

Biblical Hermeneutics

An Outline for the Seminary Course

and

The Function and History of Biblical Hermeneutics

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THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

I

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS teaches the laws by which the *meaning* of the Holy Scriptures is ascertained. These laws are the same as those of general hermeneutics. They suggest themselves to unbiased persons when they hear someone's words or read a piece of writing. The only difference is that in Biblical hermeneutics the peculiarities of the Bible must be considered. The history of two thousand years of Biblical interpretation has shown what these points of peculiarity usually are.

The history of Biblical interpretation is divided into four periods: A. From Ezra to the Apostles; B. The pre-Reformation period; C. From the Reformation to rationalism; D. Modern times.

A. When Ezra collected the books of the Old Testament, there existed at first a simple, unprejudiced method of exposition which arises from the practical necessity of the knowledge of salvation and which only wishes to hear and to accept. Sirach would be an example. But when exegesis became the special business of a learned order of lawyers, the legalistically changed attitude of these men towards Scriptures and toward the Church introduced weaknesses of interpretation which since then have always endangered correct explanation, namely, allegorism and traditionalism. On the one hand, both of these are careless in their treatment of the Word, on the other, they are prone to hair-splitting.

The traditions of the Elders, as we find them in the New Testament, illustrate this point. The method used in them is set down in Hillel's rules of interpretation.

Christ and the Apostles again established the correct method of interpretation, and for this purpose they laid down in the New Testament a few rules which are valid and suffice for all unprejudiced exegesis.

B. After the times of the Apostles legalism soon gained the upper hand. Together with a pagan way of thinking based on a false philosophy this legalism again ruined the work of Christ and the Apostles. This became especially evident in the Gnostic systems. The Apostolic Fathers and the Apologetes opposed these Gnostic errors. When by the end of this struggle, c. 170, a rule of interpretation had been formed, the *regula fidei*, the orthodox teachers had already divided into three schools which paved the way for various interpretations of this rule.

The three schools were the Antiochene-Asia Minor school headed by Irenaeus, the Alexandrian school led by Origen, and the Western-African school under the influence of Tertullian and Cyprian. These teachers were also more or less influenced by the concepts of the aprioristic, Neo-Platonic system of thought in vogue at the time. When the soteriological interest of faith dominated them they applied the art of exegesis in a natural way. But when they were also motivated by scientific interests, especially when they gave a theoretical account of their hermeneutical ideas, the Alexandrians understood the *regula fidei* in an allegorical-speculative way, the North Africans in a practical-traditionalistic way, while the Antiochenes, in contrast with both, emphasized the grammatical meaning with a tinge of rationalism.

These types were employed in the Trinitarian, Christological, and Soteriological controversies, and the last great Biblical exegetes in ancient times, Jerome and Augustine, did not advance beyond them. The three manuals of hermeneutics of this time (c. 450), those of Tichonius, Eucherius of Lyons, and Vincent of Lérins fixed these principles in which allegory and tradition were raised to the position of rules which culminate in the fourfold to sixfold meaning of a passage.

Then when Christianity in combination with papistry came to the Germanic peoples and the latter began to take up the new ideas, there emerged at first, at the time of the Carolingians, an unprejudiced spirit. It is due to this spirit that in the area of hermeneutics Christian Druthmar emphasized the literal meaning. But at the same time

Angelomus [Walafrid Strabo? Tr.] set down in his *glossa ordinaria*, the rule of the sevenfold meaning of every Scripture passage. This book became the exegetical handbook of the Middle Ages. The legalism of papacy in conjunction with the cultural immaturity of the Germanic peoples and their intellectual struggle in scholasticism accounts for this contradiction. Thus Bonaventura still clings to the sixfold meaning of Scripture, and the Greeks Oecumenius, Theophylact, and Zigabenus (from the tenth to the twelfth century) do not advance beyond it in their *catenae*.

But the spread of classical studies from Greece to the West in the fourteenth century immediately had a clarifying influence. Being chiefly linguistic, this study was directed toward a sensible hermeneutics. However, those who still remained under the influence of the Church, like Nicolaus de Lyra, clung to the *regula fidei* in the Roman traditionalistic manner. The others were not interested in the Bible at all.

C. The Reformation with its practical need for salvation made use of the humanistic-linguistic studies. Therefore it not only returned to an unprejudiced exegesis, but also penetrated more deeply into the understanding and treatment of language. The greatest master is Luther, the second greatest is Calvin. But at the same time this great progress was checked by Zwingli, who introduced rationalism into Biblical exposition, and by Melanchthon, who furthered dogmatic speculation. In subsequent times the Reformed carried on studies along the lines of Zwingli, while the Lutheran dogmatists further developed traditionalism with the analogy of faith. Allegory, too, found a representative in Cocceius in his covenant theology.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a large number of exegetes now appears on both sides, but they are distributed only at the beginning and at the end of this period. Work in dogmatics fills the intervening time. Around Luther are grouped Melanchthon, Brenz, Flacius, Strigel, Camerarius, Chemnitz, Leyser, Gerhard, and Chytraeus; around Calvin are Zwingli, Oeculampadius, Pellikan, Beza, Junius, Piscator, Mercerus, and Marloratus. In the middle of this period only the Lutheran Erasmus Schmidt and the Reformed Drusius and Grotius deserve mention. In the latter half of the seventeenth century there are, however, Geier, Sebastian Schmidt, and Calovius together with the Reformed Pocock, Lightfoot, Cocceius, and Vitringa. Otherwise it is chiefly the Lutherans who establish the theory of exegesis. In the sixteenth century Luther is supreme with his pamphlet on Translation; he is followed by Flacius with his *Clavis*. In the seventeenth century John Gerhard, Wolfgang Franz, Salomon Glassius, Conrad Dannhauer, August Pfeifer, and together with them the Reformed Daniel Chamier were authors of hermeneutical writings. On the other hand, the Reformed did important work in investigating and compiling linguistic material.

Besides Luther's translation of the Bible there appeared in the sixteenth century the English translation of the New Testament by Fryth and Tyndale, the French Bible by Olivetan, the Latin by Beza, others by Munster, Jud, Castellio, Trevelius and Junius, and Piscator. Their translations are usually connected with revisions of the original texts. In addition to the Lutherans Forster and Avenarius with their Hebrew lexicons only Munster is to be mentioned on the Reformed side. In the seventeenth century we find the Lutheran August Pfeifer with his *Critica Sacra* and Erasmus Schmidt with his Latin translation of the New Testament and his concordance under the name of Tamieion. Among the Reformed there are the two Buxtorfs, Hoettinger, and Cocceius with their Hebrew, Chaldaean, and Syrian grammars and lexicons; the Englishmen Walton and Castell with their polyglots; Pierson, Pole, and Lightfoot with their Hebrew-Talmudic investigations; the Elzevirs with their *Textus Receptus*; and the two Capells in France with their critical apparatus.

The above-mentioned work of compilation, introduced shortly before the rise of rationalism, brought on another upsurge, which on the one hand is characterized by pietism, but on the other is the transition into rationalism.

Before we proceed, we must look back upon the exegetical work of the Catholic theologians up to this time, for the following development originates among the Catholics.

The Roman Church, too, experienced an impulse toward unbiased exegetical work through the humanistic studies and through the example of the Reformation, but the Council of Trent put an end to this development. In Spain, together with the general progress under Ferdinand and Isabella, theological studies had also advanced under Cardinal Ximenes and had produced the Complutensian Polyglot. Later, under Philip II, the Antwerp Polyglot by Montanus had appeared. But with these efforts work in the exegetical field was exhausted in the Catholic Church. When now the work of the Council of Trent was carried on chiefly by the Jesuits, this order established in the Fourth

Session the old scholastic principle of the authority *sanctae matris ecclesiae* which permits no real exegetical work to thrive.

In the following years the Jesuits Montanus, Maldonatus, Mariana, Serarius, and the Hollander Estius work in the field of exegesis. Only Estius was given consideration by the Protestants, by Grotius, to be exact. During the course of the seventeenth century the study of history was developed in the Benedictine congregation of the Maurists. In connection with this study and with Jansenism the Parisian Polyglot was published by Michael Le Jay and especially by Maurus. Beside them stand the Jesuits Bonfrere, Menochius, Tirinus, and especially Cornelius a Lapide with the old principle of the fourfold meaning of Scripture.

In strong contrast with this traditionalism stands the criticism of the origin of the Bible and its texts by the Oratorian Richard Simon. Simon applies the new principles of historical science as they were understood by rationalism, a proof of the fact that traditionalism easily and with a certain natural necessity turns into its opposite. Simon's scoffing brought about Wettstein's and Bengel's textual criticism. Out of the circle of Wurttembergian Pietism Bengel gave the Church his *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*. Beside him is Rambach, the hermeneut of Jena, who brings this work of the Church to a close before the irruption of rationalism. In Rambach the Wolfian philosophical school of thought gained a voice in hermeneutics, but it also comes to an end with him. Beginning with Descartes, this school of thought resolved all intellectual life into logical demonstrations, and thus, as the somewhat related spirit of the times, it paralleled the manner of the dogmatists of the seventeenth century, until in Wolf it joined the Pietistic current.

D. Rationalism now arose as an opponent. Since Wettstein's labors it had also been interested in exegesis. It was based on neo-humanism and in the formal area of language it gave a new impulse to exegesis. Studies of the ancient classical writers and of their art, coupled with the contemporary investigations in the field of natural sciences, generated in contrast with the former pedantic manner a fresh, sober, ingenious understanding of human affairs as it is revealed in Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, e.g. also in the treatment of language and history. This method Ernesti applied to the language of Scripture, Semler to its contents, but as rationalists they ignored the soteriological importance of the Bible.

The first effect of this rationalism was that Semler's Accommodation Theory was applied to the Old Testament by Eichhorn and to the New Testament by Paulus in such a way that it was rejected in the rebirth of faith in the nineteenth century. Instead, new forces arose out of philosophy, linguistics, and the study of history. In the interest of rationalism the method of Hegelian philosophy was applied by Strauss, Bauer, and Baur to the new Testament and by Gesenius and De Wette to the Old Testament. The so-called positive criticism of Ewald and Hitzig also followed these lines. All of these men denied miracles and prophecy and invented myths and *vaticinia ex eventu*.

The linguistic study of the nineteenth century produced the masters of Biblical grammar, the rationalists Gesenius and Winer. Their work was continued by Chr. v. Hofmann, who was also trained in the rise of sober historical study. He championed soteriological exegesis. While holding fast to the belief that the Scriptures have been given by God for our salvation, he nevertheless admitted that in their human form human errors also crept in, which are subject to linguistic-historical criticism.

Hofmann's *Hermeneutics* is the last epoch-making work. Many exegetes labored contemporaneously with him and after him. Their disagreements stem from a dogmatic, not really from a hermeneutical position. Even progress in the linguistic field, especially since Deissmann and Moulton advanced beyond Winer and Buttmann in their conception of the composition of New Testament Greek, does not affect the hermeneutical principles, and these theories still await their conclusion.

In America the discussions concerning predestination, in the interest of the theology of the *seventeenth* century, finally had this result that the doctrine of the analogy of faith was established, in conformity with its ancient character, according to each person's fundamental dogmatic position – either in the traditionalistic sense or under the name of the "entirety of Scripture" in the Alexandrian-speculative sense.

But in the interest of the theology of the *sixteenth* century, "analogy" was set aside as something which is neither taught by Scripture nor is required by the art of exegesis. Many, however, wish to justify the expression both historically and theoretically.

THE RULES OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

II

Introduction

1. If we wish to understand spoken or written word, i.e., get at the meaning which the author wishes to express, three kinds of knowledge are necessary: 1. knowledge of the author's language in general; 2. knowledge of the matter discussed; 3. knowledge of the author's manner of expression and of his point of view.

If we do not know the language, we cannot approach the other two at all. If we do not know the matter discussed, even if we have a general knowledge of the author's language and particular manner, we shall nevertheless blend our own erroneous ideas into our understanding. If we do not know the author's point of view and his manner of expression, we shall again make our own manner authoritative to the detriment of the correct understanding.

2. In the case of most people, especially of experts, the special reminder is necessary that we must bring to exegesis the good intention of understanding the thoughts expressed according to the meaning intended by the author.

3. If we have a general knowledge of the language, we shall discover the subject matter and the author's special mode of expression in the writing which is to be explained. Therefore, before we can understand and explain a piece of writing in all of its parts, we must first become completely acquainted with it.

4. Upon the basis of such a knowledge of Holy Scripture the rules of Biblical exegesis form a

Doctrine of Holy Scripture in Its Importance for Exegesis

I. Its Divine Origin

II. Its Human Form

III. Its Eternal Purpose

I. The Divine Origin of the Scriptures

A. The Bible is God's Word and therefore the Infallible foundation of all theology.

1. *Proof of the statement.*

We bring to Scripture through faith in the forgiveness of sins the assurance given us by the Holy Spirit that everything which Scripture says about itself is true.

In reference to the Old Testament: 2 Timothy 3:15-16 says that Scripture comes from God. 2 Peter 1:21 testifies that the holy writers are *living* instruments of the Holy Spirit. John 10:35 says that this activity of the Spirit extends to the individual expression. Hence, verbal inspiration.

In reference to the New Testament: Christ promises to the Apostles the communication of the Spirit described above, and the Apostles assert it of themselves. Cf. John 3 :31-36; 4 :26, 42; 5:24; 21:24; the opening statements of the apostolic letters; Paul's curse upon him who teaches differently, Galatians 1.

Only in an evangelical manner, by continually bringing these thoughts into connection with the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, can we understand and discuss these thoughts aright, hence, not with the intellect alone and not with the purpose of achieving results through strict logical reasoning.

In this way, too, we must understand the term *verbal inspiration*. In no other manner is it possible to substantiate verbal inspiration.

2. *The place of this proposition is at the beginning of Biblical hermeneutics.*

To proceed from the doubt of the rationalists marks the exegete as being behind the times.

To proceed from Hofmann's freedom from presupposition is impossible. This demand is also based on legalistic intellectualism. Besides, unbelief is the most insistent presupposition. It is true, faith is also a presupposition, but only faith can make an exegete free from bias.

A teacher of Biblical hermeneutics has, of course, learned to know Holy Scripture and from it has gained the conviction that it is God's Word. This fact gives him in his exegesis a special position toward Scripture. Now he will naturally not leave his student in the dark concerning this matter in order that the student learn by the hard way. On the contrary, he will place the student at once into the correct position by putting the statement of the divine character of Scripture at the beginning of his rules of exegesis.

This statement is therefore not a theorem out of which we develop the hermeneutical rules according to laws with logical stringency, but it proclaims a gospel fact which we grasp by means of faith and which then itself creates the faith-based activity in our exegetical work.

3. Therefore we must bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Reason has only a purely formal service to perform, namely, to receive the thoughts of Scripture and to form from them clear concepts and judgments. In this work reason's critical activity also asserts itself in so far as the objective contents of Scripture must be determined.

The sole essential for the acceptance of truth is faith worked by the Holy Spirit.

This constraint is therefore not of a legalistic but of an evangelical nature and extends over everything, over the spiritual as well as over the earthly matters in Scripture.

Hence Hofmann's thesis must be rejected that errors crept in through the reflection of the writers, at least in regard to matters foreign to salvation. The reasons are threefold: 1. the thesis is obtained only by speculation; 2. it is not confirmed by experience; 3. the scientific results which are to prove it are themselves open to question.

The analogy of faith must therefore also be rejected. The idea originates in an erroneous understanding of Romans 12:6. It is related to the traditionally understood *regula fidei* of the ancient western church or to the speculatively and spiritualistically understood *κανών της πίστεως* of the Alexandrians or to Melanchthonian philosophy or to a modern theory. All of these permit the expositor to bend the word of Scripture according to his wishes or to construct connections of thought which are not contained in Scripture.

Accordingly, we arrive at the following rules:

a. We must not reject a statement of Scripture or force our own interpretation upon it

aa. because we think it contradicts the law of natural occurrence (miracles and prophecies);

bb. because we think that Scripture contains contradictions;

cc. because to us it is improbable on account of its similarity with the formation of extra-Biblical myths and legends.

In these three cases the statements are either beyond our reasoning capacity or the arguments against them are themselves debatable. We must add to the above-mentioned rule, however, that the expositor must not, due to a fondness for miracles or to intellectual laziness, spare himself the trouble of investigating thoroughly the matters under discussion; for these two inclinations are on the same intellectual and legalistic level as rejection and construction of thought connections.

b. Exegesis of Scripture must be done independently of ecclesiastical authority.

aa. It is presupposed as self-evident that the exegete is a believer.

bb. As such he has a definite confession to which he holds firmly.

cc. But in addition a thorough theological training must prevail so that it teaches one to understand that traditionalism and dogmatism rest on an unevangelical-intellectual foundation and do not leave to Scripture the supreme position in the innermost feelings or in the external treatment.

c. Neither must exegesis be determined by thoughts which are connected with the idea of the "inner word."

aa. Special revelations cannot, because of the divine origin of Scripture, annul Scripture.

bb. For this reason they cannot disclose a new understanding of Scripture.

Paul's exegesis is not directed against the Old Testament, but against the carnal understanding of it.

Paul knows nothing of a spirituality of exegesis which is opposed to the clear statement of Scripture. The revelation of the New Testament is final and awaits only the completion in glory.

cc. It is true, our Lord's promise of miracles is not subject to restrictions which He Himself has not given. But all revelations and miracles outside of Scripture must be subjected to control and correction by Scripture, not vice versa.

B. The same Holy Spirit operates in all individual books of the Bible, which have been given by God to man in the course of fifteen centuries.

The idea of the canon is here anticipated because we proceed from the basis that the exegete through faith looks upon the entire Scripture as God's Word. The explanation will be brought in the second part where we shall speak of the human form of Scripture.

1. *Scripture interprets itself when we compare Scripture with Scripture.*

The statement is self-evident, but it has a special proof in 1 Corinthians 2:13. From it we derive the following rules:

a. The wording must prevail.

The statement has nothing to do with intellectualistic-legalistic hair-splitting, but is always subject to faith which has laid hold of salvation.

b. The context must be compared.

c. The contents of the individual word must be complemented from all other passages of Scripture which use the word or speak of the matter.

d. No more must be drawn from the statements of Scripture than is elsewhere stated in Scripture.

2. *For every doctrine of Scripture there are completely clear and unmistakable passages ("loci classici" or "sedes doctrinae").* From these the doctrine must be learned and further exegesis proceed.

3. *There are also obscure passages, i.e., those passages whose meaning is unintelligible to us because of a missing link in a series of concepts.*

The obscurity may be of an external nature, e.g., something may be lacking in the text or in our knowledge of the matter discussed, or we are dealing with supermundane concepts.

In such a case, we refrain from offering an interpretation. An attempt at interpretation, in any case, can only be made upon the basis of clear concepts which are otherwise given by Scripture in reference to the same matter.

4. *Didactic and historical statements mutually complement and explain one another (Galatians 3:16), while poetic phrases frequently will have to be understood according to the former, as is generally necessary for the understanding of poetry.*

II. The Human Form of the Scriptures

Not only the origin of the original form of the Scriptures has a human history extending over fifteen hundred years, but also the transmission of this form down to the present time is subject to the changes of almost two thousand years. Hence arise, first, the questions regarding the form of the text and the acceptance of the books as divine. Only in second place do the questions arise which grow out of the historical conditions of the original writings, about national character, individuality of the writers and of the languages.

A. The formation of the text which is to be interpreted is the task of the professional text critics.

1. *Not every exegete can be a professional text critic*, but he must know so much about the workings of this branch of learning that in the individual case he can consider with understanding the arguments which are made for or against an interpretation on the basis of textual criticism.

2. *The existence of variant readings does not affect the doctrinal content of evangelical truth*. Therefore it cannot disturb the religious confidence of the exegete in regard to this truth. On the other hand, it must spur him on to careful work and cause him continually to put a modest estimate upon his ability as far as this ability is human.

3. *In this connection it will become evident that the evangelical understanding of faith frequently has more weight than the external-intellectual decision*.

B. Determining a canon is a matter of human history.

Although the canon of the Old Testament was fixed at Christ's time, this is, nevertheless, not a statement of Scripture, but an outcome of human history. As for the New Testament canon, we must bear in mind not only the distinction between homologoumena and antilegomena, but also, other questions about differences in the canon accepted by the Church, questions which have not as yet been answered.

1. *The exegete must be aware of these questions* in order to be on his guard against a legalistic manner of conducting his investigation.

2. *The strength of his position* toward the individual books of Scripture in their connection with the canon does not, however, rest upon the intellectual decisions, but in his faith in the forgiveness of sins, which he has gained from the entire volume.

3. *He will not allow a statement of the homologoumena to be restricted by a statement taken from the antilegomena*.

C. The character of the people among whom the writing originated must be considered in working out an exegesis.

1. *Israel is the nation chosen for Christ's sake*.

This fact provides its history with a peculiar stamp (against the rationalistic-historical school).

2. *The doctrines of Scripture*, including those of the New Testament, must therefore be understood on the basis of the *Israelite thought patterns*, not on those of the Gentile nations surrounding Israel.

3. *This national characteristic must not predominate in the exposition* in such a way that the clear ecumenical character of the New Testament is questioned.

D. The individuality of each writer must be taken into account.

1. This statement refers to the doctrine of inspiration in I, A, 1.

2. We understand a writer's words when we know him personally in his origin, his mentality, the circumstances of the present writing, and when we take all of this into consideration in our exposition in order to understand how the writing in all of its parts and circumstances took on the assumed form.

3. This manner of exegesis never finds it necessary to oppose the thought that the individual books of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Ghost.

4. The exposition, however, must proceed cautiously and above all must not exceed what can be proved.

E. The exegete must be well versed in the languages of the original text.

1. The entire philological achievement of modern times aids the interpretation of Scripture. But a warning is in place against a specialization which easily strays from intensive knowledge of Scripture.

2. In spite of its character derived from Israelite national characteristics and the circumstances of the *koine*, Biblical language has its own fundamental character with which we become acquainted through close general intimacy with Scripture and which we must take into account in our exposition.

3. Here again the individuality of each writer is to be considered.
4. We must not transgress arbitrarily the well-known linguistic rules:
 - a. We must not look for classicality as the purists did.
 - b. We must not drop the more usual, the real, the more comprehensive meaning without valid reasons.
5. We must know the matters being discussed in order to understand the words which treat of them, and vice versa; we must learn the matters from the words.
6. There are some linguistic terms which are especially characteristic of Scripture, which frequently occur and therefore need especially careful study.

III. The Eternal Purpose of the Scriptures

It is the purpose of the interpretation of Holy Scripture to lead to the understanding of this subject through the explanation of the Word. This Word grows in prominence in the same proportion as the understanding of the contents advances. Therefore, in our exposition we must take into consideration:

A. The difference between law, gospel, and evangelical admonition.

1. These matters we must first have grasped clearly with evangelical perception of scriptural truths.
2. Then we shall not expect this differentiation in the speech of Scripture is anything mechanical, but that in one and the same speech several or all of these may be contained according to the inner attitude of the hearer.

B. The difference between the Old and the New Testament.

1. The peculiar characteristic of the Old Testament is defined by the predominance of the Law in ideas, history, manner of expression, and importance, as the case may be, as:
 - a. legalistic
 - b. circumscribed in time
 - c. external
 - d. "pedagogical"
 - e. typical
2. The nature of the New Testament is characterized through Christ's work as:
 - a. evangelical
 - b. complete

3. Although the fulfilment of the New Testament obtains light from the understanding of the Old Testament prophecy, yet it is described quite clearly and completely in the New Testament. On the other hand, the statements of the Old Testament frequently get their complete interpretation only through the explanations of the New Testament.

4. The free manner of the New Testament quotations according to theocratic principles must be noticed.

C. That Christ is the center of Scripture.

1. So says Scripture itself.
2. Therefore we can only then understand it correctly when this rule is observed.
3. But because Scripture is the truth *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, the key to all knowledge is to be found in Christ.

The Function and History of Biblical Hermeneutics

THE FUNCTION AND HISTORY OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

I

BIBLICAL hermeneutics teaches the rules according to which the art of Biblical interpretation, the art of ascertaining the meaning of Holy Scriptures, is practiced.

The word "hermeneutics," together with the corresponding nouns, verb, and adjective is derived from Hermes, the messenger of the gods. Therefore, a *hermaeneus* is an announcer, interpreter, expositor; *hermaeneuein* means to express by means of words, to translate, to interpret; *hermaeneia* designates the corresponding activity. The adjective and the noun formed of it, which furnishes the name for our discipline, designate that which serves the activity we are discussing. On the basis of its etymology we may apply the name to all sorts of things which need announcement, translation, explanation. Usually the word is used for the exposition or explanation of the meaning of spoken words or of a piece of writing.

In this sense the function of hermeneutics has been understood in different ways, in a narrower or in a broader sense. J. J. Rambach, in his *Institutiones Hermeneuticae* (Jena, 1723) adds to exposition *communicatio*, *demonstratio*, *applicatio sensus inventi*, and J. A. Ernesti in his *Institutio Interpretis* (Leipzig, 1761) mentions as the task of the exegete not only *intellegere*, but also *applicare*. This definition is then frequently justified by etymology, a procedure related to the manner in vogue at that time of explaining things out of concepts and the latter again out of the words designating them instead of *vice versa*. F. D. E. Schleiermacher, on the other hand, in his *Hermeneutik und Kritik* (1838) and in his *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums* (1810) drops *applicare*, *demonstrare*, and *communicare* because these activities are part of the art of speaking or writing. This has since then been the general understanding of the function of hermeneutics.

However, W. Schmidt in his article on hermeneutics in Herzog's *Realenzyklopaedie* has again defended the older concept by pointing out that *intellegere* can be assigned to logic if *communicare* is grouped with rhetoric and stylistics. He accordingly defines hermeneutics as the scientific exposition of the principles according to which the meaning contained in the Holy Scriptures is to be ascertained and communicated. But in his proof he takes the concept of logic in a broader sense than is usually the case, just as Schleiermacher described *applicare* too narrowly as the art of speaking or writing. If we wish to apply the broader idea seriously as Rambach meant it, we might draw the entire homiletics and catechetics into the field of hermeneutics. It would, of course, be possible to treat the matter in this fashion. But today grammar, rhetoric, stylistics, homiletics, and logic are separate subjects. Therefore it is simpler, more practical, and more sensible to stick to the present traditional manner and to discuss in hermeneutics only the rules whereby the expositor ascertains the meaning of a speech or of a piece of writing.

It is likewise superfluous, or at least hermeneutically and practically unnecessary, to investigate whether hermeneutics is to be given the standing of an independent science. Chladenius (*Einleitung zur richtigen Auslegung von Reden und Schriften*, 1742) first separated hermeneutics from logic because correct thinking and correct exposition are two different things. J. C. K. v. Hofmann still believes in his *Biblische Hermeneutik* that hermeneutics can nevertheless be assigned to logic as a directive, not as a theory of art, since an expositor rethinks what another has written. Chladenius' remark, however, cannot be refuted so easily. Logic, with its theory of concepts, judgments, conclusions and with its teaching of explanation, division, and proofs, aims to develop *correct* thinking. At the same time it teaches *correct* speaking and writing, presupposing the theories of grammar and rhetoric. Speaking is thinking aloud. Logic here calls attention to incorrect thinking in order to criticize it. An expositor, however, is not concerned with the question of whether the thinking, the expression of which in speech or writing he is about to explain, is correct or not. It is his purpose to *understand* it under all circumstances. *This* is the purpose which the science of logic has for him. He also criticizes the thought process with which he is dealing according to the rules of logic as well as

those of grammar and rhetoric. But criticism is not his purpose, only a means of arriving at the understanding of what is written.

Here more is necessary that what is furnished by logic, grammar, and rhetoric. If the expositor meets with incorrect language or incorrect thinking, he *still* wants to ascertain the meaning. Through the language used he seeks to penetrate into the author's process of thought; he wants to understand how the language got to be as he finds it. Kahnis says (*Drei Vortraege*, 1864) to interpret means to reproduce out of the words the mind which produced the words. To accomplish this, every bit of grammatical, rhetorical, and logical criticism is necessary. But at the same time we need the ability, first, to drop criticism when it has served its purpose of making clear another's process of thought out of his psychology, and then simply to *listen* and to *understand*.

Something further is required. What we have discussed thus far is purely formal. There is also necessary the understanding of the matter which is being discussed. This understanding does not always come from the *words* before us, but must be supplied from another source if we are to *understand the statements*. Indeed, statements often appear to be faulty in language or logic only because the hearer or reader is not sufficiently acquainted with the subject matter under discussion. This knowledge is supplied by history. The explanation of how the interpreter is to proceed in such a case we can hardly expect to find in a manual of logic. Nevertheless, the attempt has seldom been made to write a textbook of general hermeneutics, because there is scarcely an activity which is practiced so generally and so perseveringly by everyone as that of interpretation. A child already uses it, even before it can speak. It is just in this way that it learns language and things. Every instruction, indeed, every bit of social intercourse rests upon this activity. Every simple person involuntarily and, in part, unconsciously, forms for himself a theory of interpretation which even changes for his association with various people. He pays attention to age, sex, origin, occupation, time and occasion, aim and purpose. All of this he takes more or less into consideration and thus arrives at a greater or lesser understanding of what he hears or reads.

Unbiased Christians Understand Scripture Correctly

The best training is the reading of the classical writers as it is practiced (or ought to be practiced) at our colleges, especially the reading of the ancient Greek and Roman authors. The reason for this is because a student must pay attention to the characteristic construction of a *foreign*, dead tongue, which he cannot speak fluently, in order to grasp the thought which this language communicates and then *turn* it into his own language, whose character in nearly every respect is almost totally different, he learns the chief point of the art of interpretation: to forget entirely one's own thinking and feeling and to place oneself into the thinking and feeling of the foreign author and to understand him from that point. To interpret is really nothing but *translating* another man's thoughts and manner of speaking into one's own.

For the same reason it might now be said that it is unnecessary to compile a Biblical hermeneutics; for out of his acquaintance with the Bible everyone will formulate adequate rules for himself. The latter statement is true. A correct Biblical hermeneutics is simply the application of the generally accepted rules of exposition to the Holy Scriptures. Every person forms his conception only with, and as a result of, a closer acquaintance with an individual person. Every book or every author demands a special hermeneutics, which, however, is only the application of the general theory of exegesis to specific cases. In the same way, every simple person forms his manner of understanding and of explanation according to the Scriptures themselves in direct proportion to his growing acquaintance with them. It is just the simple, unbiased Christians who understand Scripture correctly without much learned apparatus.

There is a further consideration. Behind every assertion in word or writing stands a personality which exerts an influence upon the hearer or reader. This is true, first, in respect to the *acceptance* of what is spoken. In oral speech this influence is stronger due to the personal presence of the speaker, unless the speaker has something repellent in his appearance or demeanor. But also in writing, this influence can be noticed more or less. This influence, secondly, comes into consideration for the *understanding* of the words, too. We understand a person we love better than we understand another.

Behind the words of Holy Scripture stands the Holy Spirit. In a miraculous way He works the understanding of His words. This is accomplished primarily of course, by means of the human understanding of the human language in which Scripture is written. But even here there is present the direct influence of the personality. The personality in this case is, like the person, divine and thus wonderful. Here too, as otherwise, the Holy Spirit works where and when He will. Just for this reason this influence is hidden from our observation and judgment, all the more because in a

purely human area, in spite of all the achievements of psychological progress, we are still frequently groping in the dark. But here lies partly the explanation for the fact which is expressed in Goethe's word and also applies in a special measure to Scripture,

*Was der Verstand der Verstaendigen nicht sieht,
Das erkennt oft in Einfalt ein kindlich Gemuet.*

To the soul of simplicity truth unfolds
Which sharpened intelligence never beholds.

We must pray for the interpretation.

And yet, just for this reason we are justified in compiling a Biblical hermeneutics – for the sake of scientific study. In earlier times, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, people became familiar with scientific study only after the European nations had become free from the spiritual bonds of medieval scholasticism. This advance inspired a large number of hermeneutical works which step by step collected the results obtained through scientific practice. Since Schleiermacher's days a fresh breeze has been blowing, and even until Hofmann there appeared repeatedly new manuals until the publication of Hofmann's posthumous works by Volk brought this activity to a close. Since then, new hermeneutical works are written only for theological manuals, for a feeling has grown that the art of interpretation is nothing but the self-evident understanding which everyone practices when he hears or reads something. This has been the case all the more because the idea is probably spreading farther and farther that the Bible is no different than any other human book.

But this is the very reason why a Biblical hermeneutics is necessary for us. We must come to grips not only with ideas characterized by complete unbelief, but also with several concepts based on partial faith. Indeed many differences must be overcome even among those who accept strictly the verbal inspiration of Scripture. Some emphasize the inspiration of Scripture, others lay special stress upon its human side. Among the latter an insecurity in the manner of exegesis often crops out, because for a long time men have not bothered to review the general principles of exegesis.

It will therefore not be the purpose of Biblical hermeneutics to propose entirely new theories for the exegesis of Scriptures, theories differing greatly from the rules of general exposition. For the Bible is written like other books, in a human language, and this language is the result of a human thought process as is also the case with other spoken and written words. But it is God's revelation. Therefore the expositor must conduct himself toward its statement somewhat differently than he does toward other writings. The fact that it is God's revelation makes us approach the thought process of the sacred writers somewhat differently than we do those of other writers. Finally, the restriction placed upon the expositor by this fact makes him realize that in the interpretation of human writings frequently too much arbitrariness obtains. Therefore the Biblical exegete will subject the rules of general hermeneutics to a criticism applicable to extra-Biblical areas, too.

THE FUNCTION AND HISTORY OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

II

A brief presentation of the history of Scriptural interpretation will first show which aspects of Biblical hermeneutics are most important.

Exposition is concerned with two things: with the thought process and with the subjects about which this process revolves. The first will assume different forms according to the new paths which the great developments in philosophy have opened up to the human mind. The subject matter is supplied by history. This branch of learning had to take on different aspects whenever great cultural development had run their course and scholars in this way had obtained better opportunities to compare the history of different peoples and different times. Only in this way do we learn to understand the individual things in their particular place and in their connection. Both developments permit the exposition at different times to assume different forms.

Thus for the history of Biblical exegesis the same historical periods are determinative as for general history: 1. From Ezra to the Reformation the ancient spirit predominates which in the Middle Ages was a schoolmaster for the Germanic nations too. 2. Up to the time of Pietism.

A. Development of Human Thinking

Before we begin to relate this history, it is necessary that we preface a remark which must be observed in almost every development of history.

Human thinking takes place in every person simultaneously more or less along two lines: that of induction and that of deduction. A child opens its eyes and ears and observes. One percept joins another, and concepts are formed when unessential characteristics are eliminated. These concepts go to form judgments, and out of the latter we form conclusions. Out of a multitude of individual cases which we have observed we derive laws. That is induction.

As the amount of intellectual content is increased, the opposite way also is practiced. Out of the general results which we have made or gained inductively through reflection we infer details through conclusions. When this is done correctly, this deductive thinking always is guided by that which the previous inductive thing has furnished. Experience tests whether the deduction was correct. Thus induction and deduction mutually help the human mind to master the things more and more. Thus, too, in the case of a child, language is born simultaneously with the expression of his reflective life. In the case of different individuals now this, now that manner of thinking predominates. The practical man operates inductively; the man of theory, deductively. The practical needs of life in the state, in commerce and industry promote the former; the profession of a teacher, the latter. In the sciences the scientists proceed inductively, the philosophers deductively. In a child, induction predominates; in a youth and in a young man, deduction. In mature persons they unite, mutually controlling and complementing each other.

So it is with the history of a people too. Above all, that is the course in the general history of intellectual life. As long as a nation is in the vigor of its youth, all thinking, feeling, and action is carried out according to the freedom of natural, direct, vigorous growth. Here it passes through the threefold development of thinking mentioned above in a brisk and lively manner. When this freshness has faded and the vital powers have been exhausted, when with the end of growth also the intellectual powers decrease, then men, it is true, still think, but no longer so independently. They cling to things which they take from others – either to every new idea which they encounter, or to the old things. The pupil swears by the words of his master. What in the latter's case was spirit and life becomes for the former law and rule. A manner of thinking and acting begins which lacks freedom, is forced, and emphasizes laws; it clings to external forms, exaggerates or transgresses them. Or, on the other hand, where there is some intellectual strength left, it serves expediency and advantage. These ends only too easily degenerate into selfishness because fresh and direct life has disappeared from the ideas. The methods of thought, indeed, remain outwardly the same, but the unbiased observer notices a foreign, unhealthy element creeping in. Imagination and speculation bring into deductive thinking an aprioristic, mystical play of thought; careful inductive thinking loses itself in subtlety and hair-splitting.

In the field of theology, especially in exegesis, we see this in traditionalism, allegory, and hair-splitting. Because men no longer have spirit and life themselves, they desire to draw upon the past. That is not a conservative attitude, but traditionalism. Instead of acquiring the paternal inheritance again and again in order to possess it, men stupidly and dully consume it. They no longer think through the doctrines of Scripture again and again in order to have them as their intellectual possession. If they did, the mind in this way would remain versatile and capable of applying the firm and settled truth to the changing forms of life so that the truth of the gospel would rule and in this way preserve the inherited treasure. Instead, men repeat words, become mentally lazy, do not pay attention to the signs of the times. Then, when conditions are so completely changed that these men must themselves see the change, their mind is too dull to find the vital connection with Scripture. That is *traditionalism* and its end. Meanwhile such men seek to come to grips with the changed conditions by means of *allegory* and *hair-splitting*.

Allegory is the result of two peculiarities of traditionalism which we have already hinted at – its special attitude toward Scripture and a general mental disposition which is connected with it. The attitude toward Scripture no longer is the immediately and directly evangelical attitude of faith which accepts Scripture with unbiased confidence as God's Word, and without many helps understands it with a simple mind. Now the attitude has become forced and legalistic because the men themselves have by now become completely different. The word of Scripture meets us as a foreign power. Because men now no longer gain an understanding through the fresh and active harmony of intellect, will, and emotions, the means of exegesis are now made artificially and hence become uncertain. The language, which was formerly understood intuitively, is now gathered out of lexicons and grammars. The terms, whose definitions were formerly supplied from the context, are now investigated as something foreign and are extended in meaning. Formerly, too, men believed that the Bible is God's Word, but that did not prevent them from

understanding in an unbiased way the human language in which it is written. This though is now retained as something heterogeneous and strange; men exaggerate it by sensing behind every word a higher and a possibly miraculous meaning, a meaning which the human word does not transmit offhand. In addition there is an aprioristic, speculative, mystical manner of thinking which is always characteristic of a period of decline. Together with allegory it reads into Scripture its phantastic creations in proportion to its lack of mastery of language and historical facts. Such mastery could enable it to practice the necessary mental discipline.

At the same time God's Word is to be applied to life. But conditions have changed. In church, world, state, and family all sorts of things have developed to which the previous understanding of Scripture does not immediately apply. Now God's Word must be brought into harmony with life because strength is lacking to make life conform to God's Word. Rather, the clear understanding of Scripture is lacking which is able to separate the essential truth from one's own ideas which one reads into Scripture. For the same reason people are incapable of living directly out of Scripture and to complement a new way of life. Hence they go the opposite way. With a hair-splitting, subtilizing mind they begin to change the meaning of Scripture according to present conditions. This is all the more the case because here again the general mental disposition which is incapable of penetrating into language or history often furthers this mechanical and frequently clumsy manner.

THE FUNCTION AND HISTORY OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

II. The History

B. Interpretation in Old Testament Times

The history of Scriptural interpretation begins with the guild of the Scribes. Before this time there had been interpretation of Scripture when the books of the Old Testament were written among the children of Israel. But that was the natural, popular interpretation which is always practiced when people hear with their ears rather than occupying themselves with reading. This manner of interpretation escapes our observation because it is not fixed as such. It probably was similar to the activity of our congregations when they listen to the sermons preached in their midst. To understand its spirit we may draw inferences from the writings which speak of Samuel, David, Solomon, and the Prophets. It is the spirit of immediate freshness which without much learned help at once grasps the essential meaning of him who is speaking to them and separates from it what is unessential. But in case of those whom we can only name here it is self-evident, because they are men who spoke moved by the Holy Ghost, Who Himself gave the writings to which they refer. We cannot speak here of applying definite rules because definite words of God cannot be referred to since at this time Scripture cannot as yet be quoted. There are three reasons for this inability of ours: Scripture does not as yet exist as a canon; the study of Scriptures by reading is not as yet the task of a profession; exegesis does not as yet have a professional, scientific form.

The case of the scribes is different. Their beginnings date back to the times of Jesus Sirach. Cf. Book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 38:25-27; 39:1ff. The name occurs as early as Ezra's time, but the professional teaching and studying does not begin until the time of the Greek domination after Alexander. It extends into the time of Christ, and after the fall of Jerusalem it continues in the studies which led to the writing of the Talmud. In the writings dating from the time before Christ we have no material for observation excepting that we may draw conclusions from the book of Sirach as to the general spirit of the age. Most of the material is embodied in the Gospels of the New Testament, in which Jesus Himself corrects the explanation of the law over against the traditions of the elders. With these agree the further notices in the Talmudic writings, which were composed at a later date concerning exegesis before Christ and in which this exegesis was continued and degenerated still more.

In captivity, Israel had learned that God's Word cannot be ignored without penalty. While they were still in Assyria and Babylon, a careful study of the law had begun, made all the more necessary because the knowledge of ancient Hebrew was disappearing. With Ezra's name is connected the history of the collection of the ancient writings and of their study. The latter was done after the manner of the study before the exile, when the books were read and out of this reading directly the lessons of wisdom were drawn, as Sirach had done. This continued until the third century before Christ.

Meanwhile the people had degenerated mentally and spiritually according to the natural law of decline. One of the forces of decay was the forcible penetration of the superficial culture of the Seleucids, a varnish which hardly covered the Oriental vulgarity of the Antiochian civilization, especially since this Greek culture of the post-

Alexandrian age was merely a secondhand civilization. In contrast and conflict with it, the confessional loyalty of Jewry hardened into externalism and, in consequence, into legalism. As early as Sirach, a home-spun, frequently utilitarian, practical, and rational study of terms asserts itself. The hope of Israel reduces the idea of the Messiah to that of a liberator from heathen tyranny. The urge toward an independent religious life is dead. The feeling of personal helplessness drives them into a servile worship characterized by literalness. Moses' Book of the Law becomes what it had not been formerly, a statute of laws.

The scribes apply Scripture to outward life. According to their position toward Scripture they are divided into two parties, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and each party has its interpreters of Scripture. The former not only cling to the law, they even intensify it by increasing the burdens. The latter turn to the carefree life of the world, accept only a part or even nothing of the canon, and what they do accept they interpret to suit their own ideas. The *middoth* the seven hermeneutical rules which are mentioned in the Talmud especially in connection with the name of Hillel, are the result of their method of exegesis.

In both cases there is an understanding which lacks spirit, and a hair-splitting, mechanical treatment of Scripture. We are familiar with it from the New Testament, also from Josephus, Philo, and from the Talmud. The Jews have the tradition about the five "couples" of scholars, the *Zugoth*, the last of whom consisted of Hillel and Shammai. Hillel, who died in A.D. 10, was the teacher of Gamaliel. These teachers then extended the interpretation of Scripture further and further since the successors always stood on the shoulders of their predecessors.

Out of this activity arose the 'traditions of the Elders' (Matthew 15:2; Mark 7:3, 5) which at Christ's time however, do not seem to have been committed to writing as yet.

The rules are as follows:

1. *qal va-chomer*, "easy and difficult," *conclusio a minori ad maius* or *vice versa*.
2. *gezerah shavah*, conclusion by analogy; because in two passages of the law words occur which are homonyms or synonyms, the two laws, however different they may be, are subject to the same rules and applications.
3. *binyan ab miccathub echad*, "main principle from one verse"; application of analogy of a passage to something not expressly mentioned in it, or derivation of a chief stipulation of the law from a single passage.
4. *binyan ab mishene ketubim*, "main principle from two passages."
5. *kelal u-pherat u-pherat u-kelal*, "general and specific, specific and general," i.e., the modification of one by the other.
6. *keyozeh bo bemakom acher*, "something similar in another passage," similarity with another passage.
7. *dabar hallamed meinyano*, "something which is gathered from the context."

In explanation of the rules as well as of the exegesis of the later scribes it must be said that they were less theologians than lawyers. Due to this fact the rules are not only concerned with the things, but they were also applied in a somewhat mechanical way. We have examples of this exegesis in the Gospels of the New Testament, but their nature we can only conclude from the contrast of Christ. Matthew 5:21ff. and 27ff. opposes the *external understanding* of the fifth and sixth commandments. But the form of the decalog and the manner which distinguished it at its promulgation above the other laws makes us conclude that it definitely included the disposition of the heart. We find the same attitude in Matthew 23:23, where the law of tithing (Leviticus 27:30) was applied to the minutest detail, an application simply not capable of being observed. But moral matters, which cannot be enumerated in laws down to the last detail, were overlooked. Here belongs; too, the explanation of *corban* (Matthew 15:1ff.), with which children excused their uncharitable behavior toward their parents. The last two examples point to *subtlety* (of which we have another example in Matthew 23:16) and to *hair-splitting* (Matthew 5:43; 19:3; 26:61). The distinction between the temple and its gold, or between the altar and the sacrifice on it, lies on the same level as the two examples mentioned above, since subtlety is less concerned with words than with things. On the other hand, the perversion of the commandment of love toward one's neighbor into its opposite, the misuse of Deuteronomy 24:1 for the purpose of laxness in matters of divorce, and the wrong understanding of Christ's words concerning the breaking of the temple indicate that this subtlety also concerned words Matthew 22:25ff. affords an example of how the Sadducees by means of their own conclusions try to squirm out of the doctrine of resurrection, but in so doing only reveal lack of knowledge and understanding.

We must not overlook that Jesus connects this whole method of exegesis with the moral position of the scribes. He calls it hypocrisy, in conformity with which they are able to strain out gnats and to swallow camels (Matthew 23:23).

C. Christ Establishes True Hermeneutics

Jesus and the Apostles corrected this wrong method of interpretation. They did not do so after the manner of professional specialists. But by teaching the Word of God aright and by proclaiming the Gospel of salvation, they naturally brought it about that their method of interpretation differed from that of their opponents and that they called attention to the errors of the latter. It was likewise not in Christ's nature to appear with divine, miraculous power, to raise the art of interpretation above the level of development of His times, and to place it if possible, on a plane which would be modern for us. No, in His humility He taught according to the method and the mental development of His days and probably was just as little acquainted with the special methods which we apply as were His contemporaries. His skill of interpretation does not go beyond that of the simple, general interpretation which every unbiased person practices. On the other hand, our Lord does possess a majestic manner in comparison, e.g., with Paul. As a teacher, Paul justifies his interpretation with quotations and with the explanation that the divine matters which he preaches transcend human understanding. But Christ's words carry a self-evident authority which makes every thought of vindication unnecessary, and only occasionally are they confirmed with a reference to His divine Sonship and to their truth which endures beyond this transitory world. Thus the words of our Lord are the heart of hermeneutics and have everlasting authority.

But our Lord did more than to give the actual corrections which we have already learned above from the contrast between Christ and the scribes. He also gave individual rules of interpretation. His statements about Scripture mention briefly that

Scripture is God's Word and as such the foundation for teaching and life (Matthew 3:15; 5:17; 22:31, 43; John 4:22; 5:39; 10:35). Hence

Scripture gives sufficient explanation in regard to this point and is infallible (John 10:35; Luke 20:37; 19:46; 24:26; 10:27; 16:17; 21:33; Matthew 5:18, 19; 4:4, 7, 10; 12:3; 19:4; 22:31; 21:42).

In addition we have directions for its use:

We are to search the Scriptures, and in so doing seek our salvation, our salvation in Christ (John 5:39).

Scripture must have unconditional authority (John 10:35; Matthew 5:17-18).

Scripture must be explained by Scripture (Luke 4:12).

The statements of the Apostles scarcely go beyond these directions of Christ. We cannot expect anything more in the case of Peter, James, and John. The dialectical use of the Old Testament is lacking in the practical manner of the first two and in the contemplative manner of John. These men quote the Old Testament only to adorn their words and to give them force to impress the word of Scripture; argumentation is a minor purpose. In two passages, 1 Peter 1:10-11 and 2 Peter 1:19, the Apostle mentions the principles:

Scripture is God's Word given by the Holy Spirit, a dependable light for doctrine and life, proclaiming salvation through Christ.

Paul, on the other hand, is the dialectician of Scripture; from him we may expect a more detailed direction for the correct method of exegesis. There are, accordingly, in his writings many statements and directions relating to Scripture. First there is a series of statements about Scripture which identify the Apostle's attitude toward what we call the scriptural principle:

1. *Scripture is directly inspired by God through His Spirit* (Galatians 1:12; 3:8, 22; 2 Timothy 3:15-16; 1 Corinthians 2:10; 15:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; Ephesians 3:5).

2. *It is infallible, sound, worthy of acceptance, clear, above reason, and a power of God* (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5, 7, 9; 1 Timothy 1:4, 10, 15; 2 Timothy 3:15; Galatians 1:8, 9).

3. *It is to serve us for godliness here and for glory above through faith in Christ, in Whom we have all the treasures of wisdom* (2 Timothy 3:15-16; Romans 3:19; 1 Timothy 1:4-11).

4. *It has typical meaning of the Old to the New Testament* (Galatians 4:24 ff; 1 Corinthians 10:6; Hebrews 7-10).

From these statements we derive the following rules for the way in which the exegete is to treat Scripture:

1. The exegete must himself be a Christian enlightened by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4, 12, 14, 15).

2. He is to adhere to the words (1 Timothy 6:34; 2 Timothy 1:13).

3. He is not to do any hair-splitting (2 Corinthians 3:6; 1 Timothy 1:4; 4:7; 6:4-5). With this direction, besides other purely exegetical reasons, every understanding of Galatians 3:16 is rejected which charges the Apostle with hairsplitting.

4. It is not to be his desire to fathom everything (1 Corinthians 2:7, 9; 13:12).

5. He shall not seek explanations compatible with reason (1 Corinthians 2:1; 4, 13, 14).

6. He shall compare Scripture with Scripture (Galatians 3:6-14).

7. He shall divide the Word rightly (2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Romans 3:19; 1 Timothy 1:6, 9).

8. He shall refer everything to Christ as the center (Galatians 1:18; Ephesians 1:10; 2:20; 1 Corinthians 3:11).

For the correct understanding of the passages quoted from Paul's letters it is necessary to remind our readers of the following. Paul's hermeneutics lies along the line of natural, general interpretation, which is free of all so-called scientific accessories which look upon exegesis as a special, learned, artistic activity.

The Apostle's directions are meant for every simple Christian. They have as their goal that the Christians should stay with the right *doctrine* instead of busying themselves with their own inventions which only serve to cater to vanity and to lead the hearers onto false paths. But because these instructions flow so directly out of the natural connection of Scripture with divine matters, the words are so chosen that they immediately have the adequate expression for our hermeneutics which applies a scientific, linguistic, and historical measuring scale.

D. Exegesis Gives Way to Morality

After the death of the Apostles the Church, humanly speaking, was put upon its own resources. It now had to administer the Gospel treasure committed to its care in order to proclaim it to the whole world. The Gospel was to permeate *all conditions* of human life among *all the different peoples of the world* and fill them with its divine contents. Here begins a new history.

The Church developed under the laws governing human life and participated in the weal and woe which is always caused by specific human circumstances. The Church first suffers all the diseases of childhood before it matures into complete manhood in Luther and the Reformation. It enters into the life of antiquity at a time when the ancient world no longer is at its best and its coming bankruptcy can already be discerned. As a consequence, the Church has in its outward form all the weaknesses of a declining civilization. It does not find it possible to arrive at complete maturity even in itself, but carries the Gospel to the Germanic peoples only in a strongly weakened form. For these nations, the Middle Ages under the papal rule become a stage of propaedeutics, as the Old Testament with its rule of the Law was for the Church in general.

Only in the Reformation does the mental maturity set in, which then develops from the end of the seventeenth century in respect to the external conditions of the Church as well as of the world. All expressions of the life of the Church, including exegesis, participate in this development.

The history of exegesis in the Ancient Church falls into three periods: A. the time of unbiased exegesis up to Origen; B. scientific exegesis from Origen to Augustine; C. the decline up to the beginning of the Middle Ages.

It is difficult to form an opinion about the early times of the Church after the death of the Apostles because we have no literature from these times. True, we have the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. But in the first place, that is probably only a small part of the Christian literature of that time. In the second place, all of these writings are of a

practical nature, even the "Homily of the Second Letter of Clement," so that we cannot expect to find much exegetical material there. The other writings, too, of which we have only scanty remains or allusions in later writings, the elaborations of gospel history or of the book of Revelation in the New Testament apocrypha, do not shed much light upon the interpretative skill of those days. If we wish to come to some conclusion, we can only say that in that period they did not do much work in exegesis.

At first the Church needed time to get acquainted with the new doctrine and to digest the great thoughts which stormed in upon it. Furthermore, the external conditions of the dispersion forced upon it did not permit a more thorough intellectual activity. Proof for this statement are the extant writings of the Apostolic Fathers; they are of a practical nature and speak of external ordinances, or they contain general directions about moral matters. Here they employ Scripture only to give their speech force and expression. This was probably also the nature of their preaching, especially since in very few cases the bishops and presbyters were able through their education to do more. Exegesis in those days was probably in the main upon the same level as it is now among the members of our congregations: The simple, general, unbiased grasping of what they hear on the basis of principles of exegesis which everyone forms for himself unconsciously. We must also take into account the strange tone which pervades the entire extant literature. It is the tone of legalism, obedience to the ecclesiastical superiors, the presbyters and bishops; the practice of abstinence; the observance of all sorts of moral rules—these ideas completely dominate the minds of these writers. This tone does not permit a real exegesis of Scripture to develop. The people speak and judge according to impressions only.

[EDITORIAL NOTE: **Biblical Hermeneutics - An Outline for the Seminary Course**, was originally a 16-page pamphlet written for inclusion in a Seminary course. **The Function and History of Biblical Hermeneutics** is an amplification of a rather sketchy outline. In a personal communication the translator wrote that "the history of that material is briefly this: At the Seminary, Otto Hohenstein showed me this essay, and upon my request permitted me to copy it. Then when I began to translate it for FAITH-LIFE, I asked him whether he would let me have the material again, because I seemed to have made some mistakes and because I was not sure about some of my abbreviations. Otto kindly sent me his notebook. It is unfortunate that Hohenstein's material breaks off at that point. It is certainly much more concrete than the Seminary outline. I reread the outline today and wondered how much we readers get from it. For me personally, the Hohenstein material is much more valuable."]