

## CHAPTER II

### *The History of New Testament Study*

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The interpretation of the Old Testament in the New is a subject on which books are still being written and examination candidates still questioned. The interpretation of earlier parts of the Old Testament in its later parts is a subject on which much more work remains to be done; it forms the first chapter in the history of Old Testament interpretation. Similarly the first chapter of a history of New Testament interpretation should be devoted to a study of the interpretation of earlier parts of the New Testament in its later parts.

#### *I. The Early Church and the Middle Ages*

##### **I. THE APOSTOLIC AGE**

There is not the same degree of internal interpretation within the New Testament as is present in the Old, but some examples are readily recognized. Within a single Gospel, for instance, there are interpretations of parables (cf. Mk. 4:3-8 with 14-20, or Mt. 13:24-30 with 37-43), some of which may belong to the tradition while others are supplied by the evangelist. A later Gospel may interpret words in an earlier Gospel which has served as one of its sources, as when "they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mk. 9:1) is reworded as "they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (Mt. 16:28) or "Truly this man was the son of God" (Mk. 15:39) becomes "Certainly this man was innocent" (Lk. 23:47).

In particular, the Gospel of John presents the story of Jesus in such a way as to bring out the abiding validity of his person, teaching and work. "Eternal life", which in the Synoptic Gospels is an occasional synonym for "the kingdom of God", now supplants it almost entirely, and is shown to consist in the knowledge of the one true God revealed through Jesus (Jn. 17:3). The wording of the charge on which Jesus was executed, "the King of the Jews", which might seem to have little relevance to the public for which the Fourth Evangelist wrote, is interpreted in Jesus' answers to Pilate's interrogation in Jn. 18:33-38a, where it becomes clear that the kingship he claims belongs wholly to the spiritual realm: his sovereignty is acknowledged by "every one who is of the truth".

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Even within the Pauline corpus we have evidence of some interpretation of earlier letters in later ones: the church principles of 1 Corinthians, for example, are reapplied in one direction in Ephesians and in another in the Pastoral Epistles. Again, it has been observed more than once that the scenes accompanying the breaking of the seals in the Apocalypse (Rev. 6:1 ff.) are constructed on a framework not unlike the eschatological discourse of Mk. 13:5ff. and parallels.

## 2. ORTHODOXY AND HERESY IN THE SECOND CENTURY

The earliest of the Apostolic Fathers, Clement of Rome, engages in some New Testament interpretation in his letter to the Corinthian church (c. A.D. 96), although the documents which he quotes had not yet been brought together to form part of one collection. His aim is to discourage envy and partisanship and to encourage a spirit of humility and mutual forbearance among the Corinthians, and he very properly quotes in this sense words from the Sermon on the Mount and pre-eminently from 1 Corinthians, where Paul deprecates party-spirit and inculcates a spirit of love in that church in an earlier generation. For the same purpose Clement quotes other New Testament writings, and especially Hebrews, which was plainly well-known to him. For example, he interprets those who "went about in skins of sheep and goats" (Heb. 11:37) as Elijah and Elisha (1 Clem. 17:1), although these men were not in the original author's mind at this point. (This misinterpretation is sufficient evidence that Clement was not the author of Hebrews—a suggestion made by some in Jerome's day and subsequently.)

The *logos* doctrine of the Johannine prologue was naturally treated by those who had been educated in Greek culture in terms of the *logos* of the philosophers. Thus Justin Martyr argued that men like Socrates, who had embraced the *logos* in the form of true reason were, without knowing it, Christians before Christ, since in due course the *logos* became incarnate in Christ.<sup>1</sup> Ptolemy, a member of the Valentinian school of Gnostics, read into the prologue the first "Ogdoad" in the Valentinian system (of which Logos was one) and so made the evangelist teach developed Valentinianism. It was not difficult for Irenaeus to expose the fallacy in this reasoning.<sup>2</sup> But at a more sober level there was much in the Gospel's vocabulary and conceptual range which lent itself to Valentinian speculation, such as the dispelling of darkness by the true light. The Valentinian *Gospel of Truth*, which may be the work of Valentinus himself, bears evident traces of an attempt to understand the Gospel of John on the part of a man whose presuppositions were those of gnostic dualism.

The gnostic schools, as we might expect, found ample material in the parables of Jesus for the presentation of their own teachings. The Naassenes, for example, interpreted the injunction in the parable of the sower, "He who has ears, let him hear" (Mt. 13:9), to mean: "No one has become a hearer of these mysteries save only the gnostics who are perfected".<sup>3</sup> When the kingdom of heaven is compared to a mustard-seed

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(Mt. 13:31), they explained this as "the indivisible point existing in the body which is known to none but the spiritual".<sup>4</sup>

The Gospel of John in particular lent itself to allegorical exegesis. This is not surprising because even today many readers of the narratives in this Gospel are left with a feeling that John is saying more than meets the eye—although certainty about any underlying significance is rarely attainable. When the mother of Jesus appears, for example, are we simply to think of Mary (it is noteworthy that John never calls her by her name) or does she symbolize the believing community, or some part of it? A similar question arises with regard to the disciple whom Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> Justin, *Second Apology* 10.

<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer.* i. 12. 2-4.

<sup>3</sup> Hippolytus, *Ref.* v. 8.29.

<sup>4</sup> Hippolytus, *Ref.* v. 9. 6.

loved. And what might be intended by the Samaritan woman's five husbands (Jn. 4:18) or by the remarkable catch of 153 fishes (Jn. 21:11)? If commentators are not content to confine themselves to the literal and surface meaning, their symbolic interpretations are likely to reflect their own mode of thinking rather than the evangelist's intention. Origen, for example, interpreted the five husbands of the five senses, by which the human soul is governed before it comes to faith in Christ, although elsewhere he takes them to mean the five books of the law, which the Samaritans acknowledged as canonical.

The Valentinian Gnostic Heracleon, the first commentator on this Gospel, gave the husbands a significance more in keeping with his own outlook: for him they represent various forms of entanglement with the material order, and only when she has been delivered from them will she be united to the *pleroma*.

### 3. MARCION AND HIS SCHOOL

Marcion (c. A.D. 140), with all his one-sided devotion to Paul as the only faithful disciple of Jesus, showed some appreciation of interpretative method in his approach to Paul's epistles. His revisions of the text of these epistles (excluding the Pastorals) and of Luke's Gospel were based on *a priori* dogma, not on anything resembling what we know today as critical method. But he had a firm grasp of the primacy of literal exegesis. Indeed, it was this that made him so resolutely jettison the Old Testament as irrelevant to the gospel; had he been willing to allegorize it, as many of his orthodox and gnostic contemporaries did, he could have made it convey the same teaching as Paul's epistles—or anything else he chose. Apart from his arbitrary handling of the text, his understanding of the epistles appears to have paid due regard to their historical and geographical setting. This may be inferred from the Marcionite prologues to the epistles (preserved in Latin in many Vulgate manuscripts), which are probably the work of his followers rather than his own and show only occasional signs of distinctive Marcionite doctrine. They make best sense if they are read consecutively according to the order in which the ten epistles were arranged in Marcion's canon, beginning with Galatians.<sup>5</sup>

The Galatians are Greeks. They first received the word of truth from the apostle, but after his departure they were tempted by false apostles to turn to the law

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and circumcision. The apostle recalls them to belief in the truth, writing to them from Ephesus.

Most of this prologue is based on the contents of the epistle, but the first and last statements are either intelligent guesses or based on tradition. The statement that the Galatians were Greeks may imply that they were not Celts ("North Galatians"); the statement that it was written from Ephesus assigns it to the same period as the Corinthian correspondence.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. D. de Bruyne, "Prologues bibliques d'origine marcionite", *Rev. Ben.* 24 (1907), pp. 1ff.; A. von Harnack, "Der marcionitische Ursprung der ältesten Vulgata-Prologe zu den Paulusbriefen", *ZNW* 24 (1925), pp. 205ff. A serious critique of De Bruyne's thesis was presented by J. Regul, *Die antimarcionitischen Evangelienprologe* (Freiburg 1969). But the Marcionite origin of seven of the Pauline prologues was upheld by K. T. Schafer, "Marius Victorinus and die marcionitischen Prologe zu den Paulusbriefen", *Rev. Ben.* 80 (1970), pp. 7 ff. See further N. A. Dahl, "The Origin of the Earliest Prologues to the Pauline Letters", *Semeia* 12 (1978), pp. 233 ff.

Romans (surprisingly) is said to have been written from Athens. The Marcionite prologue to this letter distorts its argument, perhaps on the assumption that a church founded by someone other than Paul could not have been taught the true gospel. The Romans, it is said,

had been visited previously by false apostles and introduced to the law and the prophets under the name of Christ. The apostle recalls them to the true faith of the gospel...

In fact, nothing in the letter to the Romans suggests that its recipients had been wrongly taught or had anything to unlearn.

The Epistle to the Ephesians was entitled "To the Laodiceans" in Marcion's canon (an inference, probably, from the language of Col. 4:16).

The Laodiceans are Asians. Having received the word of truth they persevered in the faith. The apostle commends them, writing to them from prison in Rome.

The letters to the Philippians and Philemon are also said to have been written "from prison in Rome". All the more surprising, then, is it to find a different provenance assigned to the letter to the Colossians:

The Colossians, like the Laodiceans, are also Asians. They also had been visited previously by false apostles: The apostle did not come to them in person, but sets them right again by means of his epistle; for they had heard the word from Archippus, who received his ministry for them. Therefore the apostle, in bonds, writes to them from Ephesus.

The reference to Archippus is an inference from Col. 4:17. As for the statement that the letter was sent from Ephesus, this is based on nothing in the text and may reflect a tradition that one of Paul's imprisonments had been endured in that city.

For the most part, the Marcionite prologues to the epistles show more objectivity and insight than do the anti-Marcionite prologues to the Gospels, which are valuable chiefly for the material which they preserve from earlier tradition, especially the writings of Papias.

#### **4. IRENAEUS AND ORIGEN**

Irenaeus, who left his home in the province of Asia to become bishop of Lyons in the Rhone valley shortly after A.D. 177, was not an interpreter of the New Testament books as such but an expositor and defender of Christian doctrine against heretics. Since, however, he recognized that Christian doctrine, preserved in special purity in the churches of apostolic foundation, was based on Scripture, he was inevitably involved in the exposition of Scripture, and indeed has been described by R. M. Grant as "the father of

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authoritative exegesis in the Church".<sup>6</sup> If I may quote what I have said elsewhere:

The apostolic tradition is for him the proper and natural interpretation of Scripture: the faith which he summarizes and expounds is what Scripture teaches. He is convinced of the

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<sup>6</sup> R. M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (London 1965), p. 55.

perspicuity of Scripture; any honest student of Scripture must agree that this is its meaning. Heretics may appeal to Scripture, but if they construct from Scripture something different from the apostolic tradition as preserved in the church their appeal is invalid.<sup>7</sup>

The argument that heretics and others who are outside the true church are incompetent to interpret Scripture since they repudiate the key that unlocks its meaning is elaborated by Tertullian. In his *Prescription against Heretics* he invokes a principle of Roman law to debar them from the right of appealing to Scripture.

While several Christian writers of the second and third centuries engaged incidentally in New Testament exegesis, the first to compile scholarly commentaries was Origen of Alexandria and Caesarea (185-254). "He brought the touch of a master to what had hitherto been nothing much more than the exercise of amateurs."<sup>8</sup> His linguistic and textual equipment was unrivalled; his mastery of the whole realm of contemporary learning was unsurpassed. Yet, even when he brought the whole weight of his scholarly apparatus to bear on the interpretation of the biblical text, he too often failed to appreciate the authors' intention because of the strength of his Platonic presuppositions, so alien to their outlook. In every generation exegetes have their presuppositions, but if they know their business they will beware of thinking that the biblical authors shared those presuppositions. Origen all too often makes the biblical authors teach Platonism instead of what they were really concerned to teach. In particular, his Platonism seems to have made him incapable of sympathizing with the biblical writers' sense of history.

Even when he comes to critical questions like discrepancies between the Gospels, he tends to surmount them by allegorization. For example, John places the cleansing of the temple at an early stage in Jesus' ministry; Matthew and the other Synoptists place it towards the end. The question belongs to the realm of historical criticism, and Origen recognizes that if it is treated on that level it cannot be resolved by harmonistic methods. In any case, he says, the story as it stands contains a number of improbabilities. But if the temple is the soul skilled in reason, to which Jesus ascends from Capernaum, a region of less dignity, so as to purify it from irrational tendencies which still adhere to it, then the improbabilities of the literal accounts disappear and the discrepancies between them become irrelevant.

Similarly, when he deals with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, he interprets Jesus as the word of God entering the soul (which is called Jerusalem). The ass which the disciples loose is the Old Testament properly interpreted; the colt, which in Matthew's account is distinguished from the parent animal, is the New Testament. The statement that no one had ever sat on it is a reference to those who never submitted to the divine message before the

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coming of Jesus. This treatment of the record is what we nowadays call demythologization, for Origen regards the literal sense as not only inadequate but as downright unacceptable. He criticizes Heracleon for interpreting the temple-cleansing in a gnostic sense, but Heracleon and he were not so far apart in their approach. Each read his philosophic presuppositions into the text, although Origen's allegorization was more under the control of the catholic rule of faith. Origen, however, did not consistently maintain his allegorical method; after insisting near the

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<sup>7</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Tradition Old and New* (Exeter 1970), p. 116.

<sup>8</sup> R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (London 1959), p. 360.

beginning of his commentary on John that the temple-cleansing could not be understood otherwise than allegorically, he refers to it later as an exhibition of Jesus' supernatural power. But even when he came to pay more respect to the historical interpretation, he regarded it as less important than the allegorical.

## 5. THE SCHOOL OF ANTIOCH

The biblical interpretation which characterized the church of Antioch was much more restrained in its practice of allegorization than that current in Alexandria. The great Antiochene exegetes belong to a later period than Clement and Origen: the two greatest figures among them are Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428) and John of the golden mouth (Chrysostom) (347-407), for the last ten years of his life patriarch of Constantinople.

Theodore, whom later generations venerated as "The Interpreter" *par excellence*, distinguished between the pure exegete and the preacher: the exegete's task was to elucidate obscurities, while the preacher's was to communicate the plain teaching of the gospel. If this distinction be maintained, Theodore was a pure exegete while Chrysostom was an expository preacher—but always a preacher.

The Alexandrians understood biblical inspiration in the Platonic sense of utterance in a state of ecstatic possession. It was fitting therefore that words so imparted should be interpreted mystically if their inner significance was to be laid bare. Theodore and the Antiochenes thought of inspiration rather as a divinely-given quickening of the writers' awareness and understanding, in which their individuality was unimpaired and their intellectual activity remained under their conscious control. It was important therefore in interpreting them to have regard to their particular usage, aims and methods. The literal sense was primary, and it was from it that moral lessons should be drawn; the typological and allegorical senses, while not excluded, were secondary.

The contrast between Theodore and Origen appears most strikingly in their Old Testament interpretation, but it is seen also in their treatment of the New Testament. Theodore treats the Gospel narratives factually: he pays attention to the particles of transition and to the minutiae of grammar and punctuation. He shows some skill in assessing the value of dubious readings and in bringing out the point of a discourse or parable. His consciousness of chronological development in theology as well as in history is illustrated by his recognition that Nathanael's use of the title "Son of God"

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in John 1:49 cannot have the full force that the title received after Jesus' resurrection. But he has the defects of his qualities: if he does not follow Origen into an excess of spiritualization, he lacks his depth of insight. His main strength is found in his exposition of the letters of Paul. Occasionally his exegesis is controlled by theological presuppositions, but that is true of exegetes in other ages. It would be absurd to see in his work an anticipation of the critical method of the nineteenth century, or even of the grammatico-historical method of the sixteenth; but he had, for his time, an uncommon appreciation of the principles of exegesis and the power of applying them to the effective eliciting of an author's meaning.

Chrysostom's homilies on the New Testament cover Matthew, John, Acts and all the Pauline letters. His biblical interpretation appears in these homilies, and is naturally expressed with a wordiness that is in marked contrast to Theodore's spare style: his homilies on the Pauline letters, for example, are nearly ten times as long as Theodore's exposition of the same documents. But they are firmly based on the Antiochene principles of exegesis so outstandingly exemplified in Theodore's work. He does not eschew allegory completely, but holds that when allegorical interpretation is in order the context itself indicates that this is so, and indicates what form the allegorical interpretation should take.

The Antiochene principles of exegesis were introduced to the west by Junilius Africanus (c. 542): he translated into Latin an introduction to biblical study by Paul of Nisibis, which reflects Theodore's methods. But the exegetical principles which became dominant in the mediaeval west owed more to Alexandria than to Antioch.

## 6. THE LATIN FATHERS

Several of the Latin Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries wrote notable commentaries on the Pauline epistles: Marius Victorinus (c. 300-370) on Galatians, Philippians and Ephesians; Jerome (347-420) on Philemon, Galatians, Ephesians and Titus; Augustine (354-430) on Romans and Galatians; "Ambrosiaster" and Pelagius on all thirteen. Victorinus endeavoured to present the literal sense, but found it difficult to exclude his Neoplatonic philosophy. Jerome's commentaries are marked by his great erudition and acquaintance with classical literature and with previous exegetical work, especially Origen's. He has left us also a commentary on Matthew and a revision of the commentary on Revelation by Victorinus of Pettau (d. 303), from which he removed the original chiliastic interpretations. "Ambrosiaster" draws many illustrations from government and law, and shows a rare interest in the principles underlying legal institutions, for example in his remarks on the institution of slavery in his comment on Col. 4:1. Pelagius has a firm grasp of the principle of justification by grace through faith—which is not easy to reconcile with popular ideas of his teaching—and insists repeatedly on the influence of example on conduct.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to Augustine's Pauline commentaries he has left us works on

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the Gospels, notably 124 homilies on the Gospel of John, and ten homilies on John's first epistle. There is also a wealth of practical exposition in his Sermons. In a number of places he gives free rein to the allegorical method. The stock example is his interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-37) where the man who goes down the Jericho road is Adam (mankind), assaulted by the devil and his angels, uncared for by the Old Testament priesthood and ministry, rescued by Christ and brought by him to the church, which exists for the refreshment of travellers on their way to the heavenly country.<sup>10</sup>

Augustine finds authority for the allegorical (spiritual) method in the words of 2 Cor. 3:6, "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." To rest content with the pedestrian level of the literal sense is a mark of soul slavery, when the treasures of the spiritual sense are there to be grasped. When

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. A. Souter, *The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul* (Oxford 1927).

<sup>10</sup> Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum* ii. 19.

the literal sense cannot be understood in reference to purity of life or soundness of doctrine, it should be concluded that the true sense is spiritual. Above all, that interpretation is to be preferred which promotes the supremacy of love. No one can claim to understand the scriptures properly unless he sees that in every part they teach love to God and love to one's neighbour.<sup>11</sup>

In proposing this last hermeneutical principle for the whole Bible, Augustine follows the precedent of Jesus, for whom the twofold commandment of love summed up the law and the prophets.

## 7. THE MIDDLE AGES

The quality of Augustine's character and intellect ensured that his example dominated the following centuries in western Christendom. In the standard "fourfold" sense of Scripture, the three non-literal senses were varieties of the spiritual sense. Thus a reference to water in Scripture might have the literal sense of water, but in the moral sense it could denote purity of life; in the allegorical sense, the doctrine of baptism; in the anagogical sense, the water of life in the heavenly Jerusalem. Thus the old jingle summed it up:

Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria,  
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia.

("The literal sense teaches what actually happened, the allegorical what you are to believe, the moral how you are to behave, the anagogical where you are going.")

On matters of criticism the judgments of Jerome were remembered and repeated by those biblical scholars in the early Middle Ages who were interested in such subjects. Here we should make special mention of the gifted exegetical school at the Abbey of St. Victor, Paris—Hugh (d. 1141) and his disciples, especially Andrew. But where the interpretation of the New Testament was concerned the primacy of the spiritual sense was generally taken for granted. The one control which kept the quest for the spiritual sense within bounds was the insistence that all interpretation must conform with "the analogy of the faith"—this apostolic expression (Rom. 12:6) being understood of "the faith" in its objective sense, as the body of accepted church

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doctrine. The unanimity of all scripture was axiomatic, and it was inconceivable that there could be any discrepancy between the interpretation of scripture and the catholic faith.

The *Glossa Ordinaria*, the great mediaeval compilation of biblical annotation, took shape from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. In it each book of the Bible is introduced by the prologue or prologues of Jerome with other prefatory material, while the annotations themselves are written in the margins and between the lines.

For the Pauline epistles, as for the Psalter, a specially elaborate *glossa*, the *Magna Glosatura*, was constructed on the basis of Anselm's *glossa* on these books by his pupil Gilbert de la Porree and by Peter Lombard.

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<sup>11</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* i. 36. We can scarcely recognize as seriously-meant exegesis his misuse of "Compel them to come in" (Luke 14:23) to authorize the coercion of the Donatists (*Epistle* 93.5).

While biblical exegesis was pursued unremittingly throughout the Middle Ages, the high standard of work which characterized the earlier Middle Ages was not maintained in the subsequent period. The *Glossa Ordinaria* and *Magna Glosatura* became in time the norm for all biblical exposition; lectures on the Bible took the form, as Dr. Beryl Smalley has put it, of "glossing the *Gloss*".<sup>12</sup> This dependence on the work of earlier annotators, masters though they were in their day, inhibited fresh biblical study as thoroughly as rabbinical methods did at an earlier date.

When John Wycliffe and his helpers undertook to make the Bible available to Englishmen in their own language, it was from a conviction that every man was God's "tenant-in-chief", immediately responsible to God and immediately responsible to obey his law. And by God's law Wycliffe meant not canon law but the Bible. It followed, then, that every man must have access to the Bible if he was to know what to obey. Earlier Bible translations in English had concentrated on those parts which were relevant to the liturgy and to the devotional life; but Wycliffe's doctrine of "dominion by grace" led to the conclusion that the whole Bible was applicable to the whole of life and should therefore be available in the vernacular.<sup>13</sup> While this approach to the Bible marked a departure from the dominant line, it was still inevitably mediaeval in conception. There was little appreciation of historical development within the biblical record, and no idea that the Bible's guidance could be ambiguous, in regard either to human relationships or to church order and organization.

## **II. Renaissance, Reformation and Counter-Reformation**

### **1. COLET**

John Colet (c. 1467-1519), later Dean of St. Paul's, broke with the exegetical methods of mediaeval scholasticism when he returned from the Continent to Oxford in 1496 and lectured on the Pauline epistles, expounding the text in terms of its plain meaning as seen in its historical context. When Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1467-1536) came to Oxford in 1498, he was profoundly influenced by Colet, to whom he owed in large measure his insight into the proper methods of biblical interpretation.

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### **2. ERASMUS**

Erasmus's contribution to the understanding of the New Testament is seen not only in his successive editions of the Greek New Testament (1516, 1519, 1522, 1527 and 1535) with his accompanying new translation into Latin and notes explaining a number of his Latin renderings, but also in his publication (1505) of Lorenzo Valla's philological annotations on the Latin New Testament and in his own paraphrases of the New Testament Epistles and Gospels (1517 ff.). These paraphrases, though written in Latin, were designed for the common people, and this design was furthered by their being translated into several European languages. The English translation was sponsored and partly undertaken by members of the royal family in the reign of Edward VI. The paraphrases are popular, practical and edifying. The historical and contextually

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<sup>12</sup> B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford 1952<sup>2</sup>), p.64.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. M. Deanesly, *The Significance of the Lollard Bible* (London 1951).

established meaning was primary, but any further form of interpretation that enabled the reader to derive some helpful lesson from the text was pressed into service. Erasmus's exposition of the Lord's Prayer was translated into English by Margaret, daughter of Sir Thomas More.

### 3. LUTHER

No exegete of the sixteenth century exercised a greater or more far-reaching influence on the course of biblical interpretation than Martin Luther (1483-1546). His place in the history of interpretation cannot be dissociated from his appeal from the authority of church, councils and papacy to the authority of *sola scriptura*. Time and again his attitude comes to clear and concise expression. At the Leipzig disputation (1519) he affirmed:

No believing Christian can be forced to recognize any authority beyond the sacred scripture, which is exclusively invested with divine right.<sup>14</sup>

At the Diet of Worms (1521) he replied to Johann von Eck's demand that he recant his alleged errors:

Unless I am convinced by the testimonies of the sacred scriptures or manifest reason..., I am bound by the scriptures which I have adduced. My conscience has been taken captive by the Word of God, and I neither can nor will recant, since it is neither safe nor right to act against conscience.<sup>15</sup>

Four years later, in *De Servo Arbitrio* (1525), he replies to Erasmus's *De Libero Arbitrio* (1523) and takes issue with Erasmus's willingness to appeal to catholic dogma where his case could not be established by *sola scriptura*, even when the logic underlying the dogma was obscure or faulty:

What do you mean, Erasmus? Is it not enough to have submitted your judgment to Scripture? Do you submit it to the Church as well?—why, what can the Church settle that Scripture did not settle first? ... What is this new-fangled religion of yours, this novel sort of humility, that, by your own example, you would take from us power to judge men's decisions and make us defer uncritically to human authority? Where does God's written Word tell us to do that? ... Woe to the Christian who doubts the truth of what is commanded him and does not follow it!—for how can he believe what he does not follow?<sup>16</sup>

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The Christian must "follow" and understand what the church requires of him, and decide whether it is a valid requirement or not, before he can intelligently submit to it. And the basis of his understanding and his decision must be the Bible.

This implies that Scripture is intelligible and consistent. If men have difficulty in understanding it, that is not because of its inherent obscurity but because of their "ignorance of words and grammar". But if Scripture is as authoritative and perspicuous as this, there must be a clear

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<sup>14</sup> M. Luther, *Werke*, Weimarer Ausgabe ii. 279.

<sup>15</sup> W.A. vii. 838.

<sup>16</sup> M. Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will*, ed. and tr. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (London 1957), p. 69 = W.A. xviii. 604f.

understanding of the principles of its interpretation. Chief among these principles was an insistence on the plain and literal meaning:

We must keep to the simple, pure and natural sense of the words, as demanded by grammar and the use of language created by God among men.<sup>17</sup>

Interpretation according to the interpreter's whim or preference is impermissible, and this is too often what allegorical interpretation amounts to. The allegorical method can make the text mean whatever the allegorizer wants it to mean. Only where the wording of a passage points unmistakably to a figurative or metaphorical interpretation is such an interpretation to be adopted.

Moreover, the Scriptures must be read in their original languages if their meaning is to be adequately discovered, and therefore painstaking study of these languages is indispensable. Only so can that "ignorance of words and grammar" be overcome which stands in the way of men's understanding of the biblical message.

But is there one basic biblical message? There is; Luther owed all that he was to his discovery of that message. The message was the gospel of justification by faith. There are some parts of the Bible which convey that message more clearly than others, and it is in the light of those parts that the others are to be read. As for certain biblical writings which seemed to contradict justification by faith, this was sufficient to put their canonicity in question.

In short, St. John's Gospel and his first Epistle; St. Paul's Epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians and Ephesians; and St. Peter's first Epistle—these are the books which show you Christ and teach everything which is necessary and blessed for you to know, even if you never see or hear any other book or teaching. Therefore in comparison with them St. James's Epistle is a right strawy epistle, for it has no evangelical quality about it.<sup>18</sup>

It was not the authors who mattered in the last analysis; it was the content of their writings.

That which does not teach Christ is not apostolic, even though Peter and Paul be the teachers. On the other hand, that which does teach Christ is apostolic, even though Judas, Annas, Pilate or Herod should propound it.<sup>19</sup>

This expresses, in extreme language, Paul's own sentiments: "Even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8); on the other hand, even if some "preach Christ from envy and rivalry", what matter? "Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in that I rejoice" (Phil. 1:15-18).

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But with the elimination of those elements whose title to a place in the canon was ruled out by their "unevangelical" content, what remained was self-evidently unanimous.

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<sup>17</sup> W.A. xviii. 608.

<sup>18</sup> W.A., *Deutsche Bibel* vi. 10.

<sup>19</sup> Preface to Epistle of James (W.A., *Deutsche Bibel* vii. 384f.).

The New Testament is one book, in which are written the gospel and the promise of God, together with the history of those who believed and those who did not. Thus every man may be sure that there is only one gospel, only one book in the New Testament, only one faith, and only one promise-giving God.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. CALVIN

Where Luther is bold, sweeping and prophetic, John Calvin (1509-64) is more scholarly, logical and painstaking. Luther was a preacher; Calvin was a lecturer. His commentaries cover nearly the whole Bible; in the New Testament the absence of a commentary on Revelation is conspicuous (the absence of commentaries on 2 and 3 John might more easily escape notice). Like Luther, he reads and expounds Scripture so as to find Christ there. He served his apprenticeship as a commentator in the commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia* which he wrote at the age of twenty-three, and something of the humanist remained in him alongside the Reformed theologian. He brought to his exegetical task a rare wealth of classical and patristic knowledge. Historical problems and textual discrepancies which crop up in the course of his exegesis he takes in his stride. On questions of introduction he can strike out on an independent course, as when he dates Galatians before the Council of Jerusalem of Acts 15—although one may wonder how the ethnic Galatians (as he takes the recipients of the letter to be) were evangelized at such an early date!<sup>21</sup>

He repudiated the time-honoured allegorical method as wholeheartedly as Luther did: not only did it enable the interpreter to extract whatever sense he wished from the text but it effectively obscured the true sense—the sense intended by the Spirit. He was not disposed to maintain time-honoured interpretations which found proof-texts for Christian doctrine in the most unlikely places, if he thought that they were excluded by the plain sense and context. Thus he was fiercely attacked for denying that the plural form for God, *'elohim*, in Gen. 1:1 and elsewhere pointed to the persons of the Trinity.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, he was a thoroughly theological expositor. To him Scripture, with all the diversity of its human authorship, was the product of the Spirit. It authenticated itself as such by the inward witness of the Spirit in the reader or hearer, and the purpose of its exposition was to make plain what the Spirit was saying not only to the churches of the first century but to those of the sixteenth. Calvin's exegesis was applied exegesis: those religious groups which attract disapproval in the Gospels and Epistles have their sixteenth-century counterparts in the Church of Rome and the Anabaptist communities.

Before he turned to exegesis, Calvin, at the age of twenty-six, published his *Institutio*, an introduction to Christian doctrine which was to receive unsurpassed recognition as a summary of Reformed theology. In Calvin's in-

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<sup>20</sup> W.A., *Deutsche Bibel* vi. 2.

<sup>21</sup> J. Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians*, etc., tr. T. H. L. Parker (Edinburgh 1965), pp. 24f.

<sup>22</sup> In the C.T.S. edition of Calvin's *Commentary on Genesis*, i (Edinburgh 1847), pp. 71f., attempts to find the Trinity in *'elohim* are described as "violent glosses" and "absurdities"; that the translator-editor was not too happy about this language may be inferred from his copious footnotes to Calvin's exposition of Gen. 1:1.

tention the whole of the *Institutio* is biblically based; Scripture is quoted copiously from start to finish in support of its successive propositions and arguments. But while many Calvinists since Calvin's day have felt it proper to expound Scripture in the light of the *Institutio*, he himself exercised much greater freedom. If in the course of his exposition he says something which is difficult to square with statements in the *Institutio*, he says it because he believes that that is what the relevant scripture means in its context. If he says on Luke 2:17f. that the shepherds' blazing abroad the news of what they had heard from the angels and seen at Bethlehem had the purpose not so much of bringing the people salvation as of rendering their ignorance inexcusable, there are many other places where he shows himself not unduly bound by his statements on predestination in the *Institutio*. In fact on this particular subject his commentaries show a flexibility which is at times disconcerting to those of his followers who would prefer a line more uniformly consistent with the *Institutio*. Not only does he reckon the elect to outnumber the reprobate—"since admittedly Christ is much more powerful to save than Adam was to ruin" (on Rom. 5:15)—but he affirms in the same context: "Paul makes grace common to all men, not because in fact it extends to all, but because it is offered to all; for although Christ suffered for the sins of the world, and is offered by the goodness of God without distinction to all men, yet not all receive him" (on Rom. 5:18). If such comments are not easily reconciled with inferences which many readers have drawn from the *Institutio*, what matter? Calvin knew that an exegete's business is to bring out the meaning of his text, and that is what he does here. Similarly on the words of institution spoken over the cup in Matt. 26:28 and Mark 14:24 ("my blood... which is shed for many") he says: "By the word many he means not a part of the world only, but the whole human race." And if, in the parallel passage in Luke 22:20, "for many" is replaced by "for you", this reminds believers to appropriate to themselves personally what has been provided for all: "let us not only remember in general that the world has been redeemed by the blood of Christ, but let each one consider for himself that his own sins have been expiated thereby." Such samples indicate that Calvin the exegete sat quite loose to certain ideas which have come traditionally to be regarded as characteristically "Calvinistic".

In fact, the more objectively grammatico-historical biblical exegesis is, the more widely is it acceptable, whereas exegesis which is controlled by theological *parti-pris* will be appreciated only where that theological outlook is found congenial. How successfully Calvin, in the setting of his day, approached the exegetical ideal is illustrated by the assessment of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609):

After the reading of Scripture, which I strenuously inculcate, and more than any other... I recommend that the *Commentaries of Calvin* be read... For I affirm that in the interpretation of the Scriptures Calvin is incomparable, and that his *Commentaries* are more to be valued than anything that is handed down to us in the writings of the Fathers—so much so that I concede to him a certain spirit of prophecy in which he stands distinguished above others, above most, indeed, above all.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> He continues with a *caveat*: "His *Institutes*, so far as respects Commonplaces, I give out to be read after the Catechism as a more extended explanation. But here I add—with discrimination, as the writings of all men ought to be read." Cited from C. Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (New York 1971), pp. 287-288. (The original is in a letter to Sebastian Egbertsz, in P. van Limborch and C. Hartsoeker, *Praestantium ac eruditorum virorum epistolae ecclesiasticae et theologicae* (Amsterdam 17643 ), no 101.) I am indebted for this reference to Dr A. Skevington Wood.

## 5. POLEMICAL SITUATION

The wind of change blew much of the time-honoured scholastic method out of exegetical practice in the Church of Rome as well as among the Reformers. It was a congenial exercise on either side to interpret Scripture in such a way as to score points against the other. The marginalia in the Geneva Bible (1560) and the Rheims New Testament (1582) provide ample illustration of this, not least in the Apocalypse. Perhaps one reason why Calvin published no commentary on this book was that his exegetical conscience could not accommodate itself to the polemical interpretation which was current in his environment. Not that Calvin shrank from polemics, but the principles which prevented him from seeing the Papacy in the "little horn" of Dan. 7:8 (which he interpreted of Julius Caesar and his successors) might perhaps have prevented him from following the fashion of discerning it in some of the sinister figures of the Apocalypse.

Theodorus Bibliander (1504-64), "the father of biblical exegesis in Switzerland",<sup>24</sup> went some way on the Reformed side towards repairing Calvin's omission. In his commentary on the Apocalypse (1549) he maintained the identification of Antichrist with the Papacy (as Calvin did in his exposition of 2 Thess. 2:1-12), but (rather inconsistently, if happily) interpreted the beast of Rev. 13:1 ff. as the Roman Empire and its wound as Nero's death—a wound which was healed with the accession of Vespasian.

With his contemporary Heinrich Bullinger (1504-75), Bibliander returned in some measure to the precedent set by Irenaeus and Victorinus of Pettau, and (whether under the stimulus of their example or not) a similar return is seen in exegesis coming from the Roman camp about the same time. Those fathers lived much closer to the age and situation of the Apocalypse than the Reformers and Counter-Reformers did, and showed how sixteenth-century expositors might extricate themselves from the morass of contemporary polemics and come nearer to discovering what John and the other New Testament writers wished their readers to understand.

### III. *The Post-Reformation Period*

#### 1. FLACIUS AND CAMERARIUS

It is commonly believed that the followers of the Reformers shrank from the exegetical freedom which Luther and Calvin enjoyed, stereotyped their insights and conducted biblical exposition along well-defined theological party lines, establishing a new Protestant scholasticism. However much this may have been true of the rank and file, the post-Reformation period produced a succession of independent thinkers.

Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520-75) published in 1567 his *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae*; it included a discussion of the principles of biblical interpretation which, in the words of W. G. Kümmel, "represents the real beginning of

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<sup>24</sup> P. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (1882-1910), vii, p. 211.

scholarly hermeneutics".<sup>25</sup> Following Luther, he admits only one sense of scripture, the grammatical sense, which normally implies a literal interpretation; only where the literal interpretation is impossible is a symbolical interpretation to be adopted as that which the author intended. He insisted on understanding the text in the sense which it was designed to convey to its original readers; without this insistence, there is no way forward in biblical exegesis.

Joachim Camerarius (1500-74) applied to New Testament interpretation the principles which he had mastered as a classical student. He confined himself to philological exegesis, even in the Apocalypse; he despaired of solving that book's symbolical problems: with regard to them he said (quoting Cicero), "Call the good guesser the best seer".

## 2. CATHOLIC EXEGESIS

Others, however, made some progress with the symbolism of the Apocalypse by combining the historical with the philological approach. On this basis Johannes Hentenius, who in 1547 wrote a preface for a Latin translation of Arethas's commentary on that book,<sup>26</sup> dated it before A.D. 70, as also did his fellow-Catholic Alfonso Salmeron in his *In Iohannis Apocalypsin Praeludia* (1614). Two Jesuit scholars who made contributions of major importance to its elucidation were Francisco de Ribera (1537-91) and Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613). The former, in his *In sacram beasi Iohannis Apostoli et Evangelistae Apocalypsin Commentarii* (1593), interpreted the earlier chapters of John's own day and the later ones of the last three and a half years immediately preceding the parousia. The latter, in his *Vestigatio Arcani Sensus in Apocalypsi* (1614), maintained that the whole book had been fulfilled: what was yet future in John's day was accomplished in the downfall of Roman paganism and the consequent triumph of the church. Even so, neither Ribera nor Alcazar was able completely to break with the church-historical method of apocalyptic interpretation.

## 3. GROTIUS

Such a break appears in the work of the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), who also broke with the Reformed tradition of identifying the Papacy with Antichrist. Grotius's *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* (1641ff.) carried on the philological and historical method of Flacius Illyricus and Camerarius, and did so more rigorously and in greater detail. So objective was his treatment of the text, in fact, that he was charged with rationalism. He saw that the individual books of the New Testament could best be understood in their respective historical contexts, even if he was not always successful in his attempts to identify those contexts. Thus he saw in 2 Thess. 2:1-12 a reference to the Emperor Gaius's attempt to have his statue set up in the Jerusalem temple, and accordingly dated the epistle c. A.D. 40, making it the earliest of the Pauline writings. He inferred from 2

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Pet. 3:3f. that that epistle was written after A.D. 70 and therefore not by Peter the apostle; he treated the name "Peter" in the initial salutation as a later addition to the text and conjectured that the author was Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, who was traditionally martyred under Trajan.

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<sup>25</sup> W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems*, E.T. (London 1972), p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> Arethas (c. 850 - c. 945), metropolitan of Cappadocian Caesarea; his commentary on the Apocalypse was an amplified reissue of the work of his predecessor Andrew (c. A.D. 600).

#### 4. BACKGROUND STUDIES

In England John Lightfoot (1602-75) realized the importance of Jewish studies for New Testament interpretation and in his *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae* (1658-78) he collected a mass of material from the rabbinical writings illustrating the Gospels, Acts, Romans and 1 Corinthians. Two volumes bearing a similar title (*Horae Ebraicae et Talmudicae in universum Novum Testamentum*) were published in 1733 and 1742 by the German scholar Christian Schöttgen (1687-1751). Johann Jakob Wettstein (1693-1754) published at Amsterdam in 1751-52 a two-volume edition of the Greek New Testament which was noteworthy not only for its departures from the *Textus Receptus* but even more so for its copious apparatus of illustrative material from classical and patristic literature. Another quarry of background material was opened in 1750, when a pioneer comparison of the writings of Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews was published by Johann Benedikt Carpzov (1720-1803) in his *Sacrae exercitationes in epistulam ad Hebraeos ex Philone Alexandrino*.

#### 5. TEXTUAL STUDIES

The reference to Wettstein's departures from the *Textus Receptus* (which exposed him to charges of heresy) reminds us how pioneer studies in the New Testament text made their contribution to its interpretation. The (English) Geneva version of 1560 was ahead of its time in drawing attention to textual variants; nearly a century later Brian Walton's *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta* (1655-57) incurred the displeasure of John Owen (*Considerations on the Prolegomena and Appendix to the Late Polyglotta*, 1659) for "that bulky collection of various readings which the appendix tenders to the view of every one that doth but cast an eye upon it".<sup>27</sup>

But the collection and publication of "various readings" proceeded apace, well in advance of the discovery of a scientific method of classifying and assessing them. John Mill (1645-1707) published two weeks before his death a reprint of Stephanus's third edition of the Greek text (1550) with an apparatus of about 30,000 variants. Their large number disturbed the faith of young Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), who accordingly devoted himself to a thorough study of the situation and showed the way to classifying the witnesses to the text and weighing the evidence of the readings. It was he who laid down the rule that in the assessing of variants "the difficult reading is to be preferred to the easy one" (*proclivi scriptioni praestat ardua*). His edition of the Greek Testament (1734) was followed in 1742 by his *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, comprising concise exegetical notes based es-

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pecially on context and grammar, regardless of dogmatic tradition (orthodox Lutheran and pietist though he was).

#### 6. SEMLER AND MICHAELIS

A new approach to New Testament interpretation was marked by the *Abhandlung vom freien Gebrauch des Kanons* (1771-75) of Johann Salomo Semler (1725-91), which approached the

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<sup>27</sup> J. Owen, *Works*, ed. W. H. Goold, xvi (London 1853), p. 347.

New Testament canon on a historical basis, and the *Einleitung in die göttlichen Schriften des Neuen Bundes* (first edition, 1750) of Johann David Michaelis (1717-91), the fourth edition of which (1788) carried forward Semler's work by stressing the importance of the historical, as distinct from the theological, approach to the individual documents of the New Testament. Both these men were indebted in some measure to Richard Simon's *Histoire Critique du texte du Nouveau Testament* (1689) and other works, but while Simon was motivated in part by a desire to weaken the force of the Reformers' appeal to the perspicuous authority of Scripture, Semler and Michaelis were subject to no such influences and deserve together to be acknowledged as pioneers in the historico-critical study of the New Testament.

## 7. THE ENLIGHTENMENT

If the eighteenth-century Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) did not make a direct contribution to the scientific exegesis of the New Testament, it did, like the English deism which preceded it,<sup>28</sup> create an atmosphere in which people were prepared to consider the matter in a spirit independent of traditional or dogmatic positions. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-81) not only published the "Wolfenbüttel Fragments" of Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) anonymously (1774-78), after their author's death—a work to which Semler made a critical rejoinder—but propounded a new theory regarding the origin of the Gospels. He envisaged a primitive Aramaic Gospel of the Nazarenes which was used by Mark and the other canonical evangelists. This thesis was given a more critical exposition in 1794 by Michaelis's pupil Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752-1827) in his study *Über die drey ersten Evangelien*. Another aspect of Lessing's theory was developed by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), who drew a sharp distinction between the portrait of Jesus in the Gospel of John and that in the other three Gospels and maintained the mutual independence even of the three Synoptic Gospels (*Christliche Schriften* ii, 1796; iii, 1797).

More generally, Lessing's hypothesis of the "ugly ditch" which prevented a transition from "the accidental facts of history" to "the necessary truths of religion" had far-reaching implications for the understanding of the New Testament.

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## 8. GRIESBACH

Semler's pupil Johann Jakob Griesbach (1745-1812) may be said to mark the transition from the "post-Reformation" to the "modern" age of New Testament study. In 1774-75 he published a critical edition of the Greek Testament in his own recension, together with an extensive apparatus. He developed Bengel's method of classifying the witnesses to the text and distinguished three main text-types—the Alexandrian, the Western and the Constantinopolitan—recognizing the third as secondary in time and inferior in value to the other two. In this he set a pattern for New Testament textual criticism which has endured to our own day.

Apart from his textual contributions, he advanced beyond the historical criticism of his immediate predecessors by applying himself to the problems of literary criticism, in that area of

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<sup>28</sup> W. G. Kümmel devotes a chapter of *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems* to "English Deism and its Early Consequences" (pp. 51-61).

New Testament where these problems are most obvious—the Gospels and their interrelationship. This question had been tackled from patristic times: Augustine's *De consensu evangelistarum* had provided a precedent for students throughout many centuries. Gospel harmonies had been drawn up from Tatian's *Diatessaron* (c. A.D. 170) onwards: Calvin, instead of writing separate commentaries on the Synoptic Gospels, expounded a harmony of the three. It is to Griesbach, apparently, that we owe the expression "Synoptic Gospels" to designate Matthew, Mark and Luke. In his *Synopsis Evangeliorum* (1776) he argued, against the traditional view that Mark was dependent on Matthew, and Luke on Matthew and Mark, that Mark was dependent mainly on Matthew and partly on Luke - that Mark, in fact, was an unoriginal and poorly informed writer. This was indeed a cul-de-sac in literary criticism, worth mentioning only because Griesbach did at least turn his back on tradition and investigate the literary problem *de novo*—none the less a cul-de-sac for recent attempts to open it up by W. R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem* (1970), and J. B. Orchard, *Why Three Synoptic Gospels?* (1975). But Eichhorn was able some years later to point to a more promising way forward by developing Lessing's idea, not the more scholarly Griesbach's.

## IV. The Nineteenth Century

### 1. DE WETTE AND LACHMANN

The new approach to biblical criticism and interpretation at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century is paralleled in other fields of study, especially in classical history and literature. In literary criticism Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824) achieved a breakthrough in his *Prolegomena* to Homer (1795); in historical criticism Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776-1831) opened a new era in the study of Roman history, especially the early period, in his *Römische Geschichte* (1811-32). In Old Testament study progress was made by Alexander Geddes (1737-1802), whose "fragmentary hypothesis" of the composition of the Pentateuch was

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elaborated by Johann Severin Vater (1771-1826); and by Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780-1849), who traced the progress of the composition of the Pentateuch by the evidence of the historical and prophetic books, and in particular drew attention to the crucial significance of the law of the single sanctuary in Deut. 12:5ff. De Wette made contributions to New Testament scholarship also—in his *Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Neuen Testament* (1836-48) and his *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die kanonischen Bücher des Neuen Testaments* (1830).

He distinguished three theological strands in the New Testament: the Jewish-Christian (in the Synoptic Gospels, most of Acts, the letters of James, Peter and Jude, and the Apocalypse), the Alexandrian (in Hebrews and the Johannine Gospel and letters) and the Pauline. These represent three separate lines along which the message of Jesus was interpreted and developed.

The work of Karl Lachman (1793-1851) was wide-ranging: he made contributions of outstanding value to the study of classical and German philology as well as to that of the New Testament. His critical edition of the Greek Testament (first edition, 1831; second edition, 1842-50) aimed at reproducing the fourth-century text and was based exclusively on the evidence of the earliest manuscripts and versions then available. This work stands at the head of

the succession of four great critical editions of the nineteenth century, the other three being those of L. F. C. von Tischendorf (first edition, 1841; eighth edition, 1872), S. P. Tregelles (1857-72) and Westcott and Hort (1881). In literary criticism Lachmann is famous for his pioneer essay "De ordine narrationum in evangeliiis synopticiis" in *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 8 (1835), 570ff., which paved the way for the general acceptance of Mark's priority over the two other Synoptic Gospels and their dependence on Mark. Lachmann's New Testament investigations had been stimulated by Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who himself made an influential contribution to Gospel criticism in his essay "Über die Zeugnisse des Papias von unsern beiden ersten Evangelien" in *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 5 (1832), 735ff. Here he argued that the logia which, according to Papias, Matthew compiled in the "Hebrew" speech should be understood not of our first Gospel but of a collection of the sayings of Jesus.

## 2. SCHLEIERMACHER AND "LIVES OF JESUS"

Whereas many of the scholars of this period here mentioned were interested primarily, if not exclusively, in the historico-critical approach, Schleiermacher, as a philosopher and theologian, manifested a hermeneutical concern: granted that the historico-critical approach disclosed the intention of the biblical writers in the context of their day, what does their message mean to readers and hearers in the different context of today? The "lower criticism", by which the authentic text was more accurately es-

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established, and the "higher criticism", by which the endeavour was made to ascertain the truth about the structure, date and authorship of the biblical documents, were making contributions of high value to the study of Scripture, but could those contributions enrich the present understanding and application of the message of Scripture?

Schleiermacher's attempt to provide a positive answer to this question was unsuccessful because, for all his religious sensitivity, he could not free himself from a basic rationalism. In terms of his psychological appraisal of the gospel narrative, for example, he interpreted the resurrection of Jesus as his resuscitation after apparent death, and the supernatural features in the accounts of his appearances to the disciples as due to presuppositions on the part of the latter.

This basic rationalism in Schleiermacher's approach finds expression in his *Leben Jesu*, which was published posthumously in 1864 on the basis of lecture notes taken down by a student. But the rationalizing approach appears most fully developed in H. E. G. Paulus, *Das Leben Jesu als Grundlage einer reinen Geschichte des Urchristentums* (1828). Paulus, says Albert Schweitzer, "had an unconquerable distrust of anything that went outside the boundaries of logical thought";<sup>29</sup> he accepted the gospel story as a whole (setting it in the framework of John's narrative) but rationalized its details so as largely to evacuate them of theological significance and to reduce them to a pedestrian level. The miracles of raising the dead, like the resurrection of Jesus himself, were interpreted in terms of the reanimation of people who were only apparently dead; the superficial piercing of Jesus' side inadvertently performed the beneficial service of a phlebotomy.

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<sup>29</sup> A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, E.T. (London 1910), p. 48.

To this kind of interpretation the death-blow was administered by *Das Leben Jesu kritisch untersucht*, by David Friedrich Strauss. Volume I of the first edition appeared in May 1835; Volume II followed a few months later. A second, unchanged, edition was published before the end of 1836. The volume of criticism which the work called forth led Strauss to make some concessions to orthodoxy in the third edition (1838), but these were revoked in the fourth edition (1840)—the edition which was translated into English by George Eliot: *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1846). Strauss found it impossible to believe in a transcendent God intervening in the life of the world, and hence found it impossible to accept the gospel witness to Christ. What he provided was a carefully constructed replacement for the gospel story, based on a thorough-going typology of miracle and myth. The rationalistic interpretation of the narrative was thus displaced by a mythological interpretation.

It is perhaps inevitable that attempts to re-tell and interpret the life of Christ should reflect the author's personal philosophy or the climate of opinion which he has absorbed. The romanticism of Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus* (1863) and the orthodox reasonableness of F. W. Farrar's *Life of Christ* (1874) are among many similarly-named works which illustrate this. And if today we can look back and add our Amen to George Tyrrell's description of Adolf Harnack's Christ as "the reflection of a Liberal Protes-

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tant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well",<sup>30</sup> many of us may be too much involved in our contemporary way of thought to appreciate the equal anachronism of interpreting the gospel in the categories of twentieth-century existentialism. "Indeed", in T. W. Manson's words, "it may be said of all theological schools of thought: By their Lives of Jesus ye shall know them."<sup>31</sup>

### 3. THE MEYER COMMENTARY

One of the great exegetical achievements of the nineteenth century was the inauguration of the *Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament* by Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer (1800-73). The first two volumes of this work, comprising text and translation, appeared in 1829; the first volume of the commentary proper (on the Synoptic Gospels) followed in 1832. The Gospels, Acts and major Pauline epistles were handled by Meyer himself; the commentaries on the remaining books were entrusted to three other scholars, among whom F. Dürstler, author of the commentary on Revelation, is best known. The series was translated into English and published by T. and T. Clark (1873-95). The commentary was revised in successive editions during Meyer's lifetime, and has been kept up to date to the present day, as new commentators have replaced earlier ones. Among contemporary contributions to the series are those by R. Bultmann on the Gospel and Epistles of John, E. Haenchen on Acts, H. Conzelmann on 1 Corinthians and E. Lohse on Colossians and Philemon, all of which have been translated into English. Meyer was described by Philip Schaff as "the ablest grammatical exegete of the age",<sup>32</sup> he deliberately restricted his commentary to the grammatico-historical plane, regarding theological and hermeneutical problems as out of bounds to the pure exegete. More recent contributors to the series have not felt bound by the founder's limitations.

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<sup>30</sup> G. Tyrrell, *Christianity, at the Cross-Roads* (London 1913), p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> T. W. Manson, "The Failure of Liberalism to interpret the Bible as the Word of God", *The Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. C. W. Dugmore (London 1944), p. 92.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in T. and T. Clark's *Prospectus to the English translation of the Meyer Commentary* (Edinburgh 1873).

#### 4. EXEGESIS AT PRINCETON

There was in the middle years of the nineteenth century a resurgence of grammatico-historical exegesis in the Reformed tradition at Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey. The outstanding exegete on the faculty was Charles Hodge (1797-1878), who published excellent commentaries on four Pauline epistles—on *Romans* (1835), the best of the four, and to this day one of the most masterly expositions of that epistle, and on *Ephesians* (1856), *1 Corinthians* (1857) and *2 Corinthians* (1859). These works served as prolegomena to his great *Systematic Theology* (1871-73); such an exegetical preparation was (in the words of his son, A. A. Hodge) "more certain to result in a system in all its elements and proportions inspired and controlled by the word of God".<sup>33</sup> His colleague Joseph Addison Alexander (1809-60) was better known for his Old Testament exegesis, but he made two helpful contributions to New Testament study in his commentaries on

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*Acts* (1856) and *Mark* (1858). In the latter he showed his freedom from tradition by his treatment of Mark as an independent author, and not as a mere abbreviator of Matthew.

#### 5. THE TÜBINGEN SCHOOL

A major event in the history of New Testament interpretation was the publication in 1831 in the *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* of a long essay on the Christ party in the Corinthian church, by Ferdinand Christian Baur.<sup>34</sup> The study of Paul's correspondence convinced Baur that apostolic Christianity, far from being a unity, was marked by a deep cleavage between the church of Jerusalem and the Pauline mission. Whereas the church of Jerusalem, led by Peter and other original associates of Jesus, maintained a judaizing version of Christianity, Paul insisted that the gospel involved the abolition of Jewish legalism and particularism. In addition, the genuineness of Paul's apostleship was questioned by the partisans of Jerusalem, and attempts were made to undermine his authority in the eyes of his converts. There is evidence enough of the sharpness of the conflict between the two sides in the Galatian and Corinthian letters of Paul especially. So thoroughly did this conflict dominate the apostolic age that those New Testament documents which do not reflect it, but present instead a picture of harmony between Peter and Paul, between the Jerusalem church and the Gentile mission, betray by that very fact their post-apostolic perspective. Baur indeed, as he followed what appeared to him to be the logic of the situation, came to ascribe a second-century date not only to Acts, from which the conflict has disappeared, but to the Gospels also. If the Gospels were second-century documents, their value as historical sources for the life and teaching of Jesus was slender indeed, but if the evidence pointed to this conclusion, the conclusion had to be accepted. In the years which followed the publication of his 1831 essay Baur was increasingly influenced by Hegel's philosophy, which saw the historical process developing in a dialectical pattern of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. This pattern seemed to Baur to be exemplified by the course of early Christian history: the first-century thesis and antithesis of Jerusalem rigorism and Pauline

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<sup>33</sup> A. A. Hodge, Preface to revised edition of C. Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York 1886), p. iv.

<sup>34</sup> This essay, "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde", has been reissued in F.C. Baur, *Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, ed. K. Scholder (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1963), i (*Historisch-kritische Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*), pp. 1ff. E. Käsemann's introduction to Vol. I is worthy of special attention.

proclamation of freedom from law being followed by the second-century synthesis in which these two were reconciled by compromise. But it must be borne in mind that the initial impetus to Baur's interpretation of early Christian history came from his New Testament exegesis, not from Hegelianism. (Nor should it be overlooked that the historical process frequently does exhibit the features of Hegel's dialectic, although it is never permissible to impose that dialectic on a historical sequence which does not correspond to it without distortion.) It is illicit, then, to dismiss Baur's reconstruction of the New Testament record (or, for that matter, Wellhausen's reconstruction of the Old Testament record)<sup>35</sup> on the plea of Hegelian influence. Baur, in fact, drew attention to a crucial factor of apostolic history which had received insufficient attention from his predecessors, and he did so to such good effect

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as to leave a permanent mark on the subsequent course of New Testament interpretation.

Like other pioneers, however, he stated the problems more convincingly than he proposed solutions to them. His second-century dating of the Gospels, for example, could not be maintained: the establishment of their first-century dating as against Baur's arguments was one of the achievements of the Cambridge school. "It might not be too inaccurate", says C. K. Barrett, "to say that Baur asked the right questions, and that Lightfoot set them in the right historical perspective."<sup>36</sup> Even the latest of the four Gospels cannot be dated after the beginning of the second century. But to say that is to say that the synthesis which Baur dated in the second century was already accomplished, or on the way to accomplishment, in the first: it was taking shape simultaneously with the thesis and antithesis. The task of the New Testament interpreter proved to be more complicated than Baur imagined—not only in the problems of the chronological development of the controversies but in their complexity and diversity. Paul had to contend with more than one kind of judaizing activity in his churches, and he had to contend at the same time with more than one variety of incipient Gnosticism. Not only so: at least one of these varieties of incipient Gnosticism was marked by prominent judaizing features. And these were only some of the human tensions within the primitive Christian church. In Baur's day it was a sufficiently radical advance to recognize that such tensions existed at all; since his recognition that this was so, a good part of New Testament interpretation has had to do with the interplay of these tensions and subsequent *détentes*.

## 6. "ESSAYS AND REVIEWS"

A great and (to many people) disturbing impression was made in England by Benjamin Jowett's essay of 104 pages "On the Interpretation of Scripture" contributed to the symposium *Essays and Reviews* (1860). Much of the essay is devoted to a plea for the use of those principles of interpretation in Bible study which are applicable to the study of other literature, and for the discontinuance of artificial methods which would not be countenanced in the study of (say) the Greek classics. Although certain aspects of his own argument are as dated as some which he criticized in others, we today should take for granted his protest against forcing Scripture to conform to post-biblical formulations of orthodox doctrine, even when these were adopted by the church as a whole—not to speak of forcing it to conform to sectarian traditions and

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. L. Peritt, *Vatke and Wellhausen* (Berlin 1965), the first part of which studies the course of the philosophy of history in the later eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries.

<sup>36</sup> C. K. Barrett, "Joseph Barber Lightfoot", *The Durham University Journal* 64 (19712), p. 203.

preferences. At least, most of us today would take it for granted—but what is to be said when the quite correct rendering “priestly service” in Rom. 15:16, NEB, is denounced by a Protestant critic because (in his eyes) it may seem to support Roman sacerdotalism? As long as Paul is interpreted as saying not what his words plainly mean but what the interpreter would like them to mean, so long is Jowett’s protest necessary. In reference to burning controversies of his day he says:

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Consider, for example, the extraordinary and unreasonable importance attached to single words, sometimes of doubtful meaning, in reference to any of the following subjects:- 1, Divorce; 2, Marriage with a Wife’s Sister; 3, Inspiration; 4, the Personality of the Holy Spirit; 5, Infant Baptism; 6, Episcopacy; 7, Divine Right of Kings; 8, Original Sin.... It is with Scripture as with oratory, its effect partly depends on the preparation in the mind or in circumstances for the reception of it. There is no use of Scripture, no quotation or misquotation of a word which is not a power in the world, when it embodies the spirit of a great movement or is echoed by the voice of a large party.<sup>37</sup>

Some of the issues listed by Jowett have fallen by the wayside and others have taken their place, but the temptation to decide in advance what Scripture must mean, and compel its words to yield that meaning, has not disappeared entirely. Yet there would be general assent to Jowett’s dictum: “Doubt comes in at the window, when Inquiry is denied at the door.”<sup>38</sup> There would, indeed, be general recognition of the fact that to approach the New Testament in a spirit of inquiry is not to take an unwarranted liberty with a sacred book, since the New Testament itself invites a spirit of inquiry. “*Interpret the Scripture like any other book*,” urged Jowett; the many respects in which Scripture is unlike any other book “will appear in the results of such an interpretation.”<sup>39</sup>

Jowett’s scholarship was broad rather than exact, and the sentence which has just been quoted, while appearing to some as a glimpse of the obvious, had disturbing implications for others—and not only for obscurantists. Brooke Foss Westcott, for example, could not approve of Jowett’s ideas of what was involved in interpreting either Scripture or any other work of comparable seriousness: the minute attention to individual words (not least to particles) which for Westcott was essential to the practice of scholarly exegesis was dismissed by Jowett as a wasting of time on what might be little more than “an excrescence of style”.<sup>40</sup>

## 7. THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL

Westcott (1825-1901) was one of the three leaders of the Cambridge school, to which reference has already been made. The other two were Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828-92) and Joseph Barber Lightfoot (1828-89). Westcott and Hort are best known for their critical edition of the *Greek New Testament* (1881), but all three made pioneer contributions of distinction to the study of the history and literature of the apostolic age and the early church. We have mentioned their establishment of the first-century dating of the Gospels: this was done pre-eminently by Westcott in his *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels* (1851) and more especially his *General*

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<sup>37</sup> *Essays and Reviews*, by F. Temple and others (London 1861<sup>4</sup>), pp. 358f.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 373.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 377.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 391.

*Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament* (1855), and by Lightfoot in his *Essays on the Work entitled "Supernatural Religion"* (published serially, 1874-77; one-volume edition, 1889). The last-named work not only exposed the incompetence of a writer who had impugned Westcott's integrity in his work on the canon but carried the positive

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argument substantially forward. Paradoxical as it may seem to say so, Lightfoot's chief contribution to the chronology of the New Testament literature was his encyclopaedic work on *The Apostolic Fathers* (1869-85), in which he validated the traditional dating of the genuine works of Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna in the closing years of the first Christian century and earlier years of the second.

In 1860 the three scholars planned to write a series of commentaries covering the whole New Testament: Lightfoot was to deal with the Pauline Epistles, Hort with the Synoptic Gospels and the Epistles of James, Peter and Jude, and Westcott with the Johannine literature and Hebrews. Lightfoot completed magisterial commentaries on *Galatians* (1865), *Philippians* (1868) and *Colossians and Philemon* (1875); a volume of his *Notes* on some of the other Pauline Epistles was published posthumously (1895). Hort left only fragments of his assignment: uncompleted commentaries on *1 Peter* (1898), *The Apocalypse* (1908), and *James* (1909) were published after his death. Westcott's great commentary on *The Gospel of John* appeared as a volume in the Speaker's Commentary series in 1880 (based on AV); a posthumous adaptation of the commentary to the Greek text appeared in 1908. His commentary on *The Epistles of John* appeared in 1883, that on *Hebrews* in 1889, while an incomplete work on *Ephesians* was edited after his death by J. M. Schulhof and published in 1906.

The members of the Cambridge trio were sufficiently different in outlook and temperament to impose limitations on any attempt to make a composite appraisal of their work: yet it can readily be said that all of them were characterized by a wide, deep and exact scholarship which refused to take short cuts or to cut corners. Their linguistic equipment was complete and detailed; for the rest, Lightfoot's strength lay in the historical interpretation of the documents which he handled, while Westcott was gifted with a rare theological insight, which served him particularly well in his exposition of the thought of the Fourth Gospel. The fact that his commentary on John (the 1880 edition) was reissued by a British publisher so recently as 1958 is eloquent. As for Lightfoot, when one compares his dissertation on the Essenes at the end of his commentary on Colossians and Philemon (1875), first with much else that was written about them in the nineteenth century and then with the new knowledge available in this century since the discovery of the Qumran manuscripts in 1947 and the following years, one can but marvel at the acuteness of his reading of the evidence then available; what he wrote can be amplified today, but there is little if anything which needs to be dismissed as obsolete.

Their pioneer work was taken up by two generations of *epigoni* who, if they did not attain to the first three, nevertheless produced commentaries not unworthy to stand alongside theirs: H. B. Swete on *Mark* (1898) and *Revelation* (1906); J. B. Mayor on *James* (1892) and on *Jude and 2 Peter* (1907), J. A. Robinson on *Ephesians* (1904), G. Milligan on *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (1908) and, another generation further on, E. G. Selwyn on *1 Peter* (1946) and V. Taylor on *Mark* (1952). These volumes were published

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by Macmillan, as companions to those of the Cambridge trio, all of which (apart from Westcott on the Gospel of John) were published by that house.

## V. *The Twentieth Century*

### 1. THOROUGH-GOING ESCHATOLOGY

With the advent of the twentieth century the centre of gravity in New Testament studies was decisively established in the Gospel tradition. William Wrede's *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (1901)—not to appear in an English dress until 1972<sup>41</sup>—inaugurated the century's work in this field. According to Wrede's thesis, Jesus' injunction to silence when he is acknowledged to be the Messiah (Mark 8:30) or Son of God (Mark 3:12; cf. 1:25, 34) is not historical truth but a device by which the gospel tradition (first given literary form by Mark) attempted to reconcile the church's belief that Jesus was Messiah and Son of God from the beginning with the fact that this belief did not emerge until after the resurrection. Jesus was indeed Messiah and Son of God all along, so runs the explanation, but he kept it dark. Thus, when three of his disciples heard him acclaimed on the mount of transfiguration as the Father's dear Son, "he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of man should have risen from the dead" (Mark 9:9). But in Wrede's account the transfiguration, like Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:29), was originally related as a resurrection incident and was artificially transposed back into the setting of the Galilean ministry.

Wrede's work entitles him to be recognized as the father of Gospel redaction criticism—that approach to the Gospels which makes due acknowledgment of the aim and contribution of each evangelist in his own right. In his hands Mark emerges as a theologian with his personal interpretation of the Gospel tradition. For all the defects in the working out of his thesis, he stands out in this regard as a scholar well ahead of his time.

Wrede's study provided Albert Schweitzer with the terminus for his survey of nineteenth-century Lives of Jesus: *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (1906; E.T. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1910). This epoch-making work reviewed the Gospel research of more than a hundred years and found all attempts to come to terms with the historical Jesus unsuccessful—the rationalist, mythical and liberal interpretations alike. The material for constructing an adequate Life of Jesus, especially the material for tracing his psychological development, was simply not available. Instead of unconsciously depicting Jesus in categories familiar at the beginning of the twentieth century, Schweitzer concentrated on the note of impending world-crisis in the Gospels and presented Jesus as an apocalyptic visionary, who at the end exposed himself to arrest and execution in order that his death might precipitate the kingdom of God and the end of history which he had announced but which had proved unexpectedly slow in arriving. In this

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exposition Schweitzer developed along lines of his own the thought of Johannes Weiss, who in a slim volume entitled *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (1892) had argued that in Jesus' view the kingdom which he announced could be established by the cataclysmic act of God only when the guilt of the people, which blocked its advent, was removed—a removal to be effected

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<sup>41</sup> *The Messianic Secret*, tr. J. C. G. Greig (London: James Clarke).

by Jesus' death as "a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). The choice, as Schweitzer saw it, lay between the thorough-going scepticism implied by Wrede and the thorough-going eschatology to which Weiss had pointed the way—and for Schweitzer it was thorough-going eschatology that pointed the way forward.

Schweitzer's reinterpretation of the story of Jesus necessitated a fresh look at the sequel to that story—in particular at Paul. His *Geschichte der paulinischen Forschung* (1911; E.T. *Paul and his Interpreters*, 1912) was a continuation of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* and reached as negative a conclusion about Pauline research as its predecessor had reached about Lives of Jesus; it was followed by his own positive account in *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (1930; E.T. *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, 1931). Paul, according to Schweitzer, shared Jesus' eschatological world-view, the only difference between them in this regard arising from the passage of time: "both are looking towards the same mountain range, but whereas Jesus sees it as lying before Him, Paul already stands upon it and its first slopes are already behind him".<sup>42</sup> While the world had not come to an end with the death and resurrection of Jesus, yet (Paul taught) the eschatological blessings secured thereby were enjoyed in anticipation by believers through their present "mystical" union with Christ mediated by the Spirit through the sacraments.

## 2. REALIZED AND PRESENT ESCHATOLOGY

Rudolf Otto, in his *Reich Gottes und Menschensohn* (1934; E.T. *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man*, 1938), saw that the kingdom of God announced by Jesus was not entirely future from the perspective of his ministry; in Jesus' teaching it had begun to break in: "from its futurity it already extends its operation into the present".<sup>43</sup> Otto laid stress on some of the parables of Mark 4 (especially the parable of the four soils and the parable of the seed growing secretly) as embodying Jesus' emphasis on the present in-breaking of the kingdom.

This insight was shared, and carried to (and even beyond) its logical conclusion by C. H. Dodd. Indications of the direction in which Dodd's mind was moving on this question were given in papers published in 1927 and 1930,<sup>44</sup> but his *Parables of the Kingdom* (1935) was a full-scale exposition of "realized eschatology"<sup>45</sup>—of the view that the Kingdom of God arrived with the commencement of Jesus' public ministry, any future reference of the kingdom being reduced to vanishing point. The ministry was, in Jesus' eyes, the crisis of world history. Since Jesus' inaugural proclamation was (as Dodd understood it) "the kingdom of God has come", it was impermissible

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"to represent the death of Jesus as in any sense the condition precedent to the coming of the Kingdom of God".<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, E.T. (London 1931), p. 113.

<sup>43</sup> *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man*, E.T. (London 1943), p. 59.

<sup>44</sup> "Das innerweltliche Reich Gottes in der Verkündigung Jesu", *Theologische Blätter* 6 (1927), pp. 120ff.; E.T. "The This-Worldly Kingdom of God in our Lord's Teaching", *Theology* 17 (1928), pp. 258ff.; and "Jesus as Teacher and Prophet" in *Mysterium Christi*, ed. G. K. A. Bell and A. Deissmann (London 1930), pp. 53ff.

<sup>45</sup> *Parables of the Kingdom* (London 1935), p. 198.

<sup>46</sup> *Parables of the Kingdom*, p. 75.

Such an extreme statement of realized eschatology was criticized for destroying "the cruciality of the cross";<sup>47</sup> but Dodd soon modified his position. "The Kingdom of God", he put it in a book published a year later, "is conceived as coming in the events of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and to proclaim these facts, in their proper setting, is to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God."<sup>48</sup> Later still he spoke of "realized eschatology" as a "not altogether felicitous term"<sup>49</sup> and expressed a preference for Joachim Jeremias's *sich realisierende Eschatologie* (translated by S. H. Hooke as "an eschatology that is in process of realization").<sup>50</sup> (Jeremias acknowledged himself to be indebted for the phrase to Ernst Haenchen.)<sup>51</sup>

This "realized eschatology" perspective was preserved in some New Testament writings—notably in the later Pauline letters and in the Fourth Gospel—but in most the old futurist eschatology of Judaism reasserted itself, especially because of the postponement of a parousia which did not take place as the immediate sequel to the resurrection of Jesus.

The solid contribution of Dodd's "realized eschatology" to New Testament exegesis has been its emphasis on the ministry of Jesus, not apart from but crowned by the saving event of his accomplished passion and triumph, as the climax of salvation-history. More recently Oscar Cullmann has used in this connexion the analogy of the decisive battle of a campaign in relation to the victory celebrations after the campaign is over. The saving act of God in Christ is the decisive battle; the achievement of the hope of glory at the parousia corresponds to the victory celebrations, but it is the decisive battle that is of crucial importance.<sup>52</sup>

To talk of eschatology as having been in any sense "realized" is to use the term (which traditionally means "the doctrine of the last things") in an extended sense, which might perhaps be justified on the ground that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies regarding what would take place "in the last (or latter) days"—a phrase which need not mean much more than "hereafter". But an even greater extension of sense is involved in the use of the term by Rudolf Bultmann and his school of existential exegesis: here every present moment is an "eschatological" moment, in the sense that the answers and questions of the past meet one in the present and evoke the reaction of responsible choice which goes to make that new thing, the future. Bultmann's Gifford Lectures, *History and Eschatology* (1957), provide a good statement of this interpretation.

### 3. HISTORY OF RELIGION SCHOOL

The "history of religion" (*religionsgeschichtlich*) approach to the New Testament, which endeavoured to set the religious presuppositions of primitive Christianity in their contemporary Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman context, promised at one time to provide powerful help

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towards its interpretation. Among the most influential works of this school were Richard Reitzenstein's *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* (1910) and, outstandingly, his *Das*

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<sup>47</sup> R. H. Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus* (London 1954), p. 49.

<sup>48</sup> *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London 1936), pp. 46f.

<sup>49</sup> *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge 1953), p. 447, n. 1.

<sup>50</sup> J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, E.T. (London 1954), p. 159.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, E.T. (London 1951), pp. 139ff.

*iranische Erlösungsmysterium* (1921). The Iranian redemption mystery of the latter work concerned the heavenly being Gayomart, primal man, who falls in battle against the power of evil and from whom, after his death, the human race springs up. When, at the end of time, Saosyant (the "Saviour") comes to raise the dead, Gayomart will be raised first and exalted to archangelic status. This "mystery" is not given literary expression until the seventh century A.D., and even in its oral form it cannot well antedate the Sassanian era (A.D. 226). It probably influenced Mandaism and later forms of Gnosticism, but it is anachronistic to see its impact in the New Testament or earlier Gnosticism.<sup>53</sup>

In its simplest form the Gnostic myth tells of a heavenly essence which falls from the upper world of light into the lower world of material darkness and is imprisoned in a multitude of earthly bodies. To liberate this pure essence from its imprisonment a saviour comes from the world of light to impart the true knowledge (*gnōsis*); he is both redeemer and revealer. By acceptance of the revealed knowledge the pure essence is released from the bondage of matter and ascends back to its original abode of light. This myth, especially in its Mandaic elaboration, has been urged as the background of the New Testament teaching (particularly, but not exclusively, in the Fourth Gospel)<sup>54</sup> about the Son of Man who came from heaven to earth to liberate men, not from matter but from sin and death, and who by descending into the grave himself set its captives free. Despite the powerful advocacy of Rudolf Bultmann and some members of his school, however, this account of the matter probably reverses the historical order: it may well be that primal man and the redeemer-revealer were first brought together in Gnosticism under the influence of the gospel story. It is certainly difficult to find convincing evidence of the typical Gnostic myth in a pre-Christian form.

But, quite apart from Iranian and Gnostic influences, there was a tendency to classify Christianity—especially the Gentile Christianity which triumphed—among the mystery religions of the Eastern Mediterranean world. This tendency often appeared at a popular level, among people who had been impressed by works like Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915), without being able to draw the correct inferences from that incomparable repository of facts; but we find it also in scholarly expositions. Kirsopp Lake's *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul* (1911) is a great work which may be read with much profit over sixty years after its first appearance; but his viewpoint on the New Testament sacraments is expressed in his observation that

much of the controversy between Catholic and Protestant theologians has found its centre in the doctrine of the Eucharist, and the latter have appealed to primitive Christianity to support their views. From their point of view the appeal fails: the Catholic doctrine is much more nearly primitive than the Protestant. But the Catholic advocate in winning his case has proved still more: the type of

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<sup>53</sup> See E. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism* (London 1973).

<sup>54</sup> See R. Bultmann, "Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandäischen and manichäischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums", *ZNW* 24 (1925), pp. 100ff.; *The Gospel of John*, E.T. (Oxford 1971), pp. 7ff. *et passim*.

doctrine which he defends is not only primitive, but pre-Christian. Or, to put the matter in the terms of another controversy, Christianity has not borrowed from the Mystery Religions, because it was always, at least in Europe, a Mystery Religion itself.<sup>55</sup>

The concession "at least in Europe" reminds us that, as is plain from 1 Corinthians, Paul's teaching about baptism and the Lord's Supper was readily interpreted by his Greek converts in terms of the traditional mystery cults. But Lake went farther: Paul, in his eyes, went along with his converts' interpretation so far as to use it as the foundation of his arguments.

New perspectives on Paul have redressed this imbalance. In particular, J. G. Machen provided a judicious assessment on the basis of the evidence in *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (1921), and W. D. Davies, in *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1948), showed how deep and pervasive were Paul's affinities with Pharisaic thought and teaching and provided corroboration of the statement in Acts 22:3 that he received his basic training in the school of Gamaliel.

#### 4. ACTS AND INCIPIENT CATHOLICISM

A major enterprise was launched in 1920 with the first volume of an encyclopaedic work entitled *The Beginnings of Christianity*. The editors (F.J., Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake) assumed that the synoptic problem had found its "general solution" and saw their next task as being "to translate these results into the language of the historian; to show how literary complexities and contradictions reveal the growth of thought and the rise of institutions". In particular, it was necessary to trace in detail the process by which first-century Christianity "achieved a synthesis between the Greco-Oriental and the Jewish religions in the Roman Empire".<sup>56</sup> The first step in the accomplishment of this task was a thorough study of Acts, and to this study they devoted Part I of the enterprise, which ran to five volumes (1920-33). But the enterprise never got beyond Part I. From our viewpoint we can see Part I as a monument marking the end of an era of *Actaforschung*—an era to which giants such as Adolf Harnack and W. M. Ramsay had made outstanding contributions<sup>57</sup>—rather than the beginning of a new one.

The new era was marked by the essays of Martin Dibelius (collected in *Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte*, 1951; E.T. *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, 1956), by Hans Conzelmann's *Die Mitte der Zeit* (1954; E.T. *The Theology of St. Luke*, 1960) and by Ernst Haenchen's Meyer commentary, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (1956; E.T. *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1971). No longer did archaeology or the history of religion occupy a central place in the study of Acts. In Dibelius's hands stylistic criticism was the key to the interpretation of the book, while in Conzelmann's eyes the author's new time-perspective (in which the "age of Jesus", for his first followers the time of the end, was now followed by the "age of the church", of indefinite duration) was a sure sign of post-apostolic "incipient catholicism" (*Frühkatholizismus*).

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<sup>55</sup> K. Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of Paul* (London 1911), p. 215.

<sup>56</sup> F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Part I, vol. i (London 1920), p. vii.

<sup>57</sup> A. Harnack, *Luke the Physician*, E.T. (London 1907); *The Acts of the Apostles*, E.T. (London 1909); *Date of the Acts and of the Synoptic Gospels*, E.T. (London 1911); *Ist die Rede des Paulus in Athen ein ursprünglicher Bestandteil der Apostelgeschichte?* (Leipzig 1913); W. M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (London 1890); *The Church in the Roman Empire* (London 1895 ); *Luke the Physician and Other Studies ...* (London 1908); *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (London 1920'4 ); cf. W. W. Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles*, (Tübingen 1975; Grand Rapids 1975).

Incipient catholicism, in fact, becomes a criterion of post-apostolic date and authorship. It involves not only the resolution of earlier tensions in a new and comprehensive unity (in which, for example, Paul and James reach happy agreement on the terms of the inclusion of Gentiles in the church), but the shift of emphasis from the local church to the church universal, the replacement of the charismatic by an institutional ministry, the recession of the hope of glory at an early parousia in favour of dependence on the present means of grace dispensed through the church and its ministry, and the adoption of a codified confession of faith. Among Lutheran theologians on the continent of Europe there is a tendency to regard such incipient catholicism as a sad declension from the apostolic—especially the Pauline—gospel; those documents in which its features are found, such as Acts, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles, are felt to be not only post-apostolic in date but sub-apostolic in standard. In fact, Hans Küng could complain with some justice that Ernst Kasemann and others were in effect establishing a reduced canon within the received canon by relegating to an inferior status anything that savoured of "early catholic decadence".<sup>58</sup> When Heinrich Schlier, a distinguished member of the Bultmann school, became convinced that the incipient catholicism which he had pointed out pre-eminently in Ephesians (e.g., in *Christus and die Kirche im Epheserbrief*, 1930) was part and parcel of apostolic Christianity he not only moved over from the Lutheran confession to the Roman obedience but even, without changing his exegesis of Ephesians, found it possible to recognize it as an authentic Pauline epistle (*Der Brief an die Epheser*, 1957, 1965<sup>5</sup>).<sup>59</sup>

## 5. THE NEW HERMENEUTIC

The "new hermeneutic" represents a modern endeavour to make the message of the New Testament intelligible and relevant to contemporary man. It is closely related to Rudolf Bultmann's constant affirmation that this message is concerned with human existence, and that it is with human existence that contemporary man is essentially concerned.<sup>60</sup> If, then, he approaches the New Testament with the question of human existence uppermost in his mind, he will find the answer in the New Testament—provided all non-essential stumbling-blocks have been removed from the New Testament by application of the demythologizing programme.<sup>61</sup>

It is not a detached and objective approach to the New Testament that is implied here, such as would be suitable for the study of geometry or astronomy. Where human existence is involved, such objectivity is neither desirable nor attainable. Bultmann is indebted to Martin Heidegger not only for his existential emphasis but also for his view of the nature of knowledge and understanding. For Heidegger there is no clear-cut line of demarcation between the knowing subject and the known object: subject and object must be mutually engaged if the knowing

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<sup>58</sup> H. Küng, *The Structures of the Church*, E.T. (London 1965), pp. 142ff.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. E. Käsemann, "Das Interpretationsproblem des Epheserbriefs", TLZ 86 (1961), pp. 1ff. (a review article on Schlier's commentary, which had originally been designed for the Meyer series).

<sup>60</sup> R. Bultmann, "Das Problem der Hermeneutik", in *Glauben and Verstehen ii* (Tübingen 1952), pp. 211ff.; E.T. "The Problem of Hermeneutics" in *Essays Philosophical and Theological*, tr. J. C. G. Greig (London 1955), pp. 234ff.

<sup>61</sup> R. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology"; E.T. in *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. and tr. R. H. Fuller (London 1953), pp. 1ff.; cf. *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, E.T. (London 1960).

process is to start at all. Similarly Bultmann insists that there can be no such thing as "presuppositionless" exegesis:<sup>62</sup> the interpreter, whether he realizes it or not, brings his presup-

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positions to the text; he comes to it with his own questions, and the answers he gets are determined in part by the questions which he puts. This situation underlies the idea of the "hermeneutical circle" in which the interpretative process is seen as flowing from subject to object, or indeed from object to subject, and back again, as the one interacts with the other.<sup>63</sup> The Bible is not like an Ugaritic text which the Semitist is deciphering for the first time. The Semitist does indeed come to the Ugaritic text with a question which interests him: "What is this text, or this writer, trying to say in relation to the Near Eastern situation of the fourteenth century B.C.?" But this is not an existential question like that which the Bible reader is envisaged as bringing to *his* text: "What is this text saying to me in my situation here and now?" Such a question (a question the importance of which was appreciated by Schleiermacher in his day) already involves a large presupposition—that the New Testament text which I am studying is related not only to the circumstances for which it was originally written but to the modern reader in his circumstances today. Both Bultmann and his followers assure the modern reader that the New Testament, in helping him to understand his own existence, in fact transforms his existence and imparts "authenticity" to it, liberating him from his bondage to the past and enabling him to be "open" towards the future.

One can see the analogy between this account of the matter and the New Testament teaching about justification by faith; one can agree that in the experience of many the analogy may amount to identity. But for this to be so the message of authentic existence should be as vitally related to the person and work of Christ as is the New Testament teaching on justification by faith. Moreover, for those who are not familiar with the vocabulary of existentialism, talk about inauthentic and authentic existence is not more intelligible than the Pauline vocabulary of sin and grace, law and liberty, retribution and acceptance, estrangement and reconciliation. In so far, indeed, as Paul's vocabulary is cast in terms of personal relationships, it may well speak to late twentieth-century man in an idiom with which he finds himself more at home than with that of existential exegesis.

The new hermeneutic takes up where Bultmann leaves off, and marks a substantial advance on his position. His disciple Ernst Fuchs has played a notable part in this: for him, the text of Scripture is properly interpreted when the word of God is proclaimed. Then the language of Scripture awakens faith; it ceases to be mere language and becomes a "language occurrence" (*Sprachereignis*).<sup>64</sup> A similar insight is expressed by Gerhard Ebeling when he speaks of a "word event" (*Wortgeschehen*).<sup>65</sup> God's saving word, that is to say, comes into effective action here and now, bringing to expression in the hearer faith such as found expression in Jesus.

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<sup>62</sup> R. Bultmann, "Ist voraussetzungslose Exegete möglich?" in *Glauben and Verstehen* iii (Tübingen 1960), pp. 142ff.; E.T. "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" in *Existence and Faith*, ed. and tr. S. M. Ogden (London 1961, 1964), pp. 342-351.

<sup>63</sup> M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, E.T. (Oxford 1959), pp. 146ff.; E. Fuchs, *Marburger Hermeneutik* (Tübingen 1968), pp. 79ff.

<sup>64</sup> E. Fuchs, *Studies of the Historical Jesus*, E.T. (London 1964), pp. 207ff.

<sup>65</sup> G. Ebeling, *The Nature of Faith*, E.T. (London, 1966), pp. 182ff.; cf. his *Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language*, E.T. (London 1973).

The parables of Jesus in particular have received illuminating exposition in terms of this new insight; it is in them, according to Fuchs, that the "most significant expression" of the message of God appears, for in them Jesus enters the world of his hearers' experience and establishes a common understanding with them.<sup>66</sup> Two pupils of Fuchs have carried forward this

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aspect of his thought: Eta Linnemann, who in her *Gleichnisse Jesu* (1961; E.T. *Parables of Jesus*, 1966) emphasizes the rôle of the hearer in the situations in which the parables were told, and Eberhard Jüngel, who in his *Paulus and Jesus* (1962) propounds the thesis that the parables convey the same message as Paul does in his teaching about justification by faith.

It may be asked if the new hermeneutic, for all its advance on Bultmann, succeeds in doing justice to the whole New Testament message—for example, to the emphasis on God's unfolding purpose in salvation-history or on the role of Jesus as the fulfiller of the past and the Amen to the promises that went before. It may be suggested, too, that it remains more relevant to the believing individual (albeit in his entering into a fellowship of love with his neighbour) than to the believing community, not to speak of the reconciled universe of the future. But if the new hermeneutic is viewed not as the way of interpreting scripture but as one useful way among others (including the classical historico-critical methods), then it can yield results of positive value.

## 6. GOSPEL CRITICISM

The twentieth century has seen little advance in the source criticism of the Synoptic Gospels. It is still the general view that Mark was a principal source of Matthew and Luke, who also were able to draw upon a collection of sayings of Jesus set in a minimum of narrative framework—the collection commonly designated Q. This two-source hypothesis has been elaborated, e.g. by B. H. Streeter, who propounded a four-source hypothesis in *The Four Gospels* (1924) and by Wilhelm Bussmann who, in *Synoptische Studien ii* (1929), distinguished two sources in the Q material—one written in Greek and the other in Aramaic. Attempts to revive the belief in the priority of Matthew over Mark raise more difficulties than they solve.<sup>67</sup>

Where the Fourth Gospel is concerned, there is a strong tendency to detach its testimony from the Synoptic tradition. Rudolf Bultmann, in *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (1941; E.T. *The Gospel of John*, 1971), distinguishes two main sources—one consisting of revelatory discourses (*Redenquelle*) and the other a book of "signs" (*Semeiaquelle*)—together with a good deal of redactional material. P. Gardner-Smith, in *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (1938), argued for John's independence of the Synoptic Gospels; this case was persuasively developed by C. H. Dodd in *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (1953) and especially in his *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (1964). If the historical tradition of this Gospel is an independent witness for the events of Jesus' ministry, the implications are far-reaching, and special importance attaches to those points at which the Markan and Johannine traditions coincide.

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<sup>66</sup> E. Fuchs, *Studies of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 125f.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. B. C. Butler, *The Originality of St. Matthew* (Cambridge 1950); W. R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem* (New York 1964).

There is a general impression that the determination of written sources has gone as far as the evidence permits, and where it is inconclusive other forms of criticism have been invoked to carry us farther back.

Tradition criticism presses the quest for sources back beyond such

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written sources as may be discerned. Where there is reason to believe that a period of oral transmission preceded the first writing down (as is most probable where the gospel story is concerned), it endeavours to trace the course of this transmission. Whereas in many areas where tradition criticism is most fruitfully employed the period of oral transmission covered many generations or even centuries, its usefulness in New Testament interpretation is limited by the brevity of this period, extending over a few decades at most.

Form criticism is one of the most serviceable tools for reconstructing the pre-literary tradition. It classifies the material according to the various "forms" represented in its contents and examines these in order to discover how they were handed down and what their successive life-settings were until they took their present shape and position. H. Gunkel, E. Sievers and S. Mowinckel had applied form-critical methods to various parts of the Old Testament; E. Norden had applied them to classical and Hellenistic subjects—notably in his *Agnostos Theos* (1913)—and Allan Menzies of St. Andrews had applied them to Mark's record, without using the explicit terminology of form criticism, in *The Earliest Gospel* (1901). His work must be borne in mind when Martin Dibelius's *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (1919),<sup>68</sup> K. L. Schmidt's *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu* (1919) and Rudolf Bultmann's *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (1921)<sup>69</sup> are hailed as the pioneer essays in this field.

With the aid of tradition criticism and form criticism the exegete's task is undertaken in three stages as he works back from (a) interpretation of our canonical Gospels and their written sources through (b) interpretation of the tradition lying behind these to (c) the reconstruction of the preaching about Jesus or of the preaching of Jesus himself.<sup>70</sup>

An over-concentration on tradition and form criticism, however, like an over-concentration on source criticism, can easily obscure the important work of the evangelists themselves. Just as a study of Shakespeare's sources and other traditional antecedents would never be allowed to replace the study of Shakespeare in his own right, so the critical methods just mentioned should never replace the study of the Gospels as finished products. Granted that the evangelists delivered what they themselves had received by tradition and otherwise, how did they, as individual authors, use the material which they received? What particular interests led to their arranging that material as they did?

Wrede, as has been said, took these questions seriously as he tackled the problem of the messianic secret, and Menzies, for all his interest in the state of the pre-Markan tradition, gave careful consideration to Mark's "lively" treatment of his materials.<sup>71</sup> In more recent years the

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<sup>68</sup> E.T. *From Tradition to Gospel* (London 1934). The third German edition (1959) was edited by G. Bornkamm and supplied with an appendix by G. Iber.

<sup>69</sup> E.T. *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford 1963), based on the third German edition (1958).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. H. Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, E.T. (London 1969), p. 98.

<sup>71</sup> A. Menzies, *The Earliest Gospel* (London 1901), p. 33.

study of the intention of the several evangelists has received the designation "redaction criticism". The rise and progress of redaction criticism has been recorded by Joachim Rohde in *Die redaktionsgeschichtliche Methode* (1966; E.T. *Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists*, 1968). Important German studies in redaction criticism are Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit* (1954; E.T. *The*

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*Theology of St. Luke*, 1960), Willi Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus* (1959; E.T. *Mark the Evangelist*, 1969) and G. Bornkamm, G. Barth and H. J. Held, *Überlieferung and Auslegung im Matthäusevangelium* (1960; E.T. *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, 1963). Due mention should be made of a series currently being published by the Paternoster Press, Exeter, the contributors to which are also contributors to the present symposium: 1. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (1970), R. P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (1972), have already appeared, and a companion volume is in preparation by G. N. Stanton on Matthew and S. S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter* (1978),

## 7. THE NEW QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

The main purpose of Gospel criticism, as of New Testament interpretation, must be a closer acquaintance with Jesus, and with the historical Jesus at that. The significance of the exalted Christ lies in his identity with the crucified Jesus.

The title of a study by J. M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1959), is plainly meant to echo the title of Albert Schweitzer's great work, but it is also meant to imply that today's quest is different in character as well as later in time than the "old quest". The new quest marks a reaction from the extremely negative assessment of the importance of history to the gospel found in Rudolf Bultmann's work. This negative assessment has been undergirded with an apostolic text in Paul's words about no longer knowing Christ "after the flesh" (2 Cor. 5:16), but in those words Paul is not concerned with the historical Jesus. In Bultmann's eyes, any appeal to history is precarious, for it is liable at any moment to be overthrown by further historical research or discovery; it is also illegitimate, being as much a denial of the gospel of justification by faith as is any other form of justification by works. But a Jesus whose identity and significance can be neither proved nor disproved by history is an insubstantial basis of faith, and some of Bultmann's colleagues have asked why he adheres so tenaciously and, as they see it, so illogically to the historical Jesus—Jesus the crucified—when, on his premises, some other figure or phenomenon might equally well present the challenge and elicit the response of that liberating decision which leads into authentic existence. Jesus, on this showing, is little more than the unknown x which triggers off this spiritual release.<sup>72</sup>

Some of Bultmann's most distinguished pupils have sought to find a way out of this impasse. Günther Bornkamm has written a full-length study of *Jesus von Nazareth* (1956; E.T. *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1960) which finds no such hiatus as Bultmann postulated between the ministry of Jesus and the preaching of the primitive church. Whereas Bultmann placed the shift from the old age to the new between Jesus and Paul, Bornkamm places it between John the Baptist and

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. H. Braun's discussion of "The Meaning of New Testament Christology", E.T. in *J Th. Ch.* 5 (1968), pp. 89ff. (These words were written before Professor Bultmann's death on July 30, 1976.)

F. F. Bruce, "The History of New Testament Study," I. Howard Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, 1977. Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, revised 1979. Pbk. ISBN: 0853644241. pp.21-59.

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Jesus—Which is where, according to one early strand of gospel tradition, Jesus himself placed it (Luke 7:28; 16:16).

Still more positive is Eduard Schweizer's assessment in *Jesus Christus*

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(1968; E.T. *Jesus*, 1971) which, while not in itself a study of the historical Jesus, devotes one chapter (entitled "Jesus: the man who fits no formula") to this subject and concludes that the chief christological motifs found throughout the New Testament "go back, in fact, to Jesus himself".<sup>73</sup>

In 1953 Ernst Käsemann gave a lecture at a reunion of Marburg old students on the problem of the historical Jesus (published in ZTK 51 (1954), pp. 125ff.; E.T. in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, 1964, pp. 15ff.), in which he called for a reopening of the question which their revered teacher was thought to have closed and argued that it was necessary to work out what could be known about the historical Jesus if they were not to end up in a new docetism.

If he can be placed at all, it must be in terms of historical particularity.... For to his particularity there corresponds the particularity of faith, for which the real history of Jesus is always happening afresh; it is now the history of the exalted Lord, but it does not cease to be the earthly history it once was, in which the call and the claim of the Gospel are encountered.<sup>74</sup>

To much the same effect Ernst Fuchs finds the key to the continuity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of the apostolic preaching in faith—in faith seen as a "language occurrence".

We formerly endeavoured to interpret the historical Jesus with the help of the primitive Christian kerygma; today we endeavour rather to interpret this kerygma with the help of the historical Jesus—the two lines of investigation are mutually complementary.<sup>75</sup>

The New Testament as a whole bears witness to one and the same Jesus—incarnate, crucified, and exalted as Lord over all. To grasp, to share and to perpetuate this witness is the interpreter's task. One way forward in the prosecution of this task is certainly pointed out by the new quest of the historical Jesus.

Finally, two quotations will sum up the moral of this chapter. First, from my old teacher Alexander Souter:

It can never cease to be of moment to the real lover of Scripture what was thought of its meaning by any patient investigator in any country or in any age.<sup>76</sup>

Next, from Johann Albrecht Bengel:

Apply thyself wholly to the text; apply the matter wholly to thyself.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> E. Schweizer, *Jesus*, E.T. (London, 1971), p. 51.

<sup>74</sup> E. Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, E.T. (London 1964), pp. 46f.

<sup>75</sup> E. Fuchs, *Zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus* (Tübingen 1960), p. vii.

<sup>76</sup> A. Souter, *The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul* (Oxford 1927), p. 7.

<sup>77</sup> J. A. Bengel, *Novum Testamentum Graecum* (Tübingen 1734), preface.

F. F. Bruce, "The History of New Testament Study," I. Howard Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, 1977. Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, revised 1979. Pbk. ISBN: 0853644241. pp.21-59.

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