

Issues in the Roman Catholic Approach to Biblical Hermeneutics Today

L. LEGRAND*

I presume that, in the title which has been proposed to me, "Biblical Hermeneutics" stands for what is usually called the "New Hermeneutics," a search for "understanding," for relevant meaning, in opposition to or at least distinct from mere "explanation," *verstehen* beyond mere *auslegen*, an enquiry into what the text means for me today beyond what it meant for the author and his audience in those days. Now it must be acknowledged that this "new hermeneutic" is mostly the product of the Protestant tradition. Most of the great names, connected with it come from Protestant circles. Catholic scholarship is certainly not absent from that quest for meaning nor indifferent to it.¹ Yet, it remains in the position of a late comer. May a representative of those late comers to the banquet say how they look at the banquet hall and how they appreciate the fare which is served at that table of the Word?

*Fr Legrand is Professor of Sacred Scripture at St Peter's Seminary, Bangalore.

¹ For a Roman Catholic viewpoint on Hermeneutics, see R. Marle, *Introduction to Hermeneutics*, London: Burns and Oates, 1967; R. E. Brown, "Hermeneutics," in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Vol. II, pp. 605-623, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1972; F. Mussner, *Geschichte der Hermeneutik von Schleiermacher bis zur Gegenwart*, Freiburg: Herder, 1970; R. Schnackenburg, "Zur Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift in unserer Zeit," in *Schriften zum Neuen Testament*, München: Kösel, 1971, pp. 57-76 (with bibliography on pp. 58-59 and 76-77); H. Cazelles, *Écriture, Parole et Esprit*, Paris: Desclée, 1970; R. Lapointe, *Les Trois Dimensions de l'Herméneutique*, 1976; a complete issue of *Journal of Dharma* (5, 1980/1) has been devoted to the question of Hermeneutics. See also the Discourse of Paul VI to the Members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission on March 14, 1974 (text in *Voice of the Church*, May 1974, pp. 679-685). Of particular interest are the Colloquies organised yearly by the Institute of Philosophical Studies, Rome, and edited by E. Castelli (Paris: Aubier): a few titles: *Mythe et Foi, L'Herméneutique de la Liberté Religieuse, L'Analyse du Langage Théologique, Herméneutique et Eschatologie, Démythisation et Idéologie, Le Sacré, Temporalité et Aliénation*. It may be mentioned also, to be complete, that M. Heidegger was a Roman Catholic.

I The Catholic Approach to Biblical Hermeneutics

1. *Christian Antiquity and the Middle Ages*

The first remark of Catholic scholars is that the "New Hermeneutic" is not quite as "new" as it claims to be. Leaving aside the question of the Targumim and Midrashim as a hermeneutic operation and coming directly to Christian times, a good amount of work has been done on the Patristic and medieval approach to Scripture and particularly on the traditional analysis of the four senses of Scripture (*Littera, Allegoria, Anagogia, Moralis*). The meaning of those four "senses" was expressed in a simple Latin distich:

*Littera gesta docet; quid credas allegoria;
moralis quid agas; quo tendas anagogia.*

("The literal sense says what happened; allegory teaches what you should believe; the moral sense what you should do and the anagogy shows the goal to which we tend.")

This was understood as a method of interpretation, as a way to reach what the text means for us today, beyond the sense it had for the authors of the Old Testament. Special mention should be made of the important work in four volumes by H. De Lubac on Medieval Exegesis (1959-1962).² In an earlier study on Origen,³ the same author had shown in the Alexandrian theologian a theology of the Logos and of his "incorporation" not only in Christ but in Scripture,⁴ in the Sacrament⁵ and in the Church.⁶ As H. Von Balthasar has remarked in his preface to the German translation of De Lubac's book on Origen, this doctrine of the presence of Christ as Word in the community is one of the theological bases of Bultmann's hermeneutics and there is thus a strange continuous thread running from the old allegorist of Alexandria to the modern radical Marburger.

2. *The Council of Trent*

It would take too long to make a complete survey of Catholic thinking on Interpretation through the centuries. A kind of cross-section can be found in a survey of the main official Church documents. They cannot be presented as fully representative of Roman Catholic thinking. They represent the thinking of Church leadership and even Roman Catholic theology recognises that the Church is not made up

² H. De Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale. Les Quatre Sens de l'Écriture*, Paris: Aubier, 1959-1962.

³ H. De Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit. L'Intelligence de l'Écriture d'après Origène*, Paris: Aubier, 1950.

⁴ "Before Christ, the Word of God was in Moses and the Prophets. For how could they announce the Word of God, if the Word of God had not been in them?" (*Periarchon* 1, *Praef.* 1).

⁵ "What is the body and the blood of Christ but the Word that feeds and rejoices the heart?" (*Ser. in Mt.*, 85).

⁶ "What was done in Jesus is even now being carried out in us" (*In Jos.* 13, 3).

only of Bishops and Popes! Moreover, it often represents a reaction to a challenge and so, like any reaction, it tends to be one-sided. It is obvious, for instance, that the reading of Scripture of such mystics as John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila cannot be simply identified with that of the Council of Trent. Even within the Council of Trent itself, the declarations of Cardinal Seripando show an openness and a vigour⁷ that he evidently failed to communicate to the majority of his colleagues at the Council.

But precisely because they represent majority views, the texts of the Councils and the Roman documents do reflect major concerns of the Roman Catholic Church at given times. Thus, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) can be considered as typical of the Catholic reaction to Protestantism. There was indeed at stake a basic hermeneutic issue: Scripture alone or Tradition also? Was one to face the biblical text personally or was his reading to be submitted to a regulative Tradition? This is not the place to go into the merits and demerits of each position. It was largely a bad quarrel and the main error consisted in the refusal of both parties to listen to and try to understand what the other side wanted to say. At any rate, the position of Trent was clearly formulated. It stressed three points :

1. The Gospel is communicated through both written books and unwritten traditions received from the mouth of Christ himself or from apostles by dictation of the Holy Spirit.⁸
2. It belongs to the Church to judge the true meaning and interpretation of the Scriptures.
3. Let no one dare to interpret the Scriptures in a way contrary to the unanimous consensus of the Fathers.⁹

I suppose that the principles 1 and 3 are common to other non-Roman Catholic traditions. The second one (recourse to the "authority of the Church") is probably more specifically Roman.

3. *Vatican I*

The first Vatican Council (1870) did not add much to the declarations of Trent. Yet a valuable specification was added to the assertion of Trent concerning the "authority" of the Church as regards the interpretation of the Scriptures: it was stated that this authority refers only "to matters of faith and morals, affecting the building up of Christian doctrine."¹⁰ This is an important specification deriving possibly from the wisdom acquired in the mishandling of the Galileo case and of other issues. In fact, in their Introductions to the Bible,

⁷ Cf. P. Canisius, "Cardinal Seripando. A Biblical Theologian at the Council of Trent," *Indian Ecclesiastical Studies* 1 (1962), pp. 116-124.

⁸ See texts in *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, ed. J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, Bangalore: TPI, 1973, p. 70, no. 210.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71, no. 215.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 72, no. 217.

theologians discuss the number of texts whose meaning has been determined by the authority of the Church or by the consensus of the Fathers. Some come to the conclusion that it is not quite certain that there are any. If any, they are certainly quite few.¹¹

4. *An Encyclical of Pius XII on the Bible*

In 1943, Pius XII issued an important encyclical on the Bible. It was a very open type of document amounting to a full treatise on biblical interpretation. It was in fact occasioned by a pressure campaign launched by certain fundamentalist milieux in Rome to stifle the then budding progress of Catholic biblical scholarship. The Pope silenced those vociferous critics and called for an intensification of biblical studies taking into account the increased knowledge of the biblical background and the new techniques of analysis of literary forms.

As regards hermeneutics, the document revives the doctrine of the Fathers on the "spiritual sense" of Scripture, that is of a greater plenitude of meaning accruing to the text from the Christ event and from the spiritual experience of centuries of Christian reading, praying and living.

An awareness of the new hermeneutic quest appears in the last part of the Encyclical which says:

God did not grant the Sacred Books to men to satisfy their curiosity or to provide them with an object of study and research; these divine oracles were bestowed, as the Apostle tells us, in order that they might 'instruct to salvation by the faith which is in Christ Jesus,' and 'that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work!' (§ 51)

Echoes of Karl Barth's Preface to the Letter to the Romans? The document then proceeds to invite scholars to look for a "theological sense" that will stir in their students the reaction of the disciples of Emmaus: Did not our hearts burn within us whilst he opened to us the Scriptures? (Lk 24:32) (§ 56). § 30 had spoken in the same way of a "theological sense" contained in the "literal sense": this was fairly close to what Barth and the hermeneutic quest had been trying to recover in the texts of the Bible.

5. *Vatican II (1965)*

Two documents of Vatican II are of particular interest:

The *Decree on Liturgy* deals at length with the place of the Bible in the Liturgy (§§ 24, 33, 35, 51f., 56). Liturgy is considered as the action through which "the work of our redemption is exercised" (§ 2). It is therefore deeply related to salvation history (§ 5-8). Liturgy is a privileged hermeneutic milieu.

The most elaborate exposition on hermeneutics is given in ch. 2 of the *Constitution on Divine Revelation*. It describes Tradition as the

¹¹ Cf. R. E. Brown, *art. cit.*, pp. 619-621.

answer to the need "to keep the Gospel forever alive and whole" (§ 7). Tradition is not a matter of doctrine alone, but also of "life and cult" (§ 8). Tradition and Scripture are "deeply connected. Both come from the same source, merge and converge together": both represent joint aspects of the same work of the same Spirit (§ 9).

Less awareness of hermeneutics is shown in ch. 3 that deals with "The Inspiration of Holy Scripture and its Interpretation": in this chapter, the word "interpretation" is mostly taken in the old sense of "method of exegesis." In a simple way, stripped of theological niceties, ch. 6 gives the outlines of a hermeneutic programme aimed at releasing the energies contained in the Word of God.

6. *Discourse of Pope Paul VI to the Biblical Commission (1974)*

The topic proposed for the first meeting of the newly reorganized Biblical Commission was Hermeneutics. This is itself significant. The address of the Pope at the audience he gave to the Members dealt specifically and quite technically with that issue.

There is presently a stress on integrating to a diachronical study, attentive to the historical development of the text, a synchronical reading that gives its due place to the literary and existential connections of any text with the linguistic and cultural context to which it belongs. Does not this lead us precisely into the life of the Church? . . . For the last 10 years or so, the hermeneutic function has come to the fore and has been added to the historico-literary exegesis. Does not this induce the exegete to go beyond the enquiry in the pure original text to remember that it is the Church, as a living community, which 'actualizes' the message for the man of today?

The Pope's address connects this technical summary of New Hermeneutics with a theology of the Word and of biblical inspiration. The Word of God in the Bible came to us through a community to a community. This community continues to carry the responsibility and the grace to actualize the message and make it continuously relevant.

Hermeneutics is therefore connected with the life and mission of the Church :

To express the message means above all to gather all the meanings of a text and make them converge towards the unity of the Mystery, which is unique, inexhaustible, transcendent and which we can consequently approach from multiple standpoints... The biblicist is called to render a similar service to the ecumenical and missionary task of the Church And we wish to recall that the Council, in the Decree on the Church's missionary activity, asked for a 'fresh scrutiny to be brought to bear on the words and deeds . . . consigned to Sacred Scripture' in the context of world cultures and religions, in order to understand the latter, as far as possible, and in a Christian way, and

'reconcile them with the manner of living taught by divine Revelation' (*Ad Gentes* 22).

This rapid survey can be summarized in the following points:

1. The concern to actualize the Scriptures is as old as the Church itself. It is even anterior to it as witnessed to by the Midrashim and Targumim of Judaism. The old Theologians have tried to formulate a theology and to work out techniques of actualisation.

2. What Catholic theology calls "tradition" corresponds very much to what the hermeneutic quest is concerned with.¹² In Tradition, Scriptures are received and communicated by a community endowed by the Spirit with a faith alive and a living language.

3. In Roman Catholic documents, the "authority of the Church" is certainly an aspect of the Tradition whether it is to be found in the consensus of the "Fathers," the decrees of the Councils or the Roman documents.

4. But it is not the only aspect; tradition is also a matter of liturgy, of Christian life and witness, of reflection on and study of, at the various levels of prayer, the Word of God.

5. It is only late documents which refer to New Hermeneutics in the sense of an awareness of the linguistic implications of the actualization of the Scriptures. But already Origen had developed an interesting theology of the Logos and of its incarnations which is very "modern" in tone.

II Questions Catholic Hermeneutics Face

1. *The first question is of really facing the issue*

It is a fact that Roman Catholics on the whole have only come lately—and, in fact, are still coming—to a real attention to the Bible. This statement would certainly call for many qualifications, but, as a kind of global sociological observation, it is on the whole accurate. Examples could be multiplied to justify this statement. For instance, in a gathering of Catholic clergymen, the temperature will be raised immediately and a vigorous exchange of opinion will follow if the question is raised of liturgical inculturation. An exposition on biblical inculturation will be listened to politely and discussed dispassionately. Another indication is that the Roman Catholic laity is blissfully (?) immune to the storm of heated comments raised by any new Bible translation in Protestant circles.

¹² This has been well observed by G. Ebeling: "The hermeneutic problem of the actualisation of the past history finds here such a radical solution that there is no longer, properly speaking, a true hermeneutic problem" ("Die Bedeutung der historisch-kritischen Methode für die protestantische Theologie," *ZTHK*, 1950, p. 19). Ebeling's statement is somewhat exaggerated since the Tradition is itself object of hermeneutics and subject to a hermeneutic understanding of the Scriptures.

Yet the interest is developing fast. But can the Roman Catholic community find a short cut to the experience of centuries which has led to the discussion on New Hermeneutics in Protestant circles? In fact, when we look at the present landscape as regards the Bible in the Roman Catholic Church, we find:

—at the grass roots level, the emergence of a genuine interest in the Bible, but an interest that often takes the naïve form of a Bible belt fundamentalism, especially in the “charismatic movement.”

—at the scholarly level, a renaissance of biblical scholarship at all levels. But this scholarship runs the risk of dry academics. We may here quote the words of a non-Catholic author reviewing for a Catholic periodical a Catholic monograph, particularly heavy in technical equipment and rather light in real significance:

Would it be too much for a Protestant to plead with Roman Catholics to match their new-found freedom for scientific biblical study with a profound criticism of the manner in which we culture-Protestants have carried it out? Technique need not be disastrous, whether in oil production or redaction criticism. But it must be subordinated—always, in every field, and without exception—to an adequate hermeneutic.¹⁸

2. Another issue we have to meet is that of the *Tradition*. Vatican II has given an impressive description of Tradition: “In Tradition, Scripture itself is understood and continuously actualised and so God, who spoke of old, continues to address unceasingly the spouse of His Son and the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel resounds in the Church and, through her in the world, continues to lead the believers into all truth and makes the word of Christ to dwell in them abundantly” (Rev. § 8). Such a “tradition” is deeply hermeneutic and creative of meaning. But there still lurks a static conception of Tradition as a deposit of notions that would not be contained in the Scriptures. The insights of Vatican II are beautiful indeed. The challenge to the Roman Catholic Church is to be open to the Spirit and give way to the creativity of the Spirit. This is no mere “theological” problem.

3. A connected issue is that of authority. As we saw, the “authority of the Church” in the Roman vision of things is a principle of interpretation. This is often considered by outsiders as one of the repulsive aspects of the Roman Catholic tradition. Lived from inside, it appears in another light. Actually every social body exercises its unavoidable pressure on its members. Moreover, authority has also its positive aspects. The biblical revival of the last decades, for instance, owes much to the unambiguous guidance of a well structured hierarchy, clearly formulated in documents and firmly enacted in practice. Again, as explained in the context of a theology of the People of God, this authority is not exercised over against the members or in opposition to them. On the contrary, “in handing over, upholding,

¹⁸ W. Wink in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 34 (1972), p. 124.

living and professing the faith, there is a remarkable community of spirit (*conspiratio*) of the Pastors and of the faithful" (Rev. § 9). But here again, how is this to be lived concretely? The recent Küng affair shows at least that it is not easy to put into practice this *singularis conspiratio* between the base and the top. Another example of lack of *conspiratio* would be the uneasy relationship that developed between the Biblical Commission and the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in the preparation of the Document on Women's Ordination.

4. A different but important issue is that of the *Old Testament* and I suppose it shares that problem with all the other Christians. In Jesus Christ everything is made new. But does this newness obliterate the past? Is the New Testament the fulfilment (Matt. 5:17) or the end of the Old Law (Col. 2:14)? The answer may be expressed coherently (?) in the writings of the theologians but hardly so in the lives of the Christian communities. Marcion rejected the Old Testament. Others, on the contrary, go back to the Old Testament, sometimes for very mixed motives: in South Africa, apartheid finds sometimes a strange justification in extreme biblical literalism.

As regards the Old Testament, the present Roman Catholic attitude is not clear. On the one hand, the Old Testament finds a regular place in the liturgical readings and the Psalms are the basis of community prayer: At the same time, the ignorance of the Old Testament among Catholic laity is often next to total because its place in church preaching is minimal. Especially in India, in theological circles, the question is often raised of the significance of the Old Testament. With a touch of aggression denoting a certain uneasiness, the statement is made that the Old Testament has no validity for India, that the Vedas and the Upanishads, or some other writings are the Old Testament of India. This is a quasi-marcionite statement but problems are not solved by being labelled. It is just an Indian manifestation of the uneasiness and ambiguity found generally among Christians as regards the Old Testament and the people of Israel. Is this the place, in this context, to make an appeal to add encounter with Islam as an essential element of our hermeneutic search for relevance in the Indian culture? Our Christian dialogue in India is one-sided: it is mostly turned towards Hinduism and practically ignores Islam. Yet, in the concrete context in which we live in India, is not Islam the practical—even if incomplete—heir to the Hebrew inheritance, the living witness to the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

III Questions the Roman Catholic Approach Puts to the Hermeneutic Quest

I shall again start from the basic observation that the Roman Catholic community is a late comer in the Hermeneutic quest as it is presently formulated. It came late because it came from other spiritual horizons. Coming from other horizons, it has also its own questions to submit.

1. The first question is this: has not the New Hermeneutic too narrow a basis? Coming as it does from Bible scholarship and from a

tradition of commitment to the Bible, it is mostly a matter of *biblical* hermeneutic. I have already mentioned that Catholics are inclined to feel more acutely the problem of liturgical hermeneutics. There is also the question of dogmatic hermeneutic, of an interpretation of the faith traditionally received and of its formulation for the man of today. Karl Rahner has written a provocative article on preaching as a hermeneutic operation. The totality of Christian witness and of Christian living calls for a creative hermeneutic. Isolating biblical hermeneutic can ultimately lead to a rift between Bible and life. By isolating the hermeneutic of the Word, is there not a danger of fragmenting the human complex and of losing sight even of the total sense of the "Word." Heidegger considers language as "the house of Being." This is true only on condition that the word is perceived as the totality of the creative activity of man, including art, labour and all the *leela* of man.

2. The origin of the New Hermeneutics may be responsible for some of its shortcomings. First it is *academic*. It is the work of scholars making a rare display of insight and originality and they keep a kind of ownership right over it. To the Reformers, it seemed presumptuous that any human authority, Church, Bishop or Pope could sit in judgement over the Word of God. But have we not come to a situation in which the Word of God has been taken over by the western universities? The Mandarins replace the Pontiffs. It would be fascinating to study the complex social development which resulted in the leisure time to study (university system), the means of learning (big libraries and now the computers), the means of communicating the results of research (publishing houses and various publication grants) being such that biblical currents and interpretations are determined by schools of western learning. The *Akademē* has replaced the *Oikoumenē*.¹⁴ In the book review mentioned above, W. Wink makes the following comment:

In the American climate of scientism, New Testament scholars have increasingly adopted a *wissenschaftliche* style. . . . The Bible was only 'in' if its study involved a scientific methodology. It was not enough that it was a 'humanity'; it had to be a 'science'. Bless God for science and all that, but on the American scene science was itself caught in an ideological trap. In its hankering after the fleshpots of scientism, NT studies have taken on its worst traits.¹⁵

3. This makes also the New Hermeneutics *individualistic*: We see hermeneutics as a primarily individualistic activity. Under the impact of the dominant liberal ideology of Western society, the insistence of the Reformers on the freedom of conscience of the interpreter has led to a view of hermeneutics in which one opinion is as good as another. Against this we

¹⁴ Cf. F. Dreyfus, "Exégèse en Sorbonne, Exégèse en Église," *Revue Biblique*, 82 (1975), pp. 321-359; A. Paul, *L'Impertinence Biblique*, Paris: Desclée, 1974.

¹⁵ *Loc. cit.*, p. 123.

need to insist that interpretation is not a matter of 'opinion' but of praxis. Secondly, the praxis which is the end of interpretation is not individual but corporate. In the last analysis, it is the involvement of the interpreter in a community of interpretation, in a community of praxis, which makes interpretation a meaningful activity.¹⁶

4. Due again to its academic origin and to the fact that it is based on the scientific discovery of the significance of language in thought communication, the New Hermeneutics tend to be *one-sidedly secular*. The Patristic and Medieval hermeneutic was a matter of faith. Its main source of inspiration was to bring out the significance of Jesus Christ for the Old Testament and for today's life. Luther's hermeneutic was also based on the same principle: *was treibet Christus*. The new hermeneutic has discovered that it takes more than a living faith to interpret the Scripture to the man of today; the living faith must be expressed in a living language. But in its enthusiasm for the linguistic discovery it has made, the present hermeneutic may overlook the faith aspect. The new quest may be weak where the old was strong and vice versa. "Issued from academic circles and based on a technical linguistic analysis, it may give too little attention to the fact that the whole linguistic transfer implied in reading the old canonical texts is carried over by a community of faith."¹⁷

5. The whole issue may be summarized by saying that a hermeneutic articulated as a theology of the Word should be complemented by a hermeneutic of the Spirit. What I mean is that the Word cannot be isolated from the global context of a history filled with the Spirit which precedes and follows the composition of the Scriptures. It is in this theandric complex that the Word is enshrined. Luke applied to Jesus the words of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has anointed me to *preach the Good News* to the poor" (Lk. 4:18) and the book of Acts is a study of the on-going relationship between the Word and the Spirit. It is now a commonplace statement to observe that the western tradition—both Catholic and Protestant—has neglected the role of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸ This applied very much to the hermeneutic quest and explains its individualism, stilted academicism, lack of Christian spontaneity and the continuing "strange silence of the Bible in the Church."

¹⁶ D. Lochhead, "Hermeneutics and Ideology," *The Ecumenist*, 15 (1977), pp. 83-84.

¹⁷ L. Legrand, "How New is 'New Hermeneutic'?", *Journal of Dharma*, 5 (1980), p. 105.

¹⁸ The collection of papers on *The New Hermeneutic* ed. by J. M. Robinson and J. B. Code (New York: Harper and Row, 1964) has two full studies on the Theology of the Word but just one reference to the Holy Spirit (p. 83). Similarly the entire discourse of Pope Paul VI on Hermeneutic (see n. 1) does not mention the Spirit at all.

Conclusion

A last question can be raised. We all know the parable of Van Buren on the invisible gardener and his conclusion that God has died the death of a thousand qualifications.¹⁹ As regards hermeneutics, the question is of whether a hermeneutic qualified as I have said can still be called by the same name. Has it not died the death of a thousand qualifications? After all, the so-called new hermeneutic has now been with theologians since the time of Karl Barth, that is for sixty years or so. Can a sixty year-old movement still be called "new"? Does not the fact that the label is still in currency simply demonstrate that biblical scholarship moves at a pace markedly slower than the world it lives in and that even Protestant scholarship has its own attachment to "tradition"? Is not "new hermeneutic" an old lady still playing the coquette when the time has come for her to prepare her will and quit the stage?²⁰

Our gathering here has a great significance. We look at the problem from a view point which is not enslaved to the western *Akademē* and in an ecumenical openness that goes beyond Christian denominations and opens on hermeneutic non-Christian traditions as well. India has indeed its role to play. Indian hermeneutic has not dichotomized explanation and understanding and has continued to move more harmoniously than the West in the continuity of a living tradition. "At any rate, the situation in which the exegete finds himself in the Third World compels him to look for an alternative to the present academic approach to the text. The poverty of means at his disposal may have the salubrious effect of compelling him to go for an 'ecological' interpretation, free from the exegetical pollution that fogs a certain amount of modern biblical research."²¹

Our situation in India invites us to go beyond the New Hermeneutics. It is that impressive challenge that faces the present gathering.

¹⁹ P. Van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, Pelican, 1963, p. 17.

²⁰ L. Legrand, *art. cit.*, p. 94.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.