

Tasks of New Testament Scholarship*

MARTIN HENGEL
TÜBINGEN UNIVERSITY

New Testament scholarship must move beyond its current preoccupation with faddish methods (as evidenced by several variations of the so-called new literary criticism) and return to a solid grounding in history, primary source materials, archaeology, and competence in the pertinent languages. This also entails familiarity with early Judaism, the Greco-Roman world, and early patristics. The exemplary contributions of major biblical scholars of the last century are reviewed.

Key Words: Tübingen School, New Testament world, primary sources

The Göttingen natural scientist and author Georg Christoph Lichtenberg observed self-critically, "The person who understands nothing but chemistry doesn't understand even it."¹ Would we not have to say something similar with regard to our own discipline? A New Testament scholar who understands the New Testament alone cannot rightly understand it at all. Still, the datum of New Testament scholarship is only a single book of 680 pages in its small format.² Among the disciplines in the humanities taught in universities, the field called "New Testament" surely has the most limited datum. One need only compare its neighbor, church history. Over against this one little book stands the complete Migne, with 378 volumes, along with countless other sources. A glance at Old Testament study, Jewish studies, and

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1. G. C. Lichtenberg, *Werke in einem Band* (ed. P. Plett; Hamburg: Hoffmann and Campe, 1967) 148 = 1 (Schmierbücher 1789-93) no. 838.

2. R. Morgenthaler, *Statistik des neutestamentlichen Wortschatzes* (Frankfurt am Main: Gotthelf Verlag, 1958) 164: with 137,490 words and 657 pages on the basis of the 21st edition of Nestle. The recently published 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland text runs to 680 pages.

classical philology (that is, at other neighboring fields of study) likewise reveals the same disparity. In the one instance, a vast number of sources from one or two millennia, in the other, twenty-seven documents, some brief, the first testimonies to a Jewish messianic sect covering a period of some sixty years, between 50 and 110 CE.

Of course, this striking disparity is bound up with the extraordinary claim to truth made by this little book and with a history of its influence that fills countless volumes. But a different, apparently opposite, problem immediately becomes evident here as well. In his aphorisms Lichtenberg, as an Enlightenment skeptic, is furious over "the time and trouble that have gone into interpreting the Bible." Somewhat hyperbolically, he suspects "a million octavo folders" (cf. John 21:25!), the result of "these efforts after hundreds and thousands of years" being that "the Bible is a book, written by human beings like all other books—by human beings who were somewhat different from us, since they lived in other times . . ."³

The Göttingen scholar and pastor's son wrote this two hundred years ago, as what had recently been coined the *historical-critical* approach to the New Testament was taking its first, tentative step.⁴ To what extent its results have been successful is still a matter for dispute today. That the Bible "written by human beings" is to be interpreted with the aid of philological-historical methods, as are other texts of the ancient world, is scarcely a matter of controversy for us now, and this without prejudging the question of its extraordinary claim to truth. Yet if, unlike then, there is today a worldwide *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, this is a refutation of the sharp-tongued skeptic who concludes with the words, "The more an interpretation of the Bible turns it into a completely ordinary book, the better this interpretation is."⁵ For when the New Testament is examined today by means of the same methods that are applied to the rest of ancient literature, it does not become "a completely ordinary book" at all. If it did, we would not be here.

Yet, after over two hundred years of critical interpretation, how are we today to do justice to this little book that gives its name to our discipline? With what tasks does it confront us at the end of the twentieth century? It is worth pondering this, and in doing so we must look back over how our field of study has developed. I beg your indulgence in concentrating chiefly on German Protestant scholarship. The *radical*, even in part destructive, criticism that has made the

3. Especially inaugurated by Johann Salomo Semler (Lichtenberg, *Werke*, 118 = 1 no. 12).

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5. Lichtenberg, *Werke*, 118 = 1 no. 12.

deepest imprint on our discipline has (I might almost say, unfortunately) come from Tübingen.⁶

Lichtenberg already saw the disparity between this *one* little book and the flood of exegetical literature. This has only grown since then. An example of this: Malatesta's catalogue of the literature on the Fourth Gospel between 1920 and 1965 runs to 3,120 items; van Belle's bibliography of that between 1966 and 1985 lists 6,300 titles.⁷ The total altogether since the Second World War may reach 15,000, and as it extends, it is shaped like a parabola. The computer makes this possible, even if we can scarcely physically keep us with the reading and writing anymore. Literature can be filed away unread and thereby "acknowledged."

They were happier times when Bishop Lightfoot gave a student the advice, "If you write a book on a subject, you have to read everything that has been written about it."⁸ Moreover, unlike us, both in England and in Germany, the greatest representatives of our field in the last century were not "New Testament scholars" at all. As von Dobschütz said of H. J. Holtzmann, their field of study "included the whole of theology."⁹

Indeed, chairs of New Testament did not yet exist. These were first established in the last decades of the previous century, in Tübingen, in 1898 for Adolf Schlatter, who was not only an exegete, but also a dogmatician, ethicist, and Judaist.¹⁰ Lectures in New Testament were offered by all professors of theology, whether they were Old Testament scholars, church historians, dogmaticians, or practical theologians.

The greatest impetus to the advance of the young discipline of New Testament along historical-philological lines came from the

6. The radical conclusions of D. F. Strauss (*Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet* [2 vols., Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1835-36]) and the even more radical conclusions of B. Bauer (*Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte and der Synoptiker* [2 vols., Leipzig: Wigand, 1841-42; 2nd ed., 1846]) lent support to the theories about earliest Christianity propounded by F. Engels.

7. E. Malatesta, *St. John's Gospel. 1920-1965* (AnBib 32; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967); G. van Belle, *Johannine Bibliography 1966-1985* (BETL 82; Leuven: Peeters and Leuven University, 1988).

8. G. R. Eden and F. C. Macdonald (eds.), *Lightfoot of Durham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1932) 135. Cf. M. Hengel, *Bishop Lightfoot and the Tübingen School on the Gospel of John and the Second Century* (DUJ Extra Complimentary No. for Subscribers, January 1992: The Lightfoot Centenary Lectures to Commemorate the Life and Work of Bishop J. B. Lightfoot [1828-89], ed. J. D. G. Dunn; Durham: Durham University Press, 1992) 23-51.

9. RE³ 23.658.

10. *A. Schlatters Rückblick auf seine Lebensarbeit: Zu seinem hundertsten Geburtstag herausgegeben von Th. Schlatter* (BFCT Sonderheft; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1952) 194; W. Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter* (R. Brockhaus Taschenbuch 101; Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1988) 121-22.

theologians whose primary work was done in Old Testament or in church history, in the first place from F. C. Baur, who both in lectures and in books treated not only the New Testament, but also the whole history of theology, philosophy of religion, canon law, and symbolics. We meet this combination of research in New Testament and church history in Hilgenfeld, Overbeck, Zahn, Harnack, Bousset, Lietzmann, and Klostermann, the last two of whom were classical philologists as well. Our discipline is also indebted to numerous Old Testament scholars for decisive suggestions, for instance, to de Wette, Ewald, Yatke, Tholuck, Delitzsch, Bleek, Reuss, Wellhausen, and Gunkel, and in more recent times Brevard Childs, James Barr, Klaus Koch, and Hartmut Gese. On the other hand, the "pure New Testament scholars" have provided precious little stimulation to these neighboring fields.

That one and the same scholar, such as R. H. Charles, should not only have edited the most important pseudepigrapha,¹¹ but also have written unsurpassed commentaries on Revelation¹² and Daniel,¹³ would have been impossible in Germany from the time of the First World War on, due to the organization of scholarship. By contrast, in the Anglo-Saxon world the connection between the two Testaments was furthered by means of the peculiar discipline of biblical studies, while in the German-speaking world the formulation "biblical theology," which had been in use since Spener's day, was more and more pushed to one side. Behind this stands a general distancing from the Old Testament on the part of German idealism. Typical thereof is the prizing of Marcion that is not restricted only to Harnack, as well as a widespread devaluation of Judaism and of its influence on Christianity, a tendency which after 1933 produced fearful results among many German theologians. It is always deadly for our discipline when it comes under the power of an alien, political ideology.

As for these specific errors that have affected my own country, today one may say that among the most important insights of our field of study since the Second World War belongs the recognition of how deeply rooted earliest Christianity is in Judaism as its native soil. This implies that the study of the pre-Christian Judaism of the Hellenistic period as a whole, that is, from the fourth century BCE on, is to be included in our field of study. Here Old and New Testament scholars must work hand in hand.

11. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament. Volume II: Pseudepigrapha* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913).

12. R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (2 vols., ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1920).

13. R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1929).

The real impetus to the emergence of New Testament scholarship as an *independent* theological discipline came from the radical criticism of the Tübingen school, beginning with the thunderclap of the *Life of Jesus* by D. F. Strauss in 1835-36 and with the appearance of publications on the New Testament from that time on by Baur and his students, who energetically demanded a "purely historical" approach.

The controversy thus ignited resulted in individual scholars concentrating largely on the New Testament and on the writings that stemmed from it in their discussion with the new school. I would reckon disciples of Baur such as Gustav Volkmar and Adolf Hilgenfeld among these,¹⁴ but also mediating scholars like Carl Weizäcker and H. J. Holtzmann, who excelled them all, as well as opponents such as Bernhard Weiss and Theodor Zahn. Even Lightfoot's epoch-making publication of the *Apostolic Fathers*¹⁵ is a reaction to the radical theses of the Tübingen scholars. The same can be said of Ernest Renan's seven-volume *Histoire des Origines du Christianisme*.¹⁶

While, on the one hand, our discipline has gradually become independent as the result of radical criticism that was meant to be consistently "historical," at the same time it was thereby called into question as "*New Testament* scholarship." For this criticism had made the canon of the New Testament as the ecclesiastically approved collection of "apostolic" writings obsolete as an historical entity. For those who, like Baur and his students, dated the Gospel of John at 170, the canon had to become a purely formal entity that could no longer be authorized historically. Since then, the problem of the canon has become a matter for controversy. In his 1892 polemic, *Das Dogma vom Neuen Testament*, Harnack's student Gustav Krüger made "the existence of New Testament scholarship . . . as a distinct theological-historical discipline . . . the chief obstacle . . . to a fruitful study of early Christianity leading *to secure results*." He challenged our guild to extend its field of study to the "appearance of the Catholic Church."¹⁷

14. See the assemblage of their essential publications in H. Harris, *The Tübingen School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) 279-83.

15. J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part I: S. Clement of Rome* (2 vols., London: Macmillan, 1869; 2nd ed., 1890); idem, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part II: S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp* (3 vols., London: Macmillan 1885; 2nd ed., 1889); idem and J. R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers: Revised Greek Texts with Introductions and English Translations* (London: Macmillan, 1891; repr. Grand Rapids; Baker, 1984). Now see the new revised and updated edition by M. W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989).

16. E. Renan, *Histoire des Origines du Christianisme* (7 vols., Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1863-99).

17. G. Krüger, *Das Dogma vom Neuen Testament* (Giessen: Curt von Münchow, 1892) 4 (author's emphasis).

Such challenges have been levied from the earliest period. In place of Introduction to the New Testament we are to have the History of Early Christian Literature; in place of a New Testament Theology, the History of the Religion of Earliest Christianity.¹⁸

To be sure, I cannot share this fear of the concept "theology," the Christian understanding of which is ultimately grounded in the Prologue of John. It is not by chance that an irreducible connection between the word of God, faith, and history is presented to us in this particular passage. The concepts θεολόγος, θεολογία, and θεολογεῖν enter at first on the basis of the Johannine λόγος in the language of the early Church Fathers and preserve over against the Greek environment a wholly new meaning.¹⁹ Our discipline would self-destruct were it to give up the question of truth pressed by Pauline and Johannine theological thinking and transform itself into a merely descriptive history of religion. For this is the salt that seasons our work and warrants its existence.

To the *question of the canon* I would reply with a *sic et non*, a yes and no. Let us begin with the "no." Our field of study *must by all means be more comprehensive* than the twenty-seven canonical texts we call the New Testament. A restriction to this narrow range of materials would be disastrous. It would mean strangling ourselves. Not restriction, but *expansion* should be our goal. As with regard to the Old Testament and the study of Judaism, I advocate broadening out to the beginnings of the Hellenistic period, so also with regard to patristics, I advocate moving the boundary up to the third century CE. The competition between the disciplines can only be salutary here. For this reason, it is a good sign when the commentaries on the apostolic fathers are written by New Testament scholars today, but we should not be satisfied with this since, as the first expositors, all the fathers up to Cyprian and Origen are of fundamental importance for our work. The history of the canon, too, including that of the LXX, ought again to receive special attention. In my reading on the Johannine question, I

18. For example, see W Wrede, *Über Aufgabe und Methode der sogenannten neutestamentlichen Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1897); idem, "Das theologische Studium und die Religionsgeschichte," in *Vorträge und Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1907) 64-83; and the more recent example, as seen in G. Lüdemann, "Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule und ihre Konsequenzen für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft," in H. M. Müller (ed.), *Kulturprotestantismus: Beiträge zu einer Gestalt des modernen Christentums* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1992) 311-38. The latter work harkens back to H. Räisänen, *Beyond New Testament Theology* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990).

19. Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.28.4-5, on the Christian writers from Justin to Clement of Alexandria. On the history of the idea, see F. Kattenbusch, "Die Entstehung einer christlichen Theologie: Zur Geschichte der Ausdrücke θεολογία, θεολογεῖν, und θεολόγος," *ZTK* 12 (1930) 161-205.

was appalled by the widespread ignorance today in this area—in stark contrast to the basic works of our grandfathers. Zahn's four-volume history of the canon appeared a bit more than one hundred years ago. It has not been surpassed, despite all mistakes. The same thing holds true of von Harnack's monumental history of literature and last but not least, his *Marcion*.²⁰ The bibliography to this first expositor of Luke and Paul in the new *Anchor Bible Dictionary* shows how little work has been done on him in the last seventy years.²¹ Only if we fully include the second and third centuries in our work can we as New Testament scholars meaningfully engage *gnostic texts*, since the gnostic system-builders and their communities lived during this time. Gnosis, so-called, is rather a peripheral problem for earliest Christianity. It belongs to its effects and not, as was mistakenly believed, to its antecedents. The texts affected by it—the Pastoral Epistles, Jude, and 2 Peter—are, as the latest writings of the New Testament, to be dated in the beginning of the second century. This means that we must energetically expand the chronological boundaries of our field, in order to be able appropriately to integrate gnosis into our work. The same holds true, moreover, for the Hermetica or for middle Platonism, through which a line of development in the philosophy of religion leads from Philo, by way of Basilides, Valentinus, his school,²² and the apologists, over to Clement and Origen, that bypasses the earliest Christian texts. This is the development that Harnack held responsible for the real "hellenizing" of Christianity.

For all that, one may also affirm *precisely on historical grounds* the decision of the ancient church as to the writings it took to be authoritative for itself. The decisive boundary-markers for the canon have already been erected by Irenaeus by 180, for around this time a consensus already exists from Gaul, through Rome and Carthage, over to Alexandria. The Baur school erred in its dating of the New Testament writings, and Lightfoot, Harnack, and others set this right. On the

20. A. von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom unbekanntem Gott* (TU 45; 2nd ed., Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924).

21. Cf. J. J. Clabeaux, "Marcion," *ABD* 4 (1992) 514-16.

22. Cf. C. Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus* (WUNT 65; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992); and W. Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], forthcoming). See also the foundational investigation of S. Pétremont, *Le Dieu séparé: Les origines du gnosticisme* (Paris: Cerf, 1984). I cannot accept the conjecture that Cerinthus is a fiction. He belongs, as do Menander and Saturninus, to the earliest witnesses of an incipient Gnosis that has been strongly influenced by Christianity, sometime around the turn of the century. See the older work by E. de Faye, *Gnostiques et gnosticisme* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1913); and the more recent work by K. Beyschlag, *Simon Magnus und die christliche Gnosis* (WUNT 10; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1974). On Philo's influence, see D. T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (CRINT 3.3; Assen: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

whole, we have no extracanonical writings that are older than the essential New Testament ones. While *1 Clement* might perhaps be contemporary with 1 Peter and the *Corpus Johanneum* and the letters of Ignatius with the Pastoral Epistles, today's popular attempt to fix earlier dates for later, so-called apocryphal gospel texts, above all the *Gospel of Thomas* or the Egerton Papyrus and the *Gospel of Peter*, have not convinced me at all.²³ The stability of New Testament writings, already present before 200, while it does not, to be sure, give us direct access to the apostolic testimony, does to the immediately following, manifold post-apostolic testimony of the second and third generations. The theological quality of this selection is also undeniable. One has only to compare Hebrews with *1 Clement*, Revelation with *Hermas*, or the four gospels with the later products. And that the genuine *Corpus Paulinum* and *Johanneum* together with the synoptics represent the basis of *Christian* theology—who would doubt this? And on what would it base itself otherwise, if it expects to be and to remain *Christian* theology? And what authorizes the existence of our Societas, if these things were no longer so? These texts do certainly form the center of our efforts, but we shall only do them justice if we draw the circle around them more broadly, so that we grasp them in relation to their Jewish and Hellenistic antecedents as well as to their early Christian effects.

Gustav Krüger saw in the restriction to the New Testament canon "the chief obstacle . . . to . . . a study of early Christianity leading to *secure and universally acknowledged results*."²⁴ Here we run into a wonderful optimism that was typical of the "historicism" of the nineteenth century. It believed—I mentioned F. C. Baur—that it was able ever more clearly to grasp "objective historical truth." The controversy over this "objective historical truth" has been going on for over 150 years. Have we really come decidedly closer to it? On a series of essential points a consensus was reached, if never a complete one. Thus, with regard to Markan priority and the existence of Q, that is, the "two source theory" over against Baur, Zahn, and Schlatter, who together with the ancient church continued to argue for the priority of Matthew, or in the recognition of seven genuine Pauline letters—in a certain sense, a compromise between Baur and Zahn. Also, the Gospel of John and the birth stories in Matthew and

23. An amazing creativity for "discovering" primitive and independent gospel sources has been demonstrated by J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991) 427-30. See also idem, *Four Other Gospels: Shadows on the Contours of Canon* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1992). Crossan treats the *Gospel of Thomas*, the Egerton Papyrus, Morton Smith's *Secret Gospel of Mark*, and the *Gospel of Peter*. I find Crossan's claims of antiquity and independence for these writings wholly unconvincing.

24. Krüger, *Das Dogma vom Neuen Testament*, 328 n. 25 (author's emphasis).

Luke are no longer understood today as historical reports, and the first and fourth gospel are only rarely traced back to an apostolic author. To be sure, this consensus is more nearly negative than positive and often very circumscribed.²⁵ This goes along with the fact that, due to the fragmentary character of our sources and the narrowness of the evidence, we have to work much more with *hypotheses* than do other disciplines. This leaves no room for any sort of optimism, whether critical or conservative. New Testament scholarship has always been in good part a *science of conjecture* and has become even more so. This fact should make us more modest. It is frequently a matter only of weighing probabilities, plausibilities, or even mere possibilities, and too often there exists the danger of confusing what is precisely possible with what in fact is really probable. An equation with several unknowns cannot be solved!

This is the case above all in the province of *literary criticism*. Here we mostly fumble in the dark with ancient texts if we cannot directly compare parallel texts and possess no trustworthy reports. We canvass the thousandfold possibilities of how these texts might have emerged, identify our logic with that of the ancient authors, introduce our own wishes and antipathies *nolens volens* or allow ourselves to be led astray by the *argumentum e silentio*—the most deceptive of all arguments. Who can say what inconsistencies and contradictions an ancient author is to be thought capable of? Who is right about the aporias in the Fourth Gospel? The "seamless garment" of Christ of a D. F. Strauss or the innumerable modern sources and redaction theories—in a text, the stylistic unity of which is unsurpassed in any other literary work of antiquity?²⁶ Or is a division of the two letters to the Corinthians into nearly thirty different fragments belonging to seven different letters to be thought probable?²⁷ How do we know that these letters were all sent to Corinth, and that these fragments all derive from Paul? And what fool of a redactor are we to think perpetrated all this? Or today's flourishing Q scholarship, overgrown with hypotheses—not only one Q community (the existence of which

25. Cf. W. G. Kümmel, at the conclusion of his overview of scholarly research, *Das Neue Testament im 20. Jahrhundert* (SBS 50; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1970) 146: "of continuing recognized results one can only speak in limited measures." Cf. also P. Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments 1: Grundlegung. Von Jesus zu Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992) 1-39, esp. 13-15, 29-30.

26. For recent discussion of the literary and stylistic unity of the Fourth Gospel, see E. Ruckstuhl, *Die literarische Einheitlichkeit des Johannesevangeliums* (Studia Friburgensia 3; Freiburg: Paulus, 1951; repr. *Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus* 5; Freiburg: Paulus; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987); P. Dschulnigg, *Stilkritik und Verfasserfrage im Johannesevangelium* (*Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus* 17; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991). See also M. Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage* (WUNT 67; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1993) 466.

27. W. Schenk, "Korintherbriefe," *TRE* 19 (1990) 620-32.

I doubt), but several, with up to five different layers of redaction, in a text that can itself only be reconstructed in very fragmentary fashion.²⁸ Why may it not simply be a collection of Jesus-sayings, gathered by a disciple who, as Jesus himself, was a master of the form? And if, as a skeptic, one denies this, would it not be more honest to point to the aporias and to issue a *non liquet*? Do not these and other hypothetical castles in the air rather testify to a Babylonian confusion in language and method?

Dealing with the book of books ought to be too serious a business to end up abandoning it to a playground of hypothesis in the style of "anything goes." We must learn to recognize our limits at the point at which we can no longer establish probability, but can only guess. We should not therefore be ashamed to speak candidly of our great uncertainty.

No, the narrowness of the framework constructed by hypotheses and overinterpretation of the texts points us *outside*, where we have great examples who give us courage and whose rigorous approach and scholarly demeanor put us under an obligation. In what follows, I shall mention just two names. First, a Catholic exegete who was a biblical theologian, philologist, historian of religion, student of Judaism and of patristics all in one and who prepared for the new era in Catholic exegesis after the Second World War as did no one else: Marie-Joseph Lagrange, the founder of the École Biblique in Jerusalem.²⁹ Here I can only refer to his *oeuvre*, which goes beyond everything it might be compared with in our time of epigones.³⁰ Next to

28. F. W. Horn, "Christentum und Judentum in der Logienquelle," *EvT* 51 (1991) 344--64; J. S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987). In my opinion much of Q scholarship betrays inadequate knowledge of the Jewish Palestinian context and is often too quick to claim parallels with literature that stems from a wholly different environment.

29. On Lagrange as an Old Testament scholar, see H. W. Seidel, *Die Erforschung des Alten Testaments in der Katholischen Theologie seit der Jahrhundertwende* (BBB 86; Frankfurt am Main: Anton Hain, 1993) 72-74, 85-87, 101-3. Seidel calls Lagrange the "founder of historical-critical work in the Old Testament" in Catholicism.

30. J. Murphy-O'Connor, *The École Biblique and the New Testament: A Century of Scholarship (1890-1990)* (Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus 13; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992) 6-28. One sentence should make us German New Testament scholars reflect: "German scholarship paid little or no attention to Lagrange's work in New Testament. Moreover radical German critics rarely if ever visited the Holy Land, where they could have made personal contact with Lagrange; contact with reality apparently was not considered to be either useful or necessary" (p. 28). See also his bibliography on pp. 153-61. In the second edition of *RGG* one article was dedicated to him; in the third edition nothing more. The latter is the case with respect to *TRE*. Also, his name is not found once in the index to vols. 1-17 (see p. 325)! His significance for Catholic exegesis in that very important first decade of the twentieth century cannot be assessed too highly. He died in 1938, the same year in which Adolf Schlatter died.

him, I mention a Protestant New Testament scholar, of the "liberal" persuasion, over twenty years younger than he, Walter Bauer, a student of H. J. Holtzmann, to whom we are indebted for the New Testament lexicon. For this, in essence his life's work, and herein only Wilamowitz-Moellendorf is to be compared to him, he read all ancient Greek literature in a labor of renunciation. He proves himself to be a scholar of the patristic tradition in the classic work, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen*,³¹ as also in his provocative *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*.³² And yet how many know that he prepared an edition of not only the Syrian *Odes of Solomon*, but also of two books of the Mishna, *Pea and Demai*, along with a first-rate commentary?³³ I could continue on at length with this "cloud of witnesses" that breaks off only after the Second World War.³⁴

To be sure, although these witnesses warn us again and again to break out of the oppressive narrowness of hypothesis-castles and alienating overinterpretations into the open landscape of *broader surroundings*, in order to bring in its fruits for our work on the New Testament, we still cannot simply return to our grandfathers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Here I would like first to mention a *negative* factor that stands in our way, the worldwide disintegration of *philological education*. The times are irretrievably past when nearly every biblical theologian of rank in the English-speaking world first studied "the greats" in Cambridge or Oxford or, as Wilamowitz and Harnack, bet on who could learn a page of Greek prose by heart more quickly—and Harnack won. The few fortunate exceptions among us who still unite *thorough* study of classical philology with biblical exegesis prove the rule. In my numerous conversations with local and foreign doctoral students, the issue of knowledge of the Latin, Greek, and Semitic languages is a major problem. As a rule, our grandfathers lectured more regularly on Greek and Latin texts, they knew a broader range of sources and so possessed a greater feeling for language and style than we do

31. W. Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1909; repr. 1967).

32. W. Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (BTH 10; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1934; 2nd ed., 1964); ET: *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

33. Cf. G. Strecker, "Walter Bauer—Exeget, Philologe, Historiker," in *Eschaton und Historie: Aufsätze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979) 360-66.

34. One must not overlook the great English scholar C. H. Dodd; cf. G. Strecker, *TRE* 9 (1982) 15-18; idem, "C. H. Dodd, Person und Werk," in *KD* 26 (1980) 50-58. In his Cambridge inaugural lecture, "The Present Task in New Testament Studies" (1936), Dodd gave direction to a whole generation in England. Other important scholars who should be mentioned include A. D. Nock, André-Jean Festugière, and Günther Zuntz. See now my small biography of this great scholar in: *PBA* 87, 493-522.

today. It is no wonder that editions of texts by New Testament scholars have become relatively infrequent. Few of us still work with manuscripts or are knowledgeable in papyrology. All the more reason to call special attention to editorial achievements such as the way the Nag Hammadi texts have been made accessible by scholars at Claremont. In this whole area, the labor of perseverance of developing the next generation of scholars, the leadership of universities, or even boards of trustees in church seminaries is pressing. What good is it if nearly all Greek texts are readily accessible to us on CD-Rom, if one cannot translate them properly? In an ahistorically-minded post-modern world, classical philology and historical theology more than ever share a common fate. The relapse into the barbarism of the loss of language threatens both.

Thorough knowledge of languages is therefore the fundamental presupposition for a continuing and broad reading of sources in the wide area I have sketched, let us say, between Alexander the Great and Diocletian, Poseidonios, Qumran, Nag Hammadi and Origen, and between Philo and the Talmud. But here I can also point to a priceless *advantage* that we have over our grandfathers. The number of sources in the environs of the New Testament itself has become incomparably richer than in the time of an F. C. Baur. It is an advantage, which should directly press upon us, to become again better philologists and historians. Only as such can we truly break new ground.

There have been *new discoveries of sources* that have toppled the Tübingen School's hypothetical construction of early Christianity. In 1851, Hippolytus' *Refutatio*, in 1846, the Armenian translation of Ephraem's commentary on the *Diatessaron*—today we have nearly the complete Syrian text—the conclusion of the pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and the *Didache*.³⁵ The list continues on to Melito's *Passover Homily*, to the great Tura discovery, to the even greater surprise of the Nag Hammadi texts, and to the smaller one of the Mani codex, indeed, down to the giant new papyrus find from the oasis of Dakhleh.³⁶ In addition, there are innumerable smaller discoveries, fragments of apocryphal gospels and acts of apostles, liturgical and homiletical texts. They all force us today to become patristics scholars, at least to some degree, which our fathers of the nineteenth century already were. Alongside the Christian and gnostic texts comes the immense number of secular and literary papyri of Egypt

35. Cf. Hengel, *Bishop Lightfoot*, 32-38.

36. See the concise references by C. A. Hope, in *The Australian Centre for Egyptology* 1 (1990) 43-54, esp. 44, 51, 53; 2 (1991) 41-50, esp. 42-43. Hopefully we shall soon have an overview of all of the newly discovered texts and their contents. The catalogue of the texts discovered in a "Genizah" of the Sinai monastery, which was supposed to appear sometime in 1980, should today serve as a warning: *vestigia terrent!*

and the steadily growing number of Greek inscriptions between Rome and Syria that have radically altered *New Testament lexicography* in the last hundred years. Unfortunately, the available auxiliary resources, the lexicon of Moulton and Milligan,³⁷ Deissmann's *Licht vom Osten*,³⁸ and even the revised lexicon of Bauer, only provide us with a basis for research that belongs to one or even two generations ago. We may be similarly thankful that young Australian philologists have made a start on the "New Documents,"³⁹ to classify this mass of data, and we eagerly await the new Moulton-Milligan.

In the time since the hectic and speculative early years of the founding of the history of religions school, papyri, inscriptions, and other archaeological monuments have opened up to us the complicated world of late antiquity, syncretism, magic and astrology, the originally Greek and later "oriental" mysteries in both their *proximity* to and their *distance from* early Christian texts.

Nevertheless, in this area, *research on the text of the New Testament* has brought us the most impressive progress that directly affects the New Testament, now enjoying the support of 98 papyri (cf. the 27th edition of Nestle/Aland [1993]; in the 26th edition [1979] there were only 89) and 300 majuscules (instead of 274), flanked by the ancient translations. Here, in comparison with the situation of the first Nestle in 1898, we have come nearly 200 years closer to the original text and are separated from it by barely 100 years. We all anxiously await the appearance of the first deliveries of the *editio critica maior*. Unfortunately, the work of text criticism has become a separate specialty, and it must once again become a shared task, especially since burning historical issues lurk behind it. To mention just a few questions: When, where, and how did the secondary endings of the Gospel of Mark come into existence? What did Marcion's "purified" text look like? How much nearer has Ephraem's Syriac commentary brought us to the *Diatessaron*? Here, too, one could lengthen the list of questions. New tasks stand out here that might lead us off the merry-go-round of unproductive (because ultimately they are untestable) hypotheses.

Still, we have not yet even mentioned the two greatest advances since the time of the Tübingers and the history of religions school. These are advances that possess an *ecumenical character* and that

37. J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

38. A. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten: Das Neue Testament and die neuentdeckten Texte der hellenistisch-römischen Welt* (4th ed., Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1923); ET: *Light from the Ancient East* (New York: Harper & Row, 1927; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978).

39. G. H. R. Horsley et al. (eds.), *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* (7 vols., North Sydney: Macquarie University, 1981-94). More volumes will follow.

again conceal within them an abundance of new possibilities. These have to do with the positive evaluation of the *unique significance of Judaism* as the mother religion of early Christianity and the philological-historical and theological interpretation of the texts entrusted to us as a *common, indeed ecumenical* task of *Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, and Jews*. The *rediscovery and reevaluation of Judaism*, as well as the *common investigation of our early history by Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant* New Testament scholars, constitute the most important events during the last fifty years of New Testament scholarship. Here a development has occurred that separates us in the most significant way from the German Protestant scholarship of the nineteenth century that was disturbed by old prejudices and by the modernist conflict and that viewed Judaism in an inadmissible way as a dark foil for the beginnings of Christianity.

Let us begin with *Judaism*. The bases of an historical investigation into ancient Judaism were certainly already laid at that time, as with the great work of Emil Schürer, the enduring significance of which is documented by its revision in English.⁴⁰ In contrast, the investigation of syncretism in early Christianity that was inaugurated by the history of religions school had one-sidedly placed pagan elements in the foreground and had viewed the Hellenistic community prior to Paul as predominantly heathen-Christian. A latent tendency persisted to underrate the significance of the Jewish sources, above all the rabbinic ones.

The third and greatest textual surprise, the discovery of the library of *Qumran*, with its pre-Christian originals, brought a new development, and the signs of a new Qumran spring show that its end is not yet in sight. The question of the messiahship of Jesus or that of the background of the Pauline and Johannine theology looks different on the basis of these texts from the way it did fifty years ago. In addition, there are the far-reaching disclosures of the pseudepigrapha and the steadily growing number of Jewish inscriptions and papyri that mediate to us an ever more detailed portrayal of Judaism, a portrayal that no longer corresponds in any way to the earlier caricature of a legally stultified community, but rather reveals a folk religion that was creative and versatile in vigorously maintaining its identity. The LXX, the Essene Qumran texts, and the rabbinic sources are unique literary collections in the ancient world and challenge us to intensive study. This largely new, fascinating world of Judaism extends from the newly discovered, already Hellenized coins of the Persian provinces of Jehud and Schomeron in the fourth cen-

40. E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (3 vols., rev. and ed. by G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Black; Edinburgh: Clark, 1973-87).

tury BCE.⁴¹ to the newly published Hekhalot and Jewish magical literature from the Byzantine period.⁴²

It is especially promising that today Christian and Jewish scholars alike work in this area and seek hand in hand for a better understanding of early Jewish and Christian history. For Jewish scholars have, since Joseph Klausner,⁴³ now discovered not only the Jews Jesus and Paul of Tarsus,⁴⁴ but also the early Christian texts in general as sources for the Judaism of the first and second centuries. I take this common labor, which does not disavow differences, but that at the same time sees the fundamental connections, to show especially the way of the future. It urges us, if we actually have a mind to discover the *truth* of faith in the texts we study, to reconsider anew the problem of a biblical theology that also includes the Jewish sources "between the Testaments" (I do not like this manner of speaking, for according to Luke 16:16: "the Law and the Prophets" go until John the Baptist)—or, as one might also say, "the Old in the New."⁴⁵ A startling result, to my mind, is the observation that the New Testament texts scarcely anywhere require the admission of *direct* pagan influence on earliest Christianity. What we detect as "Hellenistic-syncretistic" features might be due to Jewish mediation. No oriental religion, except

41. Cf. L. Mildenberg, in H. Weippert, *Palästina in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Handbuch der Archäologie in Vorderasien 2.1; Munich: Beck, 1988) 721-28; Y. Meshorer and S. Qedar, *The Coinage of Samaria in the Fourth Century BCE* (Jerusalem: Numismatics Fine Arts International, 1991).

42. P. Schäfer (ed.), *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (TSAJ 2; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1981); idem, *Hekhalot-Studien* (TSAJ 19; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1988). Schäfer, through a concordance and through translations, has made these text accessible in a synoptic edition. He is now preparing an edition of the magical texts from the Cairo genizah.

43. J. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times, and Teaching* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1925 [Hebrew orig., 1922]).

44. Recently two interesting but very different Jewish studies of Paul have appeared. The first has been produced by A. F. Segal (*Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* [London and New Haven: Yale University, 1990]) and the second, appearing posthumously, was produced by the Berlin philosopher of religion J. Taubes (*Die politische Theologie des Paulus* [A. and J. Assmann, eds.; Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993]). They have continued the Jewish research on Paul begun by J. Klausner (*From Jesus to Paul* [London: Macmillan, 1943 (Hebrew orig., 1939)]) and L. Baeck ("The Faith of Paul," BS 3 [1952] 93-110). See also D. R. Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (WUNT 60; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992) 1-26.

45. "The older the better" was the general rule in antiquity; cf. P. Pilhofer, *PRES-BYTERON KREITTON: Der Altersbeweis der jüdischen und christlichen Apologeten und seine Vorgeschichte* (WUNT 2.39; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1990). The concept *καίνός* in early Christianity of course did not have a "this-world" meaning but an eschatological meaning. See also my "Die Septuaginta als 'christliche Schriften sammlung . . .'" in M. Hengel and A. M. Schwetke (eds.), *Die Septuaginta zwischen Judentum und Christentum*, WUNT 72, 1994, 182-284 (282 ff.).

for Judaism, engaged in conversation with Hellenistic civilization with such intensity, integrated so much that was new, and still held fast to its identity. Early Christianity inherited this power of integration.

From another point of view, I could also speak of the *collaboration between Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant exegetes*. When I studied in Tübingen forty-five years ago, despite a common basis in the Bible, the ditch separating confessions seemed nearly unbridgeable, not least because, as I believed, philological-historical approaches were rejected. That a radical shift had already been prepared, for, above all in the field of Old Testament scholarship; perhaps at the École Biblique in Jerusalem, the student did not notice at this point. Since then, something like a continuous revolution has been taking place. The confessional differences that had dominated previously have nearly completely disappeared in the methods and results of scriptural interpretation. In many areas (I think of the research on the gospels that is being undertaken in Louvain,⁴⁶ or of the work on commentaries in German⁴⁷) Catholic scholars have taken over a leadership role. This is clearly illustrated by the major commentaries on John by Rudolf Schnackenburg and Raymond Brown and on Luke by Joseph Fitzmyer.⁴⁸ One can often no longer say on the basis of an author's exegetical work whether he or she is Protestant or Catholic. Indeed, just this interconfessional exegesis can serve as a salutary corrective to one-sided deformations, as well as to an unproductive conservatism or to wildly radical critiques. At the same time, it has become a basis of ecumenical discussion. Precisely in our Societas, this increasingly close collaboration has stimulated New Testament work during the last forty years more than anything else and, I hope, will do so in the future. For it is during this period that it has become truly international for the first time and has also borne its fruit in the third world.

Both Catholic and Orthodox exegesis could help us rebuild *bridges to the fathers of the ancient church*, a connection that was still self-evident to Harnack and his generation, but this has long since become lost in the Protestantism of the twentieth century in the field of New Testament. The exegesis of the Fathers is, as a rule, taken into account only marginally. What treasure we possess—to name only a few

46. One immediately thinks of Frans Neiryck and his colleagues.

47. The only big commentary series in the German language really "flowering" besides the catholic Herders theologischer Kommentar is the protestant-catholic EKK Series (Neukirchener Verlag/Patmos).

48. R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium* (3 vols., HTKNT 4.1-3; Freiburg: Herder, 1965-75); ET: *The Gospel According to St. John* (3 vols., New York: Crossroad, 1980); R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols., AB 29 and 29A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966-70); J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (2 vols., AB 28 and 28A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1981-85).

examples—in the patristic commentaries on the gospels and Paul produced by Josef Reuss and Karl Staab.⁴⁹ What we need is a completely new, comprehensive patristic commentary, a modern catena that brings together the exegesis of the Fathers.⁵⁰ This unfortunately finds insufficient expression in modern, so-called critical commentaries (and in dissertations and scholarly monographs as well). And since confessional differences are from the outset largely tied to developments in the long and troubled history of exegesis, this should also come into view at particular crucial points. In this way, the isolation that threatens our limited field could be compensated for in promoting biblical interpretation in the states of the former Soviet Union after the end of a seventy--year ice age. Here our *Societas* needs to consider what initiatives it can seize.

What is more important than specific issues is that, in our daily work, we not forget to reflect on what Paul characterized as the ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου,⁵¹ that is, the abiding truth of the early Christian message. 1 Cor 15:11 contradicts the widespread opinion today that such a thing did not exist in the early period, but rather only a multitude of contradictory messages. The astonishing cohesiveness of the community at the end of the first century also speaks against this. I am not ashamed to speak here of an original *unity* of the church given through the Christ-event that came into being not through state coercion, but rather, amidst all tensions and disputes, through the assurance, brought about by the Spirit, of the truth of the revelation of God in Christ. When we cease to pose this question, our discipline will have lost the warrant for its existence in an archival-archaeological effort at digging and drilling for an obscure object of the past that has become obsolete.

In the end, our common philological-historical, which is to say, exegetical task in regard to the ancient texts entrusted to us is a hermeneutical one. The definitive starting point remains, despite "reader response," the early Christian author, that is, what he meant and intended in view of his addressees, hearers, and readers.⁵² However,

49. J. Reuss, *Matthäus-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche* (TU 61; Berlin: Akademie, 1957); idem, *Johannes-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche* (TU 89; Berlin: Akademie, 1966); idem, *Lukas-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche* (TU 130; Berlin: Akademie, 1984); K. Staab, *Pauluskommentare aus der griechischen Kirche* (NTA 15; Münster: Aschendorff, 1933; 2nd ed., 1984).

50. For preliminary work on the scriptural hermeneutics of the Fathers, see I. Papanagopoulos, *Ἡ ΕΠΙΜΗΝΕΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΙΑΣ ΓΡΑΦΗΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΠΑΤΕΡΩΝ*, vol. 1 (Athens: Ekdoseis Akritas, 1991). An English translation is in preparation.

51. Cf. Gal 2:5, 14; also O. Hofius, *Paulusstudien* (WUNT 51; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1989) 155-56.

52. Cf. H. Gese, "Hermeneutische Grundsätze der Exegese biblischer Texte," in *Alttestamentliche Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1991) 249: "A text is to be understood as it wants to be understood, that is, as it understands itself."

and particularly if we are to preach about these texts, we can hardly neglect the question of what they mean for us today and what they have meant for those who went before us. How can we discharge this task today other than ecumenically?

Now, as I draw to a close, I might be reproached for having failed to speak about much that is essential. I have consciously avoided this.

Thus, I have not spoken about *old and new methods*. The necessary multiplicity of philological-historical methods becomes clear on its own during a continual process of testing through its own application in practice. What has actually stood the test over ten, twenty, thirty years shows its durability (in principle, of course, put in its proper place and with restrictions), namely, the form-critical method. This is also true of those methods that are especially favored today—the sociological point of view, the diverse forms of textual linguistics, narrative analysis, the new literary criticism and many others. May we yet have ten to twenty years worth of patience! Time will deliver its verdict. Absolute pronouncements are dangerous, as are frequently changing fashions. Fashion is the opposite of method. One is tempted to quote George Bernard Shaw, "Fashion is hideous. That is why it has to be changed every six months." All the same, it is necessary to break out of our too narrowly specialized field. How is a young doctoral student to learn to do good historical-philological work, when only mountains of hypotheses in the secondary literature are made available to him and precious little of abiding source material? Ought he not at the outset sharpen his wits on Qumran, Josephus, Philo, Diodore, Plutarch, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, based on his knowledge of the sources, in order then, to speak with Ernst Troeltsch, properly to make use of the "omnipotence of analogy"?⁵³

Also doubtful is today's widespread *formalism* that mainly, if not exclusively (dangerous is the "exclusively"), looks for formal parallels, forms, literary genres and rhetorical markers. Is this not in certain cases the kind of labeling that supposes to have understood something if it has put a tag on it? Understanding is more than merely schematic ordering. This is especially true when we impose our modern categories taken over from other fields on ancient texts that are innocent of them. This is quite a different thing from analyzing the logical structure of a text and its strategy of argumentation for the text's own sake. But, in order to do this, is it always absolutely necessary to collect the

53. E. Troeltsch, "Über historische und dogmatische Methoden in der Theologie," in G. Sauter (ed.), *Theologie als Wissenschaft* (TB 43; Munich: Kaiser, 1971) 105-27, esp. 108. See also P. Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments* (GNT 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986) 24-27; M. Hengel, *Zur urchristlichen Geschichtsschreibung* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1979) 107-10; ET: *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM, 1979; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

concepts in H. Lausberg,⁵⁴ and might this not also lead one astray in some cases, since such artificial nomenclature was foreign to the biblical rhetoricians? Should we not prefer instead to read the ancient authors in their original texts and carry on, at the same time, research on forms of argumentation? To be sure, this is a lifelong task which compels us to transcend the small area of New Testament writings and work as literary critics in a wider context.

I have also quite consciously not spoken of *the tasks of specific sub-disciplines*—the synoptics, Acts, the study of Paul and John or the quest of the historical Jesus. They proceed laboriously forward in the form of a spiral, and the weight of hypotheses becomes even greater. Nevertheless, amazingly indeed, new and solid discoveries are being made again and again. Certain topics temporarily receive too little exposure, others get worn out. Thus, "Paul and the law" is in vogue and party lines get tightly drawn. Perhaps new insights would be possible if we were to investigate with somewhat greater precision the topic of law and life or law and liberty in Qumran, among the Tannaim, and in Hellenistic Judaism, or if we were to pursue the history of interpretation backwards from Luther's exegesis of Galatians or Romans to the historical Paul. Perhaps Luther understood the existential problem better as it impinges on each individual believer for not focusing in historicizing fashion on the Jewish law, but rather on the law in the human heart, the demand of conscience and human self-assertion before God.

Let me conclude and sum up. My perhaps somewhat too loosely formulated topic threatens, like biblical exegesis itself, to become a never-ending theme.

1. Through a flood of literature that has become impossible to survey and the immense number of hypotheses associated with this, the limited framework of our discipline, concentrated as it is on one little book, threatens to become too constructed and to overwhelm our datum, the New Testament.

2. Therefore, within this framework that has become too restricted, we must exercise a certain self-restraint and, for its sake, broaden our field of study, into the Old Testament and Judaism, the ancient church and the Hellenistic-Roman world, as also in the area of history of exegesis, and not only within the modern period. Every New Testament scholar should seek to find one or more areas of competence outside the New Testament. In view of what has become the

54. H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft* (2 vols., Munich: Heuber, 1960; 3rd ed., Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1990); idem, *Elemente der literarischen Rhetorik* (Munich: Hueber, 1949; 10th ed., 1990). The somewhat rich rabbinic literature is in essence named by only three basic forms: *halakah*, *mashal*, and *ma'asäh*.

threat of pernicious overspecialization, we may all be permitted as a counterweight to risk a certain amount of "dilettantism." For all that, the New Testament ought to remain the center of our work. Thereby, this will receive new impulses and become more productive.

3. Moreover, in the interest of truth of the faith that encounters us in the New Testament, it behooves us to guard against overspecialization and to lay down bridges toward a biblical theology, to church history, and to systematic theology, so that something of the ecumenical unity of theology as a whole may again become apparent in our work. The conversation with Judaism must also be a part of this bridge-building.

4. Much more than we are conscious, texts newly discovered since the days of the Tübingen school have furthered progress in our discipline and have forced us to correct mistaken judgments. The great library finds from the second half of this century have fundamentally altered the picture of early Christianity. For this reason, it is important to pay attention to such small and large finds in the future and to seek to have them published and made known quickly.

5. It belongs to the ecumenical task of our discipline to defend the necessity of clear-headed philological-historical criticism over against both fundamentalist retrenchments and fanciful pseudo-criticism. The questions of historical and theological truth, rightly understood, are bound together and may not be rent asunder without injury--*fides quaerens intellectum*. Together, they are the salt that seasons the work of exegesis. This twofold question of truth poses itself precisely when we follow, in a self-critical way, how our own discipline has evolved over the last century. Inseparably connected with this are the hermeneutical questions that we can only answer in collaboration with the other theological disciplines.

Having begun with him, I shall conclude with a critical observation of Lichtenberg's on the interpretation of the New Testament. The New Testament is an *autor classicus*, the best little manual for aid and for distress ever written. This is why there has rightly been attached to every village in Christendom a professor to expound this author. That there are many of these professors who do not understand their author is something this author shares in common with others. But in, this way that book distinguishes itself from all others, in that even the mistakes in its exposition have been 'sanctified'.⁵⁵

It falls to each one of us to demonstrate to this astute critic that he is not correct.

55. Lichtenberg, *Werke*, 130 = L (1796-99) no. 27.