, An Illustrated Encyclopedia in Four Volumes, ed. G. A. Buttrick, T. S. Kepler, J. Knox, H. G. May, S. Terrien, New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962, 3848 pp., cloth \$45.00.

The appearance of this dictionary is a landmark in religious publication. It is the first comprehensive Bible dictionary in English to appear in fifty years, and is the successor to such great works as *Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible* (5 vols. 1898-1904) and *Encyclopedia Biblica* (4 vols. 1894). Its preparation was made necessary by the tremendous advances which Biblical scholarship and archaeological investigation have made in the last fifty years.

Two hundred fifty-three scholars from all over the world, all of them experts in their field, contributed to this magnificent achievement. The overall conviction that guided editors and contributors was that the Bible is not an antique but a vehicle of God's message to man. It was prepared because of the conviction that Christians must study the Bible but that the meaning of any given passage is not necessarily obvious from the English text. Thus the best in study aids must be available to the reader so that he may gain the optimum advantage from reading his Bible. "Ignorance is no ally of the gospel," writes the editor. "Knowledge and faith are not at odds. . . . Scholarship and prayer are friends, not strangers." (Vol. A-D, xxiii). The hope of those who prepared it is "that it may quicken faith in the earth, and bear its witness to that Kingdom which was and is and is to come" (Vol. A-D, xxiii).

For a summary description of the dictionary one cannot do better than to use the editorial preface. There is a total of 7,500 items. Every proper name in the Bible is listed, identified by references, and explained where necessary. The same is done for all aspects of the life of biblical times such as plants, animals and artifacts. Careful attention is given to ideas needing clarification as for example "covenant," "justification," and "church." There are articles dealing with Assyria and Egypt, archeology and chronology, biblical criticism and biblical theology, the various books of the Bible and the texts of the Old and New Testaments. Attention is given also to literature contemporary with Old and New Testaments such as the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Apostolic Fathers. Although the editors kept the King James Version "near the center" of their concern, new studies made the use of the Revised Standard Version as the guiding version "mandatory." Consequently where the two versions differ in translation the RSV is given as the main entry. An example is Romans 3:25 where the RSV has expiation and the KJV has propitiation following.

The individual articles are arranged approximately as follows. The title in bold-face type is followed by the pronunciation. In brackets follows the Hebrew or Greek original and its root meaning after which the person or place bearing the name is defined. This is followed, in a lengthy item, by an outline of the sections and subsections of the succeeding article so that it is easy for a reader to identify quickly the section of his interest. At the end of the article stands the bibliography and the writer's name.

One of the most significant services this work renders the scholar is the bibliographic guide following each major article. The article "Jesus Christ," for example (Vol. E-J, 869-896), contains two-thirds of a column of bibliography which lists no less than sixty major works which can be consulted for further study. Another important aid is the extensive cross-referencing. In the above-mentioned article, on page 879, the term DEAD SEA SCROLLS appears. This is set in upper case letters which identifies it as the title of a complete article, which can then be turned to for clarification.

One-tenth of the whole is devoted to pictures, maps, drawings, and tables, with 32 plates of illustrations in full color, and 24 of the well-known Westminster Bible maps, all vastly enriching an already great work. Inside the front cover of all four volumes we find a key to pronunciation of all the names and a time scale from 1300 B.C. to A.D. 100. Inside the back cover are the names of all the books of the Bible plus those of the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and the Apostolic Fathers. At the beginning of each volume is a complete list of abbreviations, and in Vol. A-D a section entitled Explanations and Instructions (xxv-xxviii), which assist the reader in the use of the dictionary.

The dictionary is so designed that it can serve the needs of the research scholar, the busy preacher, and the general reader who wishes to improve his knowledge of the Bible. For the scholar the Hebrew and Greek terms and the detailed discussion of critical problems had to be included. However the main Hebrew and Greek phrases are usually translated so that the layman does not lose the sequence of thought or argument. Nevertheless, one wonders whether the number of Hebrew and Greek forms appearing in, for example the article "Fear" (Vol. E-J, 256-60), might not discourage the layman. Some of the unavoidable technical terminology will also certainly daunt the layman. By and large, however, it is the reviewer's conviction that the layman will benefit in many ways from using this dictionary. The editors are to be commended for having omitted the ponderous footnoting of, for example, *Encyclopedia Biblica*. It makes for tidy appearance as well as for easier and more relaxed reading.

All of the most important recent developments in critical biblical scholarship, as well as the recent emphasis on biblical theology, have been taken into consideration by the contributors. The result is a study aid that is more constructive particularly for the preacher and layman than its two great predecessors, which appeared during the heyday of liberalism.

No one will agree with everything in this dictionary, but a detailed treatment of the shortcomings of such a vast work would exceed by far the limits of this review and the reviewer's time. Every reader will discover for himself where he disagrees and he will recognize that he is dealing with an encyclopedic dictionary and not with a work by one author.

The *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* is a companion set to the *Interpreter's Bible*. The volumes are of the same size and quality but of a different color. The publishers

are to be commended for the high quality of craftsmanship in printing and binding.

This work will certainly be normative for the next generation or two and therefore ought to be in every church library as well as in every pastor's study. The price, which at first sight appears high, becomes more modest upon the reflection that when one buys this dictionary one actually buys a library of many volumes.

BETHUEL COLLEGE

Walter Klaassen

Man In God's Purpose by Stephen Neill, World Christian Books No. 36, New York: Association Press, 1960, 100 pp., \$1.00.

The merit of this book lies in the fact that it isolates and clarifies for the lay reader the biblical teaching concerning God's creation of man (ch. 1), Man's Fall (ch. 2), God's work of salvation (ch. 3), the Christian community (ch. 4), the Christian's relationship to society (ch. 5), and man's final destiny (ch. 6).

Bishop Neill sees no contradiction between the biblical account of creation and the theory of evolution supported by geological and archeological evidence. The writer of the Creation story in Genesis is saying that God created the universe and man in it. No evolutionary theory contradicts this. The story of the Fall is not to be thought of as an historical event. It "... is a wonderful picture of the state in which man finds himself to-day." The Fall is the result of man's irresponsible use of God's gift of freedom. Man's salvation is effected by God's work in Jesus Christ, who is the Suffering Servant, the God-man. To be the recipient of God's gift of salvation is to be born again into a new human race. This new human race, assembly or family is now the new-born man's new fatherland. This is not an assembly of sinless people, but a holy community, a community set apart. The Christian loves the world as God does, but he does not approve the world's standards. The Church's purpose in the world is to "just be itself" and to "preach the Gospel to it." All men have been chosen "for a glorious destiny in Christ."

For the theological student the book may tend to be dull and uninteresting since the Bishop says nothing essentially new or original. It is confessional rather than apologetic in nature. This is where its strength lies however prosaic it may appear to the sophisticated reader.

EMMANUEL COLLEGE, TORONTO

Henry Klaassen

A Guide to the Teachings of the Early Church Fathers by Robert R. Williams, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960, 224 pp., cloth \$4.00.

This book is designed to initiate the reader into the most significant teachings of the fathers from Ignatius of Antioch to Augustine including Athanasius, Origen, and Tertullian.

The Death of Christ by John Knox, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957, 190 pp., cloth \$2.75.

The Cross in New Testament History and Faith, the subtitle of this book, adequately indicates the content. The largest single section in the book is concerned with the question of Jesus' own understanding of His death, at which point Knox departs from commonly accepted interpretations. The most important section according to the author himself is the discussion about what the church says about the Cross, for the experience of the meaning of the Cross is the most important thing of all.

Theology Between Yesterday and Tomorrow by Joseph L. Hromadka, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957, 106 pp., cloth \$2.75.

In this provocative book the erstwhile professor of theology at Princeton Theological Seminary and now Professor of theology at Prague discusses the relationship of theology and the Christian church to various ideologies, concentrating especially on Marxist Communism. A book like this is necessary, although not pleasant, reading for every Christian in America. Mennonites especially will find in it a strong echo of their own traditional refusal to identify the Gospel with any political or social ideology. This book should be read together with a good treatment of the nature and aims of Communism.

Between God and Satan by Helmut Thielicke, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958, 84 pp., cloth \$2.00.

This is an interesting book on the temptations of Jesus by one of Germany's greatest preachers. What makes it significant for both layman and pastor is its simple, vigorous language, and the author's conviction that the temptations of Jesus are the temptations of all men everywhere.

Images of the Church in the New Testament by Paul S. Minear, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960, 249 pp., cloth \$6.00.

One of America's leading New Testament scholars brings together in one volume all the images by which the church is described in the New Testament. His aim is to clarify old words and concepts, the meanings which are no longer self-evident. As a whole the book is intended to lead the reader into a clearer understanding of what the church is.

Oxford Bible Atlas ed. Herbert G. May, London: Oxford University Press, 1962, 144 pp., cloth \$4.95.

In the growing avalanche of reference volumes on the Bible here is one that combines convenient size, and reasonable price with a comprehensive coverage one would not have thought possible in 144 pages.

The arrangement of the atlas departs somewhat from what has become standard in that the maps do not appear in a block but along with the text. For example the discussion of the Babylonian Empire is accompanied by the plate.

The treatment follows the text of the Bible chronologically, the comment being divided into blocks of material, for example, Joshua to Saul, the United Monarchy. A separate section is devoted to the science of archaeology. The atlas contains many fine illustrations as well as a gazetteer. An excellent choice for Sunday school teachers and church workers in general.

BETHUEL COLLEGE

Walter Klaassen

Don't Park Here, Discussions on Dynamic Christian Living by Paul Erb, Scottsdale, Pa.; Herald Press, (c. 1962), VIII, 182 pp. \$3.00.

Look to Your Faith by J. N. Smucker, Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, (c. 1963), 111 pp., \$2.50.

Paul Erb and Jesse N. Smucker served as editors of the official denominational organs of the two larger Mennonite conferences in America. Erb was editor of the *Gospel Herald* from 1944-62 while Smucker edited the *Mennonite* 1951-61. Both men are loved and respected far beyond the circle of their immediate conference relationship for their

(Continued on page 73)

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You see, dear reader, I admonish and advise you if you seek God with all your heart, and do not want to be deceived, do not depend upon men and the doctrine of men no matter how venerable, holy, and excellent they may be esteemed. For the experts, ancient as well as modern, are opposed to each other. Put your trust in Christ alone and in His Word, and in the sure instruction and practice of His holy apostles, and by the grace of God you will be safe from all false doctrine and the power of the devil, and will walk with a free and pious mind before God. . . .

From the Writings of Menno Simons