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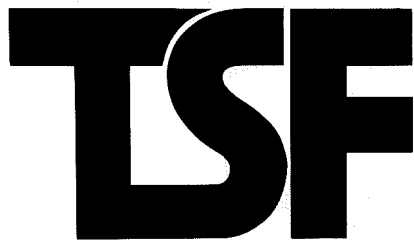
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BULLETIN

MAY / JUNE 1982

TSF BULLETIN VOL. 5 No. 5
(Formerly *TSF News & Reviews*)
Published by Theological Students
Fellowship, 233 Langdon, Madison WI
53703. ISSN No. 0272-3913

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in doubt, observe. For example, to me the arguments that God approves of homosexual behavior are specious and Scripture twisting, and therefore we ought to regard it as displeasing to him. In this case the first step of hermeneutics prevents us from adopting the current permissiveness in this matter. In the end, of course, such things are not decided by some scholar, but by the whole community who lives with the Scriptures and with these questions and eventually arrives at a consensus or *modus vivendi*.

In conclusion, my advice is to observe both steps in the hermeneutical two-step. Be sure to give the Bible its full due as the written Word of God. Do not sell it short. Do not despair over the text just because some professor of yours has. Reserve your judgment and strive to see the issue through to a resolution. For we live in the hermeneutical hope that what the Bible says will prove to be the very Word which modern men and women need to hear even if at present they may resist hearing it. Our job is to let the Bible stand tall and do our utmost to understand the contemporary experiences so as to explain the claim of God in the most lucid way possible. Often we will find an interpretive breakthrough with God's help which will loose the Scriptures powerfully into the current situation. But if it should happen that they will not hear the Word whatever we do to explain it, let us stand strong in it and not yield an inch to unbelief. Like Ezekiel let us sit where they sit and help them understand, but if they refuse, the message must be given, and it remains the same.

For Further Reading

To get some help with the "new hermeneutic" consult A. C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Eerdmans), even though the book is dense and lacks sufficient positive directness. Thiselton is promising more of these in a forthcoming book.

For a guided tour through some of the difficult interpretive issues such as sex-roles and inspiration, check Robert K. Johnston, *Evangelicals at an Impasse, Biblical Authority in Practice* (John Knox).

David Kelsey makes us think twice about the question, "what kind of authority does the Bible have over us?" in *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* (Fortress). He ends up sounding too relativistic for me, giving the impression that the Bible can mean more or less what you decide and want it to mean, but at least he forces us to think about that and not take it for granted. My own view is that the Bible has that authority which it indicates it wants to have when you expound it. It differs from Psalms to Isaiah to Acts to Romans. The Bible exercises authority in many modes—but not according to our decision.

Politics of Jesus, by John Yoder (Eerdmans) illustrates a creative use of Scripture, whether he is right or not. He goes back to the text and brings it right into the present in a powerful move. The problem with the actual view he presents is that for many readers of the whole Bible it will set up difficulties of interpretation once you stray too far from the Sermon on the Mount, which Yoder gives a radical anabaptist reading.

STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS NEEDED

Each year TSF accepts applications from students wishing to serve as Contributors to *TSF Bulletin*. For 1982-83, the job description includes (1) contributing to the editorial content of the *Bulletin* by filling out brief evaluative questionnaires on each issue, and (2) submitting at least one book review as arranged in cooperation with an Associate Editor.

Letters of application must include current degree program, area of concentration, a sample of your writing, and summer and fall addresses. All applications should be received by June 15, 1982. Send them to the Editor, *TSF Bulletin*, 233 Langdon, Madison, WI 53703.

HERMENEUTICS AND HISTORY

By Vaughn Baker, M.Div. student, Perkins School of Theology.

In his book, *History and Hermeneutics* (Westminster, 1966), Carl Braaten reviews the debate in Protestant theology concerning the importance of history for faith. After discussing the role that nineteenth-century "questers" such as D. F. Strauss, dialectical theologians such as Barth, existentialist theologians such as Bultmann, and post-Bultmannians such as Ebeling, Fuchs, and Kasemann have all played in this debate, Braaten concludes along with Wolfhart Pannenberg that "the historical character of redemptive events must therefore be asserted today in discussion with the theology of existence, with the theology of redemptive history, and with the methodological principles of critical-historical investigation" (p. 28). Braaten calls for theology to find its locus once again in history, and not merely in an existential or transcendent history.

Carl Braaten notes that since the nineteenth century, hermeneutics has assumed a positivistic world-view in the historical-critical method. Such a method assumes a natural continuum and uniformity of events (Hume). The historical method also assumes that history consists of two layers: bare historical facts and their existential meanings (*Historie* and *Geschichte*). These two layers are separate and non-interdependent. The result of theology having accepted these historical assumptions is that history is seen as meaningless, and therefore theology must retreat into the safe harbors of existence or pre-history. The problem of such a retreat, however, is that the kerygma is divorced from history. Theology as a result becomes indifferent

Braaten rightly chooses to throw off the shackles of nineteenth-century positivism

to historical questions. Braaten believes that such a divorce of kerygma from history (or facts from meaning) is fatal for the following reasons: (1) The full meaning of the Incarnation implies that revelation is history happening. A separation of kerygma from history would contradict the meaning of the Incarnation. (2) An adequate apologetic must refer to the historical events from which the statements of faith arose, otherwise the truthfulness of the Christian faith would be in doubt. (3) Such an indifference to history does not do justice to the Old and New Testaments which purport to be witnesses to God's redemptive acts in history. (4) A merely existential interpretation is too limiting a principle. Both Testaments are concerned with more than one's self-understanding. (5) Event and its meaning are indissoluble. Meaning and interpretation are themselves historical, and therefore events and their significance are but two dimensions of the same historical reality. (6) A separation of event and meaning reduces eschatology to something either transcendental or radically existentialized. To view history as a uniformity of natural causes results in an eschatology which does not focus on the future, denying the possibility of something really new happening.

Does this mean, therefore, that we should reject the historical-critical method and return to a pre-critical understanding of history, existence, and the cosmos? By no means, says Braaten. While he maintains that kerygma and history are bound up with each other, and that a dichotomy between the two cannot be maintained, Braaten agrees with both Pannen-

berg and Moltmann that the historical-critical method is not necessarily bound to a closed naturalistic world view, and must be liberated from it. This is necessary, lest we end up with an existential (individualized and interiorized) historicism.

If history is not to be understood in a positivistic sense, and faith not merely as an existential act of decision which is in no way dependent upon history, how then are we to understand faith's relation to history? Again Braaten returns to Pannenberg, who proposes a theology of world history (*Universalgeschichte*) as a solution to the hermeneutical problem. Such a theology would seek to find "an over-arching perspective that can bring the horizons of the past and present together without obliterating their distinctive characteristics" (p. 145). The historical process which includes (and unifies) Old and New Testament history, church history, and world history is regarded as the work of the biblical God. Therefore, theology has the task of seeing the connection between the acts of God recorded in Scripture, and the events of world and church history. History is therefore no longer meaningless, but becomes the arena and locus of God's unfolding plan for the world. History is no longer bifurcated, but is seen in its totality as a whole from the perspective of the end of history (Hegel), i.e., Jesus of Nazareth. History is now understood in the light of Jesus' resurrection from the dead (Moltmann), and as a result history's future glows with the anticipation of God doing a new thing in history (as opposed to uniformitarianism). Eschatology regains its rightful place, eagerly awaiting the coming of God's Kingdom on this earth. Eschatology is not reduced merely to Epiphany, but is understood in the biblical framework of promise and fulfillment.

Braaten's volume is helpful as a quick survey of where theology has gone in the last hundred years, and provides a new perspective from which the hermeneutical issues of modern Protestantism may be seen and discussed. Braaten's critique of Bultmann's existentialist method of interpretation helps show its limitedness and inadequacy to explicate the breadth of the whole biblical message. Helpful also is Braaten's criticism of modern theology's separation of kerygma from history. Such a dualism sounds reminiscent of ancient dualistic thought (cf. Moltmann's allusion to gnosticism in the *Theology of Hope*, p. 92). By employing Pannenberg's theology of world history, Braaten avoids such a dualism. Also the Old Testament is restored to its proper place along with the New in the scheme of

promise and fulfillment. Perhaps most importantly of all, Braaten seeks to take the future seriously as the place where God will do a new thing. A transcendent eschatology is no eschatology, and an existentialized interpretation is too limiting and individualistic. Braaten rightly chooses to throw off the shackles of nineteenth-century positivism and allow the present and the future of history to be understood in the light of Jesus' resurrection. For those who were raised on dialectical and existential theology, but want to dive into the waters of the hope school, this volume is a good springboard.

Since the time that *History and Hermeneutics* was published, a number of other works have come out which develop to a greater extent the issues raised in Braaten's volume. One of these works is: *New Frontiers In Theology Volume III: Theology As History*, edited by James M. Robinson & John B. Cobb, Jr. (Harper & Row, 1967). This volume provides a provocative study of that school of thought which finds its center in Wolfhart Pannenberg and his thesis that any relevant theology must develop from an assumption of the ultimate revelation of God through history. Another work along these lines is one edited by Pannenberg himself, entitled *Revelation As History*, (MacMillan, 1968). In this volume one should pay particular attention to Pannenberg's own chapter, "Dogmatic Theses On The Doctrine of Revelation," in which he explains his understanding of history (pp. 125-158). Also, in Pannenberg's *Basic Questions in Theology Vol. II* (Fortress, 1971) the chapter on "What Is Truth?" (pp. 1-27) provides some helpful insights in his proleptic view of history. One last work of Pannenberg's that I would note is his article "Hermeneutics and Universal History," in *History and Hermeneutic*, Robert W. Funk, ed., (Harper & Row, 1967).

For those who wish to go even further in this school of thought I would recommend two more references, both by Jürgen Moltmann: *Theology of Hope* (Harper & Row, 1967), and *Hope and Planning* (Harper & Row, 1971). In the latter please note chapter three, "Exegesis and the Eschatology of History" (p. 56-98).

Finally, Anthony Thiselton's *The Two Horizons* (Eerdmans, 1980) is the most comprehensive work on hermeneutics in recent years. Section III, on "Hermeneutics and History: The Issue of Historical Distance" includes comments on Nineham, Lessing, Hereder, Hegel, Ranke, Troeltsch, and Pannenberg.

WOMEN AND THE PROMISE OF RESTORATION

The Evangelical Women's Caucus will hold its fifth plenary conference in Seattle, July 21-24, 1982. Plenary meetings, workshops, seminars, and small-group sessions will provide a variety of opportunities for conference participants to explore aspects of biblical feminism. Session leaders include Patricia Gundry, Roberta Hestenes, David Scholer, and Nancy Hardesty. During the conference, Linda Mercadante, Nancy Hardesty and Mark Lau Branson will also lead an informal roundtable discussion about issues facing women in seminary. The EWC has as its purpose to present God's teaching in Scripture on female-male equality to the whole body of Christ's church, and to call both women and men to mutual submission and active discipleship. Those who would like more information about this conference should write: Evangelical Women's Caucus, Helen Estep, Registrar, P.O. Box 31613, Seattle, WA 98103.

EUROPEAN THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS' CONFERENCE

The International Fellowship of Evangelical Students will sponsor this conference, to be held September 1-8, 1982 at Schloss Mittersill in Austria. The conference aim is to establish a deeper understanding of evangelical theology and to stimulate closer

fellowship among theology students from the countries of Europe. The main speakers at the conference will be Dick France (England), who will speak on "Jesus' use of Scripture and our use of Scripture;" and Peter Kuzmic (Yugoslavia), who will do Bible exposition related to the conference theme, "The Word of the Lord and the Lord of the Word." The registration deadline is June 30, 1982. For more information, write IFES, 10 College Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1BE, England.

SAN FRANCISCO INSTITUTE ON URBAN MISSIONS

Simpson College in San Francisco has developed its Summer Institute for Urban Missions in response to the fact of rapid worldwide urbanization. The Institute will provide intensive cross-cultural/urban training that is biblically based and interdisciplinary. Course credit should transfer to most colleges and seminaries under any one of several disciplines. Eleven courses are offered in two sessions, June 7-July 1 and July 6-30, 1982. Course topics include urban family and youth ministries, urban church planting and growth, and urban social problems. Faculty include Craig Ellison, Donald Buteyn, Bennie Goodwin, and John Perkins. For more information write Summer Institute for Urban Missions, Simpson College, 801 Silver Ave., San Francisco, CA 94134.