

## PRESUPPOSITIONS IN NEW TESTAMENT CRITICISM

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Why do the conclusions of New Testament scholars differ so widely? Anyone who begins to read books about the New Testament soon becomes aware that competent scholars defend with equal vigour and sincerity widely differing approaches to the New Testament. The variety of viewpoints often causes great perplexity both to theological students and to the church at large. Occasionally bewilderment leads to abandonment of serious historical critical study of the Scriptures in favour of a supposedly simple and direct "devotional" approach. Theological students are prone to the temptation to regard a listing of scholarly viewpoints and names in support of a particular opinion as serious exegesis.

As many parts of this book show, there is an on-going discussion about critical methods. But this hardly accounts for the extent to which scholarly conclusions differ; there is now considerable agreement among Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars about the appropriate tools and methods to be used in exegesis. The presuppositions adopted either consciously or unconsciously by the interpreter are far more influential in New Testament scholarship than disagreements over method.

The question of presuppositions in interpretation arises in all historical studies, in literary criticism, and also in scientific studies.<sup>1</sup> Historians frequently differ considerably in their assessment of the same source material. Literary critics are no more likely than New Testament scholars to reach agreement about the interpretation of ancient or modern literature. But there are, as we shall see, some questions which arise in a particularly acute form only in connection with the interpretation of the Bible.

As soon as we recognize the importance of presuppositions in all scholarly inquiry, we are bound to ask whether it is possible to abandon them in the interests of scientific rigour. If not, which presuppositions should be allowed to affect interpretation, and which not? Behind these questions lurk philosophical problems about the nature of knowledge; indeed, the task of philosophy can be defined as "the logical analysis of presuppositions."<sup>2</sup> A discussion of presuppositions has even wider implications: it is only a slight exaggeration to claim that the history of the church is the history of the interpretation of Scripture; the whole of church history revolves around the

presuppositions adopted in study of the Bible in different times and in different circumstances.<sup>3</sup>

Although discussion of presuppositions has frequently continued alongside scholarly study of the New Testament since the time of F. D. Schleiermacher, it has recently become much more prominent, particularly in association with the new hermeneutic.<sup>4</sup> As C. E. Braaten stresses, renewed interest in hermeneutical philosophy has encouraged exegetes to become self-conscious about their presuppositions.<sup>5</sup>

Presuppositions are involved in every aspect of the relationship of the interpreter to his text. Our theme is so wide and has so many implications that we cannot attempt to cover all aspects of it.<sup>6</sup> We shall discuss first some of the prejudices and presuppositions which are, or have been, involved in exegesis of the New Testament. An examination of presuppositions must be the first step taken in scientific interpretation. This is no easy task; for it is so hard to see the spectacles through which one looks and without which one cannot see anything clearly at all. We can attempt to do little more than underline the wide variety and all-pervasiveness of presuppositions at work in interpretation; a full-scale critique of various major theological positions is obviously not possible here. We shall then consider whether or not exegesis can be undertaken without presuppositions, for an allegedly neutral unbiased approach has often been appealed to in the past, and will always seem to be an attractive possibility. Finally, we shall discuss presuppositions which cannot be dispensed with and which ought to be involved in interpretation; in particular we shall discuss the interpreter's pre-understanding.

### I. *Prejudices and Presuppositions*

"Prejudice" and "presuppositions" are often used loosely as synonyms. Although the two words cannot be completely separated, it may be useful to distinguish between the personal factors which affect the judgment of the interpreter (prejudices) and the philosophical or theological starting point which an interpreter takes and which he usually shares with some others (presuppositions).<sup>7</sup>

An interpreter's work is always affected by human foibles and fallibility. Prejudice arises in all scholarly disciplines. The individual's personality will play a part in his work, even though this will usually be an unconscious influence; an optimist and a pessimist may well assess a literary or a historical document differently. Historians are usually well aware that their own political standpoint cannot be discounted; sometimes a particular political stance is taken quite deliberately. Cultural factors are also important; the interpreter may be so conditioned by his environment that he is almost automatically biased in one direction or else he is quite unable to consider all the alternative approaches.

Scholarly politics should not be neglected as a factor in interpretation. Younger scholars are often under considerable pressure to publish their results as quickly as possible; short cuts are sometimes taken, awkward

evidence ignored, and hypotheses all too often become proven results. Scholars rarely criticise the work of colleagues and friends as rigorously as other work.<sup>8</sup> There may be subtle pressures from a publisher with an eye on his market and, in the case of the biblical scholar, from various official or denominational quarters.

The New Testament scholar's interest in original results often leads to an over-emphasis on the distinctive theological perspective of different parts of the New Testament.<sup>9</sup> Recent redaction criticism of the gospels provides several examples of this.<sup>10</sup> There is no doubt that Matthew and Luke speak with different accents; both evangelists have modified and re-shaped the sources at their disposal. But a number of scholars assume too readily that a fresh theological outlook is the only factor at work.<sup>11</sup>

These varied pressures must be taken seriously. But they are not necessarily negative factors to be avoided at all costs. Without debate and without scholarly pressures advance would be slower. If all idiosyncratic features were to be eliminated from an individual performer's interpretation of a Beethoven sonata, how much poorer we should be! Hence different conclusions which arise from the prejudice of the individual interpreter are not necessarily undesirable; they are bound to arise, even where similar presuppositions are shared.

The interpreter must beware of and attempt to allow for the prejudice which may influence his judgment. But, as Gadamer has strongly stressed, a completely detached and unbiased stance is impossible: "Even a master of historical method is not able to remain completely free from the prejudices of his time, his social environment, his national position etc. Is that to be taken for a deficiency? And even if it were, I regard it as a philosophical task to reflect as to why this deficiency is never absent whenever something is done. In other words I regard *acknowledging what is* as the only scholarly way, rather than taking one's point of departure in what should be or might be."<sup>12</sup> Here, Gadamer overstates his case in debate with an opponent, E. Betti. But his main point is valid, even though he comes close to making a virtue out of a necessity. If an individual's prejudice is so deep-seated that, in effect, a verdict is passed before the evidence is even considered, then, surely, prejudice negates the possibility of understanding a text.

## II. *The Effects of Presuppositions*

A brief perusal of the history of the interpretation of Scripture is sufficient to confirm that the classical creeds of Christendom and particular doctrinal presuppositions have exercised a profound influence on interpretation right up to the present day.<sup>13</sup> Interpretation of the Bible has often involved little more than production of proof texts to support an already existing doctrinal framework. Later theological reflections have often been read back, often unconsciously, into the New Testament documents. W. Wrede saw the history of New Testament scholarship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the constant struggle of historical research to cut itself loose from

dogmatic prejudgments.<sup>14</sup> The impact of doctrinal convictions on historical and exegetical studies can also be seen in Jewish scholarship; J. Neusner has recently argued that in this respect Jewish scholarship is 150 years behind New Testament research. Neusner shows that the rabbinic traditions have often been used for apologetic purposes by both Jewish and Christian scholars who have failed to study them from a rigorously historical perspective.<sup>15</sup>

It is hardly necessary to list examples of the profound effect theological presuppositions have had on exegesis. But we must take time to illustrate this important point briefly before we consider whether or not it is possible to avoid the impact of presuppositions.

The parables of Jesus have always been central in hermeneutical discussion; this is not surprising since the meaning of a parable is rarely made explicit in the gospels, but it is left for the hearer or interpreter to discover for himself. Hence presuppositions can influence exegesis of the parables even more easily and strongly than other parts of the Bible. Allegorical interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan was all but universal in the early church and in the middle ages, and it has persisted until modern times.<sup>16</sup> Origen's interpretation is a good example of allegorical exegesis. For Origen (who lived from c. 185–c. 254 A.D.), the man who fell among thieves is Adam. As Jerusalem represents heaven, so Jericho, to which the traveller journeyed, is the world. The robbers are man's enemies, the devil and his minions. The priest stands for the law, the Levite for the prophets. The good Samaritan is Christ himself. The beast on which the wounded man was set is Christ's body which bears the fallen Adam. The inn is the Church; the two pence, the Father and the Son; and the Samaritan's promise to come again, Christ's Second Advent.

Why will this simply not do? Such an interpretation presupposes that the original hearers of the parable were already completely familiar with a systematically organised summary of "classical" Christian doctrine. This is the presupposition which unlocks the meaning of the parable; if one does not have the key, the parable remains a mystery. In allegorical exegesis of this kind, the text becomes a coat-hook on which the interpreter hangs his own ideas; the exegete can draw from the parable almost whatever he likes.<sup>17</sup> Interpretation becomes an "in-game".

Not surprisingly, the two pence given by the good Samaritan to the inn-keeper provided plenty of scope for imaginative exegesis. Some of the early fathers suggested that they represented the Old and the New Testaments, others the two commandments of love, or faith and works, or virtue and knowledge, or the body and blood of Christ; less frequently, the promise of present and future life, or historical and anagogical interpretation, or a text and its interpretation were mentioned.<sup>18</sup> We have chosen an extreme example in order to underline as clearly as possible the impact which presuppositions, particularly doctrinal presuppositions, always have on interpretation.<sup>19</sup>

Ian Paisley's strident attack on the New English Bible illustrates the same

point. Paisley explicitly adopts a doctrinal standpoint from which he judges the New English Bible: "The Shorter Catechism, that great little compendium of Biblical Theology",<sup>20</sup> Paisley argues that the translators of the NEB have with diabolical cunning deliberately attacked a number of cardinal Christian doctrines; their presuppositions have influenced their translation of the text.<sup>21</sup> Most of Paisley's criticisms are patently absurd. But one cannot suppose that while his own presuppositions are clearly stated, the translators of the NEB have managed to eliminate their own presuppositions and have simply translated the text with sound scholarly methods. For all translation involves interpretation and interpretation without any presuppositions is, as we shall argue later, an unattainable goal.

The history of life of Jesus research provides further confirmation of the impact of presuppositions on historical research and on exegesis. Albert Schweitzer introduced his survey of scholarly lives of Jesus with the observation that there is no historical undertaking which is more personal in character than the attempt to write a life of Jesus.<sup>22</sup> And the position has hardly changed since Schweitzer's day: once the assumptions and presuppositions of the author are known, it is not difficult to predict the main outlines of his portrait of Jesus.<sup>23</sup> C. E. Braaten notes cynically but correctly that nothing makes an onlooker so skeptical of New Testament scholarship as observing the frequency with which there occurs a convenient correspondence between what scholars claim to prove historically and what they need theologically.<sup>24</sup>

Presuppositions in New Testament exegesis are as frequently philosophical as doctrinal, though a sharp distinction is impossible. The miracle stories in the gospels and in Acts provide an example of the interplay of philosophical and doctrinal presuppositions. The interpreter's prior decision about the possibility or impossibility of miracle is bound to influence his conclusions about the historicity of the miracle stories even more than his literary analysis of the traditions; doctrinal or theological presuppositions will influence his assessment of their significance for Christology.<sup>25</sup> Existential exegesis also involves philosophical and theological presuppositions.

R. Bultmann's comment is apposite: "Every exegesis that is guided by dogmatic prejudices does not hear what the text says, but only lets the latter say what it wants to hear."<sup>26</sup> Neither the conservative nor the radical scholar can claim to be free from presuppositions. But this does not mean that the interpreter must attempt to become a neutral observer; on the contrary, empathy with the subject matter of the text is an essential presupposition. Before we take up this point in more detail, we must examine briefly the alternative approach: presuppositionless exegesis.

### III. *Presuppositionless Exegesis?*

Once the close relationship between the interpreter's own assumptions and convictions and his exegetical and theological results is appreciated ful-

ly, the attraction of interpretation which does not read into the text what is not there becomes apparent.<sup>27</sup> Is it possible to set aside completely one's own presuppositions, and to approach the text from a neutral detached viewpoint with an agreed historical critical method and so reach scientific, objective results quite untainted by dogma? Can we, for example, locate the "pure" facts of the life and teaching of Jesus behind the early church's interpretation of him?

This possibility has frequently teased Biblical scholars. Indeed, as confidence in the historical critical method grew in the nineteenth century, so too did the appeal of presuppositionless exegesis. In 1860 Benjamin Jowett claimed that the interpretation of Scripture had nothing to do with any opinion of its origin; the meaning of Scripture was one thing, the inspiration of Scripture was another.<sup>28</sup> Although "spectator" exegesis is associated particularly with the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, it has continued to be championed by a few scholars. E. Stauffer, for example, claimed that in his attempt to write what he called a history of Jesus, the evangelists' interpretation of Jesus, the interpretation offered by the dogmas of the church, even his own personal interpretation of Jesus were barred.<sup>29</sup> No doubt the aim seemed to some to be laudable, but the results were disappointing. Stauffer's own prejudices and assumptions were clearly revealed on almost every page.

Whenever scholarly results diverge strongly, and whenever influential "schools" of exegesis arise which are heavily dependent on particular presuppositions, a supposedly neutral uncommitted approach will always seem to offer an attractive way forward. Secure, firmly established results will always appeal to many scholars and laymen, however meagre the results turn out to be.

Nor may we suppose that whereas exegetical or theological judgments are very much at the mercy of presuppositions, historical and literary questions need not be open to the distortion of the interpreter's standpoint. An historian cannot approach either an ancient or a modern text without asking particular questions of his sources; behind his questions lurk his presuppositions.

A completely detached stance is not even possible in textual criticism; whenever the textual evidence is ambiguous the scholar's decision will be influenced, however indirectly, by his own presuppositions. The Jerusalem Bible provides an interesting reminder that doctrinal presuppositions are at work in textual criticism, even when least expected. At John 1:13 all the Greek manuscripts have a plural verb: it is those who believed in the name of Jesus who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. A weakly attested variant has a singular verb: the verse then refers to Jesus who was born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh . . . but of God. The variant is almost certainly not original; it is more likely that a reference to the virgin birth has been introduced rather than removed by an early scribe. The scholarship which lies behind the Jerusalem Bible is generally of a high standard, but in this case preference for a most

unlikely variant would seem to stem ultimately from a desire to find within the New Testament a further strand of evidence which supports the Virgin Birth.

Bernard Lonergan has recently called presuppositionless exegesis "the Principle of the Empty Head". "On this view," he writes, "the less one knows, the better an exegete one will be . . . Anything over and above a re-issue of the same signs in the same order will be mediated by the experience, intelligence, and judgment of the interpreter."<sup>30</sup> This is surely correct. It is possible to minimise the influence of presuppositions; it is not possible to begin to interpret a text without approaching it from a particular angle – and behind the choice of that initial stance from which one asks questions of a text lie presuppositions.

The attempt to interpret the New Testament from a neutral detached standpoint with methods which were assumed to be strictly scientific has largely been abandoned. At the height of its popularity this approach had its own widely shared assumptions, those of classical liberalism.

#### IV. *Pre-understanding and the Text*

Although R. Bultmann launched a series of attacks on the assumptions of nineteenth century scholars and developed his own distinctive understanding of the role of presuppositions in interpretation, it was Karl Barth who took the first decisive step in a new direction in interpretation, with the publication of his commentary on Romans. The brief preface, written in 1918, is a powerful and moving theological statement. It begins: "Paul spoke as a son of his own time to his own contemporaries. But there is a much more important truth than this: Paul speaks as prophet and apostle of the Kingdom of God to all men of all times."<sup>31</sup> At the beginning of the twentieth century almost all New Testament scholars took it for granted that the task of exegesis was to establish as exactly and as fully as possible what the text meant in its own time. For Barth the more important and dangerous question was the present meaning of the text.<sup>32</sup> The preface continues, "The reader will detect for himself that it has been written with a sense of joyful discovery. The mighty voice of Paul was new to me, and if to me, no doubt to many others also." Barth had no desire to reject the historical critical method as such; he states this explicitly in the preface to his commentary as well as in later writings.<sup>33</sup> For Barth the historical critical method was the starting point in exegesis, though, as many of his critics have maintained with not a little justification, Barth himself frequently paid only lip-service to his own principle.

The interpreter does not observe the text from a safe distance; interpretation means confrontation with the text – and this means the confrontation of blind and sinful man with the sovereign and gracious God. In the light of recent scholarly preoccupation with hermeneutics and with presuppositions in particular, it is surprising that Barth did not comment explicitly in much greater detail on the relationship of the interpreter to the text.<sup>34</sup>

R. Bultmann quickly joined forces with Barth (though in later years they disagreed on many basic theological issues). Bultmann and Barth both insisted that exegesis which merely interprets the text in its original historical situation cannot uncover the meaning of the text. In an important essay published in 1950 Bultmann discussed the interpreter's presuppositions at some length. He stressed that presuppositionless exegesis is impossible; understanding is continually informed by a definite way of asking questions of the text, and this includes a pre-understanding of the subject matter of the text.<sup>35</sup>

In a second essay on the same theme Bultmann insists that the one presupposition which cannot be dismissed is the historical method of interrogating the text. The interpreter must pay attention to the meaning of words, to the grammar, to the style and to the historical setting of the text.<sup>36</sup> But the most important part of the essay is Bultmann's exposition of the interpreter's pre-understanding (*Vorverständnis*). If history is to be understood at all, then some specific perspective is always presupposed. "Can one understand economic history without having a concept of what economy and society in general mean? . . . Only he who has a relation to music can understand a text that deals with music."<sup>37</sup> This is surely correct. It is not surprising that Bultmann's notion of pre-understanding has been extremely influential in recent theological writing. The so-called new hermeneutic takes this aspect of Bultmann's work as one of its main starting points.

If one accepts that the interpreter must have a pre-understanding of the subject matter of his text, one is driven to the conclusion that there can never be a definitive interpretation of a text. "The understanding of the text," insists Bultmann, "remains open because the meaning of the Scriptures discloses itself anew in every future . . . Since the exegete exists historically and must hear the word of Scripture as spoken in his special historical situation, he will always understand the old word anew. Always anew will it tell him who he, man, is and who God is . . ." <sup>38</sup> Here we have one answer to the problem with which we began: the variety of conclusions reached by scholars committed to the historical critical method. If exegesis cannot be conducted at a safe distance from the text, from a neutral perspective, then there are bound to be a variety of interpretations, since the questions asked of the text by different scholars or readers will differ.

If each interpreter must approach the text with his own pre-understanding, we are bound to ask which kinds of pre-understanding are valid and which are not. Bultmann himself insisted that the historian must be "self-conscious about the fact that his way of asking questions is one-sided and only comes at the phenomenon of the text from the standpoint of a particular perspective. The historical perspective is falsified only when a specific way of raising questions is put forward as the only way — when, for example, all history is reduced to economic history."<sup>39</sup> Bultmann did not always put this sound theoretical principle into practice. His own particular way of asking questions of the text from an existentialist perspective became not



just one approach among many others, but was elevated to a commanding height from which the whole New Testament landscape was surveyed.<sup>40</sup>

But even if Bultmann was inconsistent himself, he did quite rightly insist that the interpreter's pre-understanding is not in any sense to be regarded as definitive for it must be open to modification by the text.<sup>41</sup> This is a most important point to which we shall return in a moment.

### V. *Possible Safeguards*

If it is not necessary for the interpreter to lay aside his own preliminary understanding of the subject matter of the text, have we not succumbed yet again to the tendency of Christian scholars right through history to read the New Testament through their own doctrinal spectacles? There are important safeguards against this threat, but no guarantees that it will be avoided.

The first is that the interpreter who is aware of the danger is more likely to avoid it than one who is not. Hence the importance of the history of exegesis for the theologian. Such a study underlines the need to refrain from allowing a doctrinal framework to dominate the text; it also reminds one that the Word of God must be heard anew in every generation. The latest exegesis or the latest theological insight is not the first time that new light has been shed on the text – nor will it be the last.

The second safeguard is the historical critical method. This at once rules out, for example, fanciful allegorical exegesis. The current flight from careful scholarly historical study of the Bible is surely only a passing fashion. The meaning of the Scriptures must not be restricted to what the text seems to be saying to me today. The critical methods used by biblical scholars (and discussed in later chapters in this book) are a fence which keep the interpreter's doctrinal assumptions or convictions in check. The methods themselves must be open to constant scrutiny and reappraisal lest they too become a framework which locks the text rigidly into one position.

The third safeguard is even more important. The interpreter must allow his own presuppositions and his own pre-understanding to be modified or even completely reshaped by the text itself. Unless this is allowed to happen, the interpreter will be unable to avoid projecting his own ideas on to the text. Exegesis guided rigidly by pre-understanding will be able to establish only what the interpreter already knows.<sup>42</sup> There must be a constant dialogue between the interpreter and the text. The hermeneutical circle is not only unavoidable but desirable.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, one must go still further: the text may well shatter the interpreter's existing pre-understanding and lead him to an unexpectedly new vantage point from which he continues his scrutiny of the text. Once the text is given priority and once the interpreter ceases to erect a barrier between himself and the text, he will find that as he seeks to interpret the text, the text will, as it were, interpret him. When this happens, the authority of Scripture is being taken seriously; God's Word is not a dead letter to be observed coldly but a Word which speaks to me in my situation.

This important hermeneutical principle helps us to see in a new light a

problem which often arises in discussions of the exegete's presuppositions. Must the interpreter share the convictions and faith of the New Testament writers, or can the New Testament be interpreted by a non-Christian? Many would want to affirm that since the New Testament documents were written by men deeply and passionately committed to the person of Jesus Christ, the faith of the original writers must be shared by the interpreter. For if full understanding includes not only what the text meant, but also what it means now, faith must be necessary if the intention of the text is to be exposed.

Some, on the other hand, would want to stress that many parts of the New Testament were written to awaken faith, not to confirm it. The parables of Jesus do not presuppose that the hearers share Jesus' standpoint, for many of them are deliberately designed to break through the defences of those who listened. Many parts of the gospel traditions were used primarily in the missionary preaching of the early church. Luke almost certainly wrote his two volumes for interested but uncommitted readers; the Fourth Gospel is evangelistic in intention. Surely it is legitimate for the interpreter to stand where the original readers or hearers stood: they did not necessarily share the convictions of the writer or speaker. Hence, it might be argued, we must not insist that the text can be understood fully only from the standpoint of faith.

How is this dilemma to be resolved, for both positions can be defended cogently? We cannot suggest that while the parts of the New Testament which were written originally to Christian believers can be understood fully only in the light of faith, the "evangelistic" sections do not require any such prior commitment. The New Testament cannot be divided up neatly into these two categories.

If, as we have argued, interpretation involves *dialogue* with the text, to ask whether or not the interpreter must be a Christian believer is, in a sense, to ask the wrong question. It would be a valid and important question if it were possible for the interpreter to isolate himself from the text in the safety of a detached position, for in that case, even if he claimed to be working without any presuppositions, his own convictions and understanding would be the spectacles through which the text would *always* be viewed. But, as we have stressed, "spectator" exegesis is both impossible and undesirable. Once exegesis is seen as an on-going dialogue between the interpreter and the text, the interpreter's starting point becomes less important than his willingness and readiness to run the risk that the pre-understanding with which he comes to the text may well be refined or completely renewed: he must be prepared to be interpreted by the text. That is the necessary presupposition with which he must attempt to operate.

The exegete cannot allow either his own personal bias or prejudice or his pre-understanding to dominate the text. They cannot be avoided completely, but they must be no more than a door through which the text is approached. The text is prior: the interpreter stands before it humbly and prays that through the scholarly methods and the questions with which he comes to the text, God's Word will be heard afresh. This is the exciting task to which the

interpreter is called. But it is also a dangerous task: God's Word sweeps away my comfortably secure presuppositions; it is a Word of judgment as well as of grace.

## NOTES

1. The standard work is H. -G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen 1973<sup>3</sup>; E.T. *Truth and Method*, London 1975). In both the second (1965) and the third editions (1973), Gadamer interacts with his critics and with the recent literature. For a useful summary and critical discussion, see E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven 1967), especially pp. 245ff.
2. A. Nygren, *Meaning and Method: Prolegomena to a Scientific Philosophy of Religion and a Scientific Theology* (London 1972), pp. 160ff.
3. Cf. G. Ebeling's lecture, *Kirchengeschichte als Geschichte der Auslegung der Heiligenschrift*, Tübingen 1947); reprinted in G. Ebeling, *Wort Gottes und Tradition* (Göttingen 1964), pp. 9-27; E.T. *The Word of God and Tradition* (London 1966), pp. 11-31.
4. See J. M. Robinson, "Hermeneutic Since Barth" in J. M. Robinson and J. B. Cobb (ed.), *The New Hermeneutic* (New York 1964), pp. 1-77.
5. C.E. Braaten, *History and Hermeneutics* (London 1968), p. 52.
6. This chapter should be read in close conjunction with F. F. Bruce's preceding chapter "The History of New Testament Study" and A. C. Thiselton's discussion of "The New Hermeneutic" in chapter XVI.
7. Cf. A. Nygren, op. cit., pp. 187ff.
8. Cf. for examples, W. R. Farmer's discussion of the history of synoptic source criticism. *The Synoptic Problem*, (New York and London 1964), esp. pp. 94ff. and pp. 287ff.
9. This danger is, however, less serious than the widespread assumption that all the writers of the New Testament speak with the same voice.
10. See S. S. Smalley's discussion of redaction criticism in chapter XI; also M. D. Hooker. "In his own Image?" in *What About the New Testament?* ed. M. Hooker and C. Hickling (London 1975), pp. 28-44.
11. I have argued elsewhere that some of the alterations Luke makes to his sources are not theological (as several scholars have supposed) but stylistic. G. N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching* (Cambridge 1974), pp. 31-66.
12. *Wahrheit und Methode* (3rd ed. 1973), pp. 483f. (E.T. pp. 465f.). I have used J. M. Robinson's translation, *The New Hermeneutic*, op. cit., p. 76.
13. Doctrinal presuppositions have also exercised a profound influence on interpretations of church history!
14. See R. Morgan's interesting discussion of W. Wrede, *The Nature of New Testament Theology* (London 1973), esp. p. 22.
15. J. Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70* (Leiden 1970), Vol. III, pp. 320ff.
16. For valuable detailed studies, see W. Monselewski, *Der barmherzige Samariter: eine auslegungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Lukas 10, 25-37* (Tübingen 1967), and H. G. Klemm, *Das Gleichnis vom Barmherzigen Samariter: Grundzüge der Auslegung im 16./17. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 1973).
17. Not all allegorical exegesis is as fanciful as the example given. I do not accept that all traces of allegory in the parables must stem from the early church rather than from Jesus himself.
18. For the details and the references, see H. G. Klemm, op. cit., p. 22f., n.23 and W. Monselewski, op. cit., pp. 45ff.
19. For a discussion of the influence of presuppositions on recent interpretation of the parables, see N. Perrin, "The Modern Interpretation of the Parables and the Problem of Hermeneutics", *Interpretation* 25 (1971), pp. 131-148.

20. Ian R. K. Paisley, *The New English Bible: Version or Perversion?* (Belfast, no date), p. 6.
21. Paisley concentrates largely on the judgment of the NEB translators in an area with which he himself is not familiar: textual criticism.
22. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London 1953<sup>3</sup>), p. 4.
23. See, for example, R. Slenczka's discussion, *Geschichtlichkeit und Personsein Jesu Christi* (Göttingen 1967). See also H. K. McArthur's useful collection of excerpts from a wide range of recent writing on the life of Jesus, *In Search of the Historical Jesus* (New York 1969).
24. *History and Hermeneutic*, p. 55.
25. For a useful discussion, see H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Leiden 1965).
26. "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?", English translation in *Existence and Faith*, ed. S. M. Ogden, (London 1961 and 1964), p. 343. Page references are to the 1964 paperback edition.
27. Cf. K. Frör's discussion, *Biblische Hermeneutik* (Munich 1967<sup>3</sup>), pp. 51ff.
28. "On the Interpretation of Scripture", in *Essays and Reviews* (1860), pp. 350f. I owe this reference to C. W. Dugmore (ed.), *The Interpretation of the Bible*, (London 1944), p. vii. cf. the essay by T. W. Manson in the same volume, pp. 92-107.
29. *Jesus and His Story* (London 1960), p. 13.
30. B. J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London 1972), p. 157.
31. *Der Römerbrief*, 1st ed. 1919; E. T. *The Epistle to the Romans* (London 1933), pp. 1f.
32. I have oversimplified Barth's position for the sake of clarity. Elsewhere Barth insists that the interpreter is dealing not so much with the text *per se* as with the "reality" which lies behind the text.
33. See, for example, *Church Dogmatics* 1/2 (E.T. Edinburgh 1956), pp. 464ff. and 722ff.
34. For more detailed discussions, see G. Eichholz, "Der Ansatz Karl Barths in der Hermeneutik" in *Antwort: Karl Barth zum siebzigsten Geburtstag* (Zollikon-Zürich 1956), pp. 52ff.; F.-W. Marquardt, "Exegese und Dogmatik in Karl Barths Theologie", *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, Registerband (Zürich 1970), pp. 651ff.
- Verstehen* II (Tübingen, 1952), pp. 211-235; E.T. *Essays Philosophical and Theological* (London 1955), pp. 236-261.
36. "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" *Existence and Faith*, p. 344. Bultmann insists that "the historical method includes the presupposition that history is a unity in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect . . . This closedness means that the continuum of historical happenings cannot be rent by the interference of supernatural transcendent powers . . ." Bultmann's main point is that historical science as such can neither prove nor disprove that God has interfered in history; "it can only leave every man free to determine whether he wants to see an act of God in a historical event that it itself understands in terms of that event's immanent historical causes." (ibid., p. 345). Bultmann does not wish to deny that God has acted in history.
37. Ibid., p. 347. Similarly, "Das Problem", op. cit., p. 218f.
38. "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?", op. cit., p. 351.
39. Ibid., p. 346.
40. So also, among many others, C. E. Braaten, op. cit., p. 134, and A. Nygren, op. cit., pp. 200ff. (cf. also pp. 131ff. and 299ff.).
41. "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" op. cit., p. 347f.
42. Cf. D. O. Via, *The Parables* (Philadelphia 1967), p. 50.
43. On the hermeneutical circle, see A. C. Thiselton's discussion below, p. 316.