# APPROACHES TO NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS

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### I. *Different Ways of Interpreting the New Testament*

Exegesis means interpretation and as we apply the term to the books of the New Testament we may begin with a provisional definition of the task. To practise exegesis in regard to the New Testament literature is to enquire what was the meaning intended by the original authors. The process is one of uncovering that meaning, and the technique is known as heuristics, i.e. the study which explains how to discover the sense of a passage of Scripture. This is to be the interpreter's primary aim, requiring that his approach to Scripture be one of honest enquiry and a determined effort to find out the intended meaning of the author for his day.

But this approach, expressed in a way which at first glance commends itself as straightforward and full of commonsense, both proceeds with some assumptions which ought to be acknowledged openly and conceals several hidden pitfalls. We can notice these as we set down some of the different ways in which the approach to the interpretation of the New Testament has been understood.

### 1. THE DOGMATIC APPROACH

Under this heading we refer to a view of the New Testament Scripture which sees it as an arsenal of proof-texts to be arranged, without much regard given to their literary form, historical context, theological purpose, or even their best translation into modern English, to form a network of probative evidence.

Seen in this light, the meaning of Scripture is atomized by being regarded as contained in key-words or key-phrases or isolated single verses treated without respect to their neighbouring context. Little attention is paid to the teaching of the passage or book in which the individual texts appear. There is obvious danger in this method. It misuses the text of Scripture by appealing to a truncated part (a verse) instead of to the larger, more intelligible unit (a paragraph or longer section, according to the writer's purpose). It cannot escape the charge of subjectivism when isolated verses are chosen because of their apparent suitability to "prove a point". And it is forgetful of God's

providence in conveying his word to men not in fragmented or situation-less dicta, but in the total context of the historical milieu of an ancient people (Israel, the early church) and through the medium of a set of languages which make use of non-prescriptive modes of expression. Failure to recall this last point turns the New Testament into a legal code or a set of cold facts, like a telephone directory.

On a different level another version of the dogmatic approach is evident in those instances in church history when an ecclesiastical authority has imposed an interpretation on Scripture. To give one example, the Council of Trent gave clear directive about the meaning of Jesus' eucharistic words to the disciples in the upper room.

> He said in plain, unmistakable words that he was giving them his own body and his own blood. . . .
> These words have their proper and obvious meaning and were so understood by the Fathers.[1]

This ruling by the Magisterium indicates an authoritative appeal to one, highly particularized interpretation of Scripture and its use as a dogmatic instrument to establish church teaching. Again, as with the previous discussion about Protestant proof-texting, Scripture has assumed the character of a law-book.

## 2. THE IMPRESSIONISTIC APPROACH

The impressionistic approach may seem to be the exact antithesis of the method just described. Its main characteristic is a way of approaching the New Testament Scripture in which the reader equates the message of the passage before him with the thoughts which fill his mind as he reads. The exercise is one of gaining impressions from the text which has its function in exciting and engendering a series of "thoughts", triggered by the verses in question. This is a popular treatment of the Bible with some recent evangelical young people's groups, for example the Jesus people.[2]

There can be no doubt that this approach is open to grave objection. It is a treatment of Scripture which is at the mercy of human feelings; it fails to submit to some objective control in a recognition of the plain sense of the text, set in its historical context. Therefore it overlooks the reality that Scripture comes to us in historical dress and requires that we respect its contextual setting in the day in which it was first given. Moreover, the approach ignores the fact, only too painfully obvious, that the Bible is not an easy book to understand and its study demands our full attention and the mental discipline of concentrated effort to grasp the import of the words before us if we are to penetrate to their true meaning. It is a counsel of despair to turn away from serious Bible study because it is difficult, in preference for the easy way of impressionism.

## 3. THE GRAMMATICO-HISTORICAL METHOD

The grammatico-historical method has everything to commend it as an antidote to both of the approaches mentioned. It takes seriously God's revelation which he has been pleased to communicate in verbal form in the pages of holy Scripture. The New Testament is the word of God in the words of men.[3] For that reason, the reader begins his enquiry into the meaning of a passage with a conscious endeavour to know what the words (Gr. *grammata*) meant in their historical setting. And that means that he will strive to gain understanding of the text through the language-form which any specific passage employs. Certain corollaries follow from this appreciation of what Scripture is and how God has been pleased to make it available to his people. For one thing, there is the problem of the best text of the New Testament in the original Greek. The student will want to satisfy himself, as far as he is able, that either the Greek Testament in front of him or the translation based upon it is the "best". By that word is meant that it is as close to the original autographs as it is possible to get through the science of textual criticism. The transmission of the New Testament text has been affected by the contingencies of historical circumstances and, since we do not possess the original autographs for inspection, it is incumbent upon us that we use all the means available to recover the text which stands nearest to the original.

The other matter is the ascertaining of the meaning of the Greek words and their translation equivalents in our native language. For this we need the help of grammar books, lexicons, dictionaries and concordances. To be sure, there will also be a residue of places where the grammatical or syntactical sense is unclear. The first epistle of John contains several instances of this ambiguity and it is uncertain (e.g. at 1 John 4:17) exactly how the prepositional phrases, dependent clauses and adverbial expressions fit together as the author originally intended. Several permutations and combinations are possible.[4]

Then, the clothing of God's saving revelation of himself in historical events and their interpretation means that the present-day student must take history seriously and be alive to the setting of Scripture's story as far as the New Testament is concerned in the world of first century Graeco-Roman society. Luke's notice in his gospel (3:1f.) shows the evangelist's purpose in describing the historical framework in which the gospel events took place. This anchoring of the saving message in history is of immeasurable importance. It was appreciated by the early Christians in their refusal to evacuate the gospel of its historical content and to cut it loose from its historical moorings – a refusal which led them to oppose gnostic influences as heretical (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16ff.).

Furthermore, the grammatico-historical method enters a needed protest against an inordinate desire for relevance which marks out the impressionistic approach. According to the aim of the latter, the reader professes a desire to study and to heed only those parts of Scripture which

have an easily convertible theological and spiritual value and whose application to life stands out most obviously. This proclivity to accept only parts of the Bible as relevant and spiritually valuable has been severely criticized in recent years, notably by J. Barr.[5]

This is a tendency, however, to be held in check as we pay due recognition to the demands of the grammatico-historical requirements. They include the reminder that the scope of the Bible covers the entire range of life and offers a comprehensive world-view which is distorted if we choose to narrow it to our personal interests at any given moment of our Christian experience. A true corrective is supplied by our resolve to treat the whole corpus of Scripture with serious intent and to hear what its total witness may be by the rigorous and disciplined application of a method which seeks to elucidate the message in its original setting and in its literal sense.

## 4. THE MEANING FOR THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The question is now raised whether a Christian reader of the New Testament can remain content with a line of study which sets its aim only at the ascertaining of the first century meaning. Granted that this is a legitimate and necessary starting-point, must we not press on to enquire about the meaning of the text for ourselves today? This second stage of enquiry is the determining of the true transition point needed to move from "What did the text mean?" to "What does the text say and how do I understand it for myself today?" The issue was first pinpointed by W. Dilthey when he drew the distinction between explanation and understanding.[6]

At this point we should notice an approach to the interpretation of the New Testament which regards as totally unsatisfactory any attempt to stay with the first century meaning of the text. This is *the existentialist approach,* which is more fully described and criticized later in this book (pp. 294–300). It will be sufficient to mention here its main emphasis since it is regarded as the most serious rival to the view which has just been mentioned.

Its starting principle is the acceptance of the thesis stated by H.-G. Gadamer (in his *Wahrheit und Methode* Tübingen 1973[3]) that a modern reader is bound to understand the meaning of an ancient author in a way different from the one which that author intended. This barrier led Gadamer to enunciate the principle that interpretation inevitably includes translation from one situation to another, and that the modern interpreter should ask what the text is saying to him in his situation. Basically the approach of existential hermeneutics is: Granted that the text meant such-and-such to its first writer and his readers, what does the text mean to me today even though I cannot share the presuppositions of that ancient situation and am separated by a barrier of world-view and culture from that old-world scene? Put otherwise, this method of exegesis asks, What would the ancient author have meant by his words if he had been living in our contemporary situation and how does he speak to us today? We can hear his message by taking what we think to be *his* meaning given long ago and bringing it over

(trans-lating) into our frame of reference. The chief exponent of this way of looking at and listening to Scripture is E. Fuchs. See further pp. 308ff.

But it would be wrong to imagine that this method has gained general currency outside a limited constituency. Opponents of Bultmann (e.g. O. Cullmann, whose teaching on salvation history is based on the priority of the grammatico-historical method), insist that we must listen to what the New Testament meant to its first readers and give that our obedience however unpalatable and "strange" its message may be. Writing from within the Bultmannian school, E. Käsemann objects that the existential exegetical method may lead to serious distortions of what the New Testament is all about and set up a new norm by which the New Testament message is required to be tested.[7]

One important way of bridging the gap between the poles of reading the New Testament in order to ascertain the first century meaning and arriving at the contemporary application of that message is the approach known as the seeking of *sensus plenior*. By this term is meant the deeper meaning of the text, a meaning not apparently intended by the author but seen to be intended by God when we have regard to the further light which is shed on the text by developing revelation.[8]

A good example of this method is the exegesis of Old Testament "Messianic" prophecies (e.g. Is. 7:14) which yield their full meaning to the Christian believer when he reads them in the light of interpretation given by the New Testament writers (e.g. Mt. 1:23). There is much value in this approach inasmuch as the New Testament itself encourages its readers to see larger fulfilments of what appeared only in embryo or in part in the Old Testament revelation (Heb. 1:1–3). But some firm control is needed, and the principle of *sensus plenior* is misused if it opens the door to the notion of a tandem relationship between Scripture and tradition (even in the modified form suggested by Y. M.-J. Congar[9]) or suggests that the later church has power to sanction as authoritative for Christian doctrine ideas and dogmas which are held to be latent in Scripture and subsequently elevated to the status of "articles of belief".[10] The criteria by which we may decide what constitutes *sensus plenior* are (a) an authorization in the New Testament which gives warrant to the "fuller sense" to be accorded to an Old Testament passage. This credential would have the effect of placing the Old Testament teaching in a wider context, and making it germane for the history of salvation (e.g. the Immanuel prophecies in Isaiah). Then (b) the New Testament's "larger fulfilment" should be congruous with the literal sense. Examples of the possible homogeneity of two passages may be given in the prophetic psalms 2 and 110 where the original setting in the Israelite monarchy is capable of wider and deeper application to "great David's greater Son".

A more cautious way of framing the interrelation between the Old Testament preparation for Christ and the fulfilment in the New is in terms of *typology*.[11] According to this method the emphasis is shifted from the *words* in the Old Testament passages which are thought to contain hidden truth

(which later became clarified through further revelation) to *events* or *things* described in the Old Testament which are the subject of interpretative commentary in the New. Thus we are encouraged to see in a series of historical happenings (the Passover, the manna, the bronze serpent) and persons (Adam, Melchizedek, Moses, David) the types (for the word *typos* see Rom. 5:14 and for the adverb *typikōs* see 1 Cor. 10:11) of the later events in the ministry of Jesus and the explications of the ways in which his person and work were understood.

5. SALVATION HISTORY

This brings us to consider the method which goes right to the heart of the Christian concern with Scripture, particularly the New Testament. We may express it in terms of *salvation history*. [12] Scripture is the record of God's redeeming acts and their interpretation, directed to his people and calculated to evoke their response in obedience, love and service. The latter part of that statement is important since it is sometimes objected that when "salvation history" is narrowly conceived as a recital of dramatic events of God's redemption it allows no room for the Wisdom literature in the Old Testament, or (say) the hortatory sections in Paul or the Epistle of James in the New Testament. But these portions in the hortatory sections in Paul or in the Epistle of James are to be classified under man's total response to the grace of God and his salvation. The response is as wide-ranging as the revelation of God and covers the whole of life.

Yet even with this caveat it still remains true that the multiform character of the New Testament does not permit us to erect a "canon within the canon" to the exclusion of some parts of the corpus which do not apparently relate to the person and place of Jesus Christ. We may want to give emphasis to those parts of the New Testament which (as Luther said) "present Christ bright and clear" and so which "promote Christ". And in our study of any given passage we should do well to begin with the question of what the section may have to say to us about Jesus Christ as the focus of God's saving purpose for the world and the church. But we may have to admit in all candour that the christological teaching is absent in any given section (e.g. James). However, we shall place an appropriate value on that passage and see it in the total perspective of the New Testament. In this case, it will have something to say to us as we enquire why it was that James raised the objection that "faith without works is dead", perhaps in the context of a misunderstanding of Paul's teaching of *sola gratia, sola fide* and of a travesty of his gospel which turned freedom from the law into antinomianism and libertinism (as in Rom. 3:8; 6:1ff.).

The important guiding principle is that we should seek to begin with the text in its original setting and try to ascertain all we can about the occasion of its teaching. Then we shall be in a good position to read off the application (if any) of that teaching for our situation. Isolated verses taken from their context should be handled with caution (though there is no denying

that the Lord of the Scripture may speak to his people in exceptional ways, however much we may wish to hedge about the random method of Bible selection and indicate its hidden pitfalls to the unwary). More safety is found in the sense of a larger unity of Scripture – a paragraph, a whole incident or a book of the New Testament. The recognition that the passage had a message for its readers long before we set eyes on it will save us from presumption and arrogance (as though the Scripture were written primarily for our sakes: see 1 Cor. 14:36). This salutary reminder is an effective answer to both dogmatism and impressionism.

The rigorous application of the grammatico-historical method will place a check on any tendency either to personal idiosyncrasy in wanting to read into the text what we wish it would say or a spiritualizing of the Bible which allows its message to float in an undefined vacuum and untethered to the historical events of the process of God's activity in salvation. That activity is located in the time-and-space framework of the history of Jesus Christ and the apostolic church; and whether we like it or not we are shut up to this segment of world history for the locus of redemption and its inspired interpretation. The New Testament both tells the story and supplies the key to the story. For that reason it remains the indispensable source of our knowledge of God and his ways with men.

## II. *Some Principles of Exegesis*

We turn now to consider some principles of interpretation which should be kept in view as we approach any given passage. First, the principles will be stated in the form of questions; then, we shall devote the remainder of the essay to some illustrations of the type of literature which is found in the New Testament.

### 1. LITERARY FORM

We may first ask the general question, what is the literary form (technically known as *genus litterarium*) of the several New Testament documents? The twenty-seven books of the New Testament are not written in the same genre and it is important to know the chief classifications of the New Testament "library" of books. One question regarding classification has to do with the precise type of writing known as "gospel". Is it an attempted "Life of Jesus" on the analogy of contemporary parallels in the ancient world (such as Plutarch's *Lives*)? Or does the first Christian Gospel (usually taken to be Mark) fall into no category for which antiquity can produce a parallel? If so, is this unique literary type of writing the way we should classify the later Gospels (*e.g.* Luke) which both follow Mark's general outline and add features of a more "biographical" nature which are not found in Mark?

A similar question has to be faced in regard to the segment of the New Testament literature which goes under the caption of "letters". Are they

pieces of private correspondence between (say) Paul and the churches? Or were they composed consciously for publication and so fall into the category of "epistles" (as Deissmann once suggested in his well-known discussion of the two classes of epistolary writing in the hellenistic world)? According to the decision taken in this matter, questions touching the manner of Paul's composition, i.e. whether his letters were "occasional writings" composed in the urgency of the moment or carefully constructed discourses arranged with regard to some well-attested literary forms of the day and showing evidence of a polished style, will have to be considered. Either way, there is the problem set by the possibility that Paul may have used a scribe to take down his oral messages. Indeed the existence of an amanuensis is seen in Romans 16:22. Then, it becomes a matter of some importance to know how much freedom Paul gave to a man such as Tertius and whether the forms of speech and the actual words used are Paul's own or whether he permitted his scribe to fill in the skeleton he suggested and gave the final product his approval when he came to append his signature. The latter method of scribal freedom is found in our knowledge of writing methods in the Graeco-Roman world. [13]

## 2. BACKGROUND

We can now turn to consider the literary problems presented by a given text or passage in one of the books of the New Testament by asking, what do the words mean in their obvious background? Sometimes this background will be clearly the Old Testament as when the text is written in conscious imitation of the poetry of the Old Testament psalms or in a Septuagintal style or with the use of expressions which are identifiable as Semitic (e.g. hyperbole, gnomic or pithy sayings, liturgical formulas). At other times, the setting will be that of the Graeco-Roman world, as evidenced by snatches of hellenistic philosophy, lines from the Greek theatre or the use of language which is seen in the non-literary papyri. [14]

## 3. CULTURAL SETTING

What is the cultural setting of the passage and how is it illumined by knowing something of the customs, traditions, folk-lore of the people who play a part in the narrative or who were the audiences for whom the sayings or the writing were intended? [15] At a deeper level, we shall need to enquire about the religious and theological milieu in which the people of the story stood and to learn something of the presuppositions (e.g. cosmological ideas, belief in evil spirits) which informed those religious beliefs.

## 4. THEOLOGICAL PURPOSE

Above all, we must ask what is the theological purpose of the author and how does he express it. [16] Underlying our attempted exegesis will be the

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desire to learn what theological motivation (called a *Tendenz*) has inspired the writer. Only in this way can we hope to appreciate the meaning which he intended in his recording (say) of a parable of Jesus or a piece of descriptive narration or a statement of religious conviction. This does not imply that we think that the New Testament writers had an ulterior motive in their presentations. But it does insist that no New Testament author wrote without some definite purpose in view. Sometimes the purpose is openly declared (e.g. Lk. 1:1–4; Jn. 20:31; Col. 2:2–4; 1 Tim. 1:3ff.; 1 Jn. 2:1, 7, 12; 5:13) and at other times it has to be teased out of the overall writing of the author as well as discovered by a close inspection of the contextual setting of his individual verses.

Another matter which is raised sometimes acutely for the modern reader of the gospels emerges from the recognition that these evangelists were also theologians in their own right. It was not their purpose simply to reproduce the life and teaching of Jesus in a detached and neutral way. They were men of Christian faith who wrote to confirm the faith of their readers and quite probably to refute some erroneous teaching which had appeared in the churches. The implicit refutation of docetism which lies in the background of John's Gospel with its full stress on Jesus' humanity is a case in point.

Many students, however, find problems with another part of this understanding of the gospel tradition. Source criticism has shown more or less conclusively that the evangelists used materials from the traditions they took over, and redaction criticism has added the supplementary consideration that the evangelists were not simply transmitters of that tradition but the first commentators on it. Their work as editors implies that they adapted and shaped the tradition in order to bring it into line with their own theological purpose. It is this study of the pre-history of the gospel records which causes some important questions to be asked. Specifically, it is asked whether our exegesis is concerned with recovering "what actually happened" in the story and "what Jesus really said" by pressing behind the gospel data which include (in this view) the evangelists' interpretations and editorial work. An example is the way in which many modern scholars treat the parables of Jesus. We are faced with a recoverable setting of the stories in Jesus' own ministry. But in addition the text both contains a transposed setting in the life and activity of the early church and evinces a certain embellishment to make the original message of Jesus relevant to life situations in the later church. The question at issue is how much concern should the modern exegete show about these adaptations and modifications which are attributable to the early church's interest.

As a general principle – and we may refer to other sections of this book to discuss the points in detail – we may concede that our interest should be a double one. In so far as we can press back to recover the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, or at least to catch the overtone of his *ipsissima vox* which may or may not be the same thing, [17] we must do so. For by this route of enquiry we are assured of being in touch with the historical centre of our faith, the earthly Jesus as he walked and talked in Palestine. But it is a serious mistake

to think that we should discard as worthless the testimony of the early Christians which has become woven, often inextricably, into the narrative. That interpretative evidence has its own value as a witness, at once inspired and authoritative, to what the first Christians believed and taught about their Lord or how they responded to the original version of his teaching. To that extent both strata of the gospel tradition have their distinctive roles to play and they should not be set in antithesis.

Nor is it it a wise course to overlook the way in which several parts of the New Testament were written against diverse backgrounds. An example of this feature might be given in the use of the terms "faith" and "works" in Paul and James. Neither writer is saying exactly the same thing by these words. Conceivably, as we have mentioned, James is correcting a defective understanding of Paul's teaching on the part of his followers. Or we can cite the important place given to "righteousness" in Matthew's gospel which looks as though the term there is a conscious rebuttal of the false notion of "righteousness by faith" in the hands of some misguided Christians who turned Paul's teaching into antinomian licence by supposing that Gentile Christians were free to live as they pleased (see Rom. 3:31; 6:1ff.; Gal. 5:13–15; 2 Pet. 2:17–22 in the light of 2 Pet. 3:16). [18]

In effect, this caution means that every section of the New Testament must be interpreted in the light of the larger context of the overall purpose and plan of the book of which it forms a part, and according to the purpose for which it was intended. Often the purpose of individual verses can only be known as we see the fuller purpose of the book or the epistle, and (paradoxically) the specific reason for writing is found in the sum of the individual verses. This is the hermeneutical circle in which the modern interpreter finds himself. [19]

An example of this inter-relation of the whole and the parts is the book of the Revelation. Starting from the premise (which in turn is deducible from an examination of the chapters of the book) that this book of the New Testament belongs to the literary genre of apocalyptic (see later, p. 234f.), we may state that its primary purpose is that of the encouragement and strengthening of the afflicted people of God as they undergo trial and persecution. This conclusion is borne out by an inspection of individual verses (e.g. 2:10; 13:10; 14:12) and thus it becomes a principle which helps us to interpret the message of the whole book.

### III. *Literary Forms and Styles*

We turn now to pass under review specimen *exempla* of the chief literary forms which are found in the New Testament. Obviously some choice will have to be made in this selection; and what governs that choice is the need to single out such material as requires some comment if we are to be helped in the task of exegesis. The literary forms, then, will not be discussed in their own right as examples drawn from ancient literature but rather as data contributing to a fuller appreciation of Scripture as God's word to man. That

word was written in the style and manner of a first century writing. Our task is to throw some light on the literary usages which the New Testament writers employed as an aid to a clearer exegesis.

## 1. GENRE

The literature of the New Testament falls into four categories as we classify it according to its literary genre: gospel, acts, epistle and apocalypse.

(a) The literary type of "acts" need not detain us for the purposes of our discussion. The term πράξεις is known to have been applied to some biographical works in antiquity but the author of the writing *ad Theophilum* does not use the word. He uses λόγος for his first volume (Acts 1:1) and he calls the work of predecessors in that field by the title of "stories", διηγήσει. The canonical title of "The Acts of the Apostles" was added later to the second volume in the Lucan corpus and it seems "if anything an effort to describe the contents rather than the form". [20] The later apocryphal Acts get their name from the Lucan model, and in both instances there does not seem to be any adherence to a stereotyped literary form in the choice of this title.

(b) The term "gospel" is restricted in the New Testament to the activity and substance of the early Christian preaching. "To preach the gospel" (Mk. 1:14; 1 Cor. 1:17; Gal. 1:11) is a common expression. The New Testament invariably connects "gospel" (i.e. the announcement of good news) with verbs of speaking and responding, and never with verbs of writing and reading. Even where the meaning is slightly ambiguous (2 Cor. 8:18, AV) there is no indication that the early Christians thought of the gospel as a written composition. "Evangelist" in this period meant a herald, a proclaimer of good news, and not a scribe busy with his reed-pen.

One of the earliest designations of the gospel records was "memoirs" (Justin Martyr), but this term did not remain in vogue. Instead, the Christians of the second and third centuries coined the title "Gospels" for these books. [21]

The reason for this is important, and provides a vital key to a reading of the "gospels" today. No Christian "biographer" thought that he was preserving by his literary records the memory of Jesus, which might otherwise lapse and be forgotten. To imagine this is to overlook the Christian belief in the risen Lord whose living presence was assured to the church in every generation. It is true that Christians may well have desired a permanent account of Jesus' earthly life, words and activity, especially since his first followers were being removed from the scene by death with the passing of the first generation. But it still remains a factor of considerable importance in our understanding of primitive Christianity that the church's thought and life were not oriented to the past as though the believers were harking back to some lost "golden age" when Jesus was here among men. His living presence was vouchsafed by the Spirit and was made a present reality as often as they acted upon his promise (Mt. 18:20; 28:19, 20) and broke

bread "in remembrance of" him (1 Cor. 11:24f.).

So the first account of Jesus' ministry (the outline of it may be seen in skeletal form in Acts 10:37–41) boldly carried as its title: Beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God (Mark 1:1). Consistently thereafter through Mark's account the term "gospel" refers to the content of the proclaimed message which was designed to tell the story of God's saving action in Jesus and of the human response to it. In this way the "gospels" received their name because they gave the substance of the "gospel", declared in Romans 1:16 to be God's power to salvation for all who believe.

This, we may submit, is the first principle of gospel interpretation. We place a high value on these four books because they contain the essence of the saving events which formed the bedrock of the apostolic gospel. They are kerygmatic (i.e. announcing the good news and calling for a decision in regard to it) in nature and evangelical in design (i.e. intended to lead to faith in Jesus Christ, according to Jn. 20:31). They are historical in the way in which they root the life-story of Jesus in the world of first century Judaism and the times of Graeco-Roman civilization, but it is history with a distinct bias.

The history of Jesus is reported from a particular and individualistic perspective in order to show the kerygmatic side of that history. That means that the separate sections (the *pericopae*) and the gospels seen as whole books were intended to direct their readers' faith to a living person, once localized in Galilee and Jerusalem but now set free from all earthly limitation, and exalted as Lord of heaven and earth as the one in whom alone salvation is to be found. We might describe this history as salvation-history or perhaps better as "interpreted history", that is, history angled in such a way as to bring out the present significance of Jesus as the living Lord, accessible to all who call upon him, and as the exemplar of faith who trod a road of victory through suffering which his followers in every age are bidden to take. This last mentioned feature of the gospel story suggests to A. N. Wilder that the truest genre of the Christian gospels is re-enacted history centred on a faith-story in which Christ is recalled as a pattern of meaning or orientation for the believer.[22] The element of "mimesis" or re-enactment implies that history is recalled not as a record of the past valuable for its own sake but in order to contemporize Christ who comes out of the past to greet his people in the present.

(c) The major part of the New Testament corpus as regards size falls into the category of "epistle".[23] As early Christianity spread across the Mediterranean basin and churches were formed in different localities it became necessary for lines of communication to be extended between the various centres. In this way the role played by epistolary correspondence assumed an importance spoken of by Polycarp in his description of Paul's contact with the Philippians:

> During his residence with you he gave the men of those days clear and sound instruction in the word of truth, while he was there in person among you; and even after his departure he still sent letters which, if you will study them attentively,

will enable you to make progress in the faith which was delivered to you (*To the Philippians* 3:2).

The fact of apostolic instruction by letter has produced a type of writing for which there are no ancient parallels. "The letter of Christian instruction was in fact almost as distinctive a Christian contribution to literary types as the written gospel." [24]

While this statement may be true in the strict sense of letters composed for a didactic purpose, the format and style of Paul's letters follow conventional patterns known to us from methods of letter-writing in the hellenistic world. There were four parties involved: the author, the secretary, the messenger, and the recipient. Three questions are important as they impinge upon the exegetical task of understanding the New Testament epistles.

First, the two types of correspondence described by Deissmann need to be borne in mind. He distinguished between an epistle, which is a conscious literary effort intended for publication, and a letter, which is private in character, written for a specific occasion and of ephemeral duration. If we accept this distinction, it seems that the New Testament pieces of correspondence without exception fall into the former category. Many signs in the epistles point in this direction. (*a*) Paul and Peter compose in a carefully thought-out style, the evidence for which we shall see later. John's first epistle contains recurring patterns of thought which have bewildered the commentators but the overall impression is that John is pursuing certain lines of pastoral counsel with deliberate intention. (*b*) Apostolic authority runs through the major epistles of Paul showing that he was conscious of his teaching office as "apostle to the Gentiles". This is true even in those parts of Pauline correspondence which are usually regarded as his "tender" pastoral letters (Philippians: see 1:1; 2:12; 3:17) and private communications (the note to Philemon is addressed to the church in his house, verse 2, and speaks of Paul as an ambassador, verse 9). (*c*) Paul intends that his letters will be read out in assemblies of Christian worship (1 Thes. 5:27) and will circulate among other Christian groups as they are sent on from the addressees (Col. 4:16). (*d*) He has in his mind's eye a picture of the church assembled for public worship as he writes (1 Cor. 5:1ff.; Col. 2:5) and in greeting one part of the church in his epistle he takes into account also the wider company of the church in every place (1 Cor. 1:2). This vision of an "ecumenical" church (as in 1 Pet. 1:1, 5:9; Jas. 1:1) enforces the belief that these epistles are all "catholic" inasmuch as their scope reaches out to embrace the Christian brotherhood in the world. Perhaps the only exceptions to this rule are 2 and 3 John, which seem to be individual.

Secondly, Paul and Peter both make reference to a scribe (Rom. 16:22; 1 Pet. 5:12); and this has raised the question of how much liberty these men were allowed in the actual composing of the epistles. O. Roller's thesis has been mentioned. According to this, letter-writing in the ancient world was left to professionals who took down in shorthand the substance of the author's thought and later, at their leisure since transcribing was a laborious business, wrote up the letter. Then the completed letter was presented to the

author for final approval and signature. In this way Roller reconstructed the manner in which some of Paul's epistles came into being. But he also maintains that there is evidence for Paul's activity in writing the whole letter, as in Colossians 4:18 where no scribe is mentioned. But this is offset by other pieces of evidence, notably in the places where he seems to be adding his final words (Gal. 6:11), appending his autograph (Col. 4:18), or supplying a signature as a proof of authenticity (2 Thes. 3:17). It has been claimed that the mark of his revising hand is apparent in (e.g.) 2 Cor. 8:23f. with its broken syntax and in a sentence which has no main verb.

The "secretary hypothesis" has been invoked to account for the excellent literary style of 1 Peter as well as the unusual features of word usage and style in the Pastoral epistles.[25] Certainly 1 Peter 5:12 gives more information than do the Pauline letters about the status of the scribe, though it is premature for some scholars to conclude on the strength of this that "the vocabulary and style are not decisive criteria for settling its authenticity" since the secretary *ex hypothesi* took part in the composition of an epistle.[26] W. G. Kümmel has entered some important caveats regarding this theory, namely that frequent breaks and interruptions in the flow of the epistles (e.g. Phil. 3:1f.) show that these are due to pauses in dictation and that the scribe is writing the letter directly from Paul's lips. Also he appeals to a consistency of language throughout the Pauline homologoumena, which suggests that even with scribal assistance it is the real Paul whose personality and teaching comes through the various pieces of his correspondence.[27] On the other hand, Roller objects that Paul's style is "mixed" and runs into that of his amanuensis.[28]

Thirdly, there is a matter which offers more tangible help in the task of Pauline exegesis. This is the apostle's custom of using a form of epistolary thanksgiving in the opening section of his epistles. The investigation of P. Schubert[29] called attention to the use by Paul of the formula, "I thank God for . . ." or "I thank God upon . . ." The two points which this discussion established were (*a*) that as a consistent rule Paul uses the construction of the verb and the preposition ἐπί with the dative case as a way of introducing the cause for which thanks are offered; and (*b*) that, in the epistles, the thanksgiving period introduces "the vital theme of the letter" or "the epistolary situation". This discussion throws considerable light on the exegesis of Philippians 1:3 and makes very probable the interpretation that Paul is thanking God for all the remembrance the Philippians have had of him, i.e. by their support of his ministry and sending of gifts to him. See Moffatt's translation. This view, if accepted, disposes of the objection often brought against the unity of the Philippian letter that Paul would not have waited until chapter 4 to say "Thank you" for the gift brought by Epaphroditus. On this reading of the text, his opening word is one of acknowledgement and it introduces the "epistolary situation" of the letter.

J. T. Sanders has pursued this line of enquiry and maintains that the epistolary thanksgivings are borrowed from the liturgical prayers of the community after the model of the Qumran community's Hymns.[30] This

*hodaya* formula expressing thankfulness to God reflects Paul's conscious sense of oneness with the worshipping body of Christ,[31] and both in his use of *hodaya* (I thank God) and *beracha* (Blessed be (God)) he is drawing upon the liturgical vocabulary of the churches which in turn was modelled on Jewish prayer forms (1 Macc. 4:30–33; Genesis Apocryphon col. 20, lines 12ff.) and later set the pattern for early Christian liturgies (e.g. Polycarp, *Mart.* 14; Didache, 9, 10; Acts of Thomas; 1 Clement 59–61; Apostolic Constitutions 7).[32] The upshot of this investigation is to demonstrate that Paul's prayer-speech and his requests for the communities were not as spontaneous and *ad hoc* as is sometimes thought, but that he was consciously following Jewish patterns as a framework into which he fitted his exposition of the Christian gospel. And all this served a didactic purpose in that he intended to teach the congregation by means of the liturgical formularies which were the common property of the churches. The importance of this conclusion will be apparent when we come to consider Paul's use of Christian hymns in his epistles.

(d) The fourth literary genre is apocalyptic. The presence of this type of Jewish material is found in the synoptic apocalypses (Mark 13; Matthew 24; Luke 21), 2 Thessalonians 2 and the book of Revelation. It is a necessity for an understanding of these passages that the Old Testament and intertestamental background should be appreciated (e.g. Is. 24–27; Zc. 9–14; Joel 2, 3 and especially the section of Dan. 7–12 in the canonical Old Testament; and such specimens of "apocalyptic" literature as Enoch, Baruch, 4 Ezra and the Assumption of Moses which came out of the period of the two centuries before Jesus and possibly span his lifetime).[33]

The similarities of the New Testament apocalypses to the Jewish counterparts are important to notice, even if there are important differences. In the area of likeness, there are the obvious features that both examples of this genre of literature share a common religious purpose, namely (*a*) to strengthen the faith of God's people under trial and in anticipation of the decisive intervention of God which will be the dénouement of history and the ushering in of the rule of God over all the world; and (*b*) to express this message of consolation and hope against a background of dualism[34] in which, according to the time-scheme of the two ages, this age is one of wickedness and persecution for the saints of God and the age to come is one of triumph and vindication. There is, then, a double vision in apocalyptic writing. Through the historical circumstances of the clash of earthly powers[35] the reader is meant to see the nature of the real engagement between God and evil in the universe.[36]

Because the seer's vision includes both the earthly and the heavenly worlds the language he uses is circumscribed, since he can only describe events ostensibly set in the heavenly region in a language appropriate to the earthly scene (e.g. what does Rev. 12:7 mean, if literally applied to the upper world?). This is the problem of communication which the apocalyptist solves by his recourse to the language of symbolism, the use of imagery, the employment of mythological forms and anthropomorphisms. The book of

Revelation is replete with examples of all these accommodations (e.g. symbolic values attached to numbers in the descriptions of 7:4; 11:3; 12:6 and 20:3; the imagery of colour in ch. 4 and ch. 17; mythological ideas of the dragon and the serpent in 12:7, which are interpreted for the reader in 20:2; and pictures of the celestial Christ dressed in human form 1:13–16; 19:11–16). Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (see 5:5, 6: the Lion is the Lamb).

## 2. HYMNIC AND POETIC FORMS

One distinct advantage of reading the Old Testament in a modern version is that one is able to see at a glance which parts of the text are cast in poetic and hymnic style. The canonical Psalms are the obvious illustration, but by no means are poetry and hymnody restricted to these psalms. Judges 5 is possibly the earliest example of poetry in the Hebrew Bible, and the song of Miriam (Ex. 15) is set in quasi-hymnic form.

(a) The reader of the New Testament needs the same guidance to show him at a moment's glance what are the poetic portions of the literature. The more apparent examples come in Luke 1, 2 which preserve some early canticles doubtless treasured in the Jewish Christian community, and possibly forming part of their liturgical worship. These are the *Magnificat* (Lk. 1:45–55), the *Benedictus* (Lk. 1:68–79), and the *Nunc Dimittis* (Lk. 2:29–32). All the Latin titles are drawn from the opening words of the poetic pieces. Examples of Hebrew poetic forms [37] are to be seen in these canticles. Synonymous parallelism appears in Luke 1:46, 47:

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

And to recognize this usage is to avoid the mistake of trying to distinguish anthropologically between "soul" and "spirit" in this text. The two terms are used synonymously.

(i) Antithetical parallelism shines through a later verse of the *Magnificat* (1:52). There is a good example of this feature in Luke 2:14. In the angelic jubilation known as the *Gloria in Excelsis* the two lines are set in direct contrast, corresponding to the two spheres of acknowledgement:

To God in the highest, glory!
Peace to his people on earth!

Two additional comments may be made on this snatch of Advent celebra-

tion. It contains a specimen of chiasmus; the lines cross in their agreements and so form a diagram represented by the Greek letter *chi* ($\chi$). So the phrase "in the highest (heaven)" matches the corresponding antithesis of "on earth" but it is set at a different place on the lines, so forming a cross. There are several other places in the New Testament where chiasmus has been suspected,[38] from the isolated cases in the gospels (e.g. Matt. 7:6[39]) to the elaborate attempt to construct Colossians 1:15–20 in chiastic form.[40]

The other element in Luke 2:14 which comes to light when we have regard to its literary formulation is the sense of Greek ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας which is decided by this construction. Apart from the textual difficulty, it cannot now be doubted that the meaning is "Peace on earth to men to whom God shows his mercy", and not "to men who have goodwill" or "all those pleasing him" (The Living Bible). The emphasis must lie on God's activity which unites the two spheres of heaven and earth and so "reconciles" them – a theme which runs through the hymnic confessions of Colossians 1:15–20 and 1 Timothy 3:16 where the chiastic device is pressed into the service of a profound theological interpretation of the restoring work of the cosmic Redeemer.

Antithetical parallelism produces one notable type of sentence which has been closely studied in recent research. This is the form known as "Sentences of Holy Law"[41] and these are all variations of the legal principle of *lex talionis*. The basic form is seen in 1 Corinthians 3:17:

If anyone destroys the temple of God,
God will destroy him.

This is both antithesis, and chiasmus, and expresses in memorable style the apocalyptic judgment formula: destruction to the destroyer. It is the application of this "law" which accounts for the summary verdict pronounced on Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11). From this initial premise Käsemann launches into a full discussion of the role of charismatic prophets and apostolic authority in the New Testament church and throws some light on the eschatological dimension which is presupposed in many prescriptive standards (e.g. in the Gospels, Mark 8:38; in Paul, 1 Cor. 14:37; in the Apocalypse, Rev. 22:18f.).

(ii) The Hebrew custom of setting two lines side by side, or two stichos in the same line, is called by the Latin term *parallelismus membrorum;* and there are several examples of this feature in Paul and Peter. The device plays a significant theological role, when the early Christians developed the christological scheme of setting side by side the two stages of Christ's "existence". He was described as Man by his incarnation; and as exalted Lord by his enthronement to God's presence. The formula for this is given as κατὰ σάρκα/κατὰ πνεῦμα. Examples are seen in Romans 1:3ff:

Born of the family of David on his human side,
Appointed Son of God from the resurrection of the dead
by the power of holy spirit

and, at greater length, in 1 Timothy 3:16 and 1 Peter 3:18–22. The verse 1 Peter 1:20 is an example of a *parallelismus membrorum,* which utilizes the

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themes of pre-existence/incarnation, and employs the good classical form of contrast $\mu\grave{\varepsilon}\nu$. . . $\delta\grave{\varepsilon}$. . .):

Foreknown before the world's foundation,
Revealed at the end of time for your sake.

One or two fragments of credal formulation apply the same form to a statement of soteriology, as in 1 Corinthians 15:3bff.:

Christ died for our sins
          according to the Scriptures;
Christ was raised on the third day
          according to the Scriptures

or Romans 4:25:

Who was handed over on account of our trespasses,
But raised in proof of our justification.

(iii) This last mentioned verse also incorporates an Old Testament feature of considerable exegetical value. It is the "divine passive".[42] There are excellent grounds for believing that this mode of expression, i.e. using the passive voice of a verb to denote the hidden action of God as the agent responsible for the activity, was characteristic of Jesus' way of speaking. A feature which began as a reverential way of avoiding the use of the sacred name of God was picked up in the apocalyptic literature and used as a concealed way of expressing divine secrets; and it became customary, with an extended usage, on Jesus' lips. He uses it over 100 times (Jeremias, p. 11) and some of the best examples are Matthew 5:4: "Blessed are those who mourn, for God will comfort them", or Luke 12:7: "All the hairs of your head are numbered (by God)." These are fairly obvious illustrations, once we grasp the principle involved. A less clear case, but with equal theological weight, is in Mark 1:14: "Now after John had been handed over (by God to his fate), Jesus came . . ."[43] where Mark's intention is to suggest a deliberate parallel between John's fate and the destiny of the Son of man who will at last be delivered by God into the hands of sinners (Mk. 9:31, 14:41). In a similar vein we should understand Romans 4:25 and 1 Corinthians 11:23: "The Lord Jesus on the night when he was handed over (to his fateful destiny by God) . . ."[44]

(iv) Snatches of hymnody based on the Old Testament model are seen in the Apocalypse of John. Scattered through the series of visions are songs of the heavenly world (Rev. 4:11; 11:17, 18; 14:7; 15:3, 4). While these lines are placed on the lips of the heavenly worshippers, it is likely that in their form they betray the influence of the synagogues of the Greek-speaking world of the Dispersion.[45] The most illustrious example of these instances, however, is the ejaculation which became embedded in the Christian liturgy of the later church. From the opening words of Revelation 4:8 it is known as the *Ter Sanctus* – the Thrice Holy:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come.[46]

(b) Poetic and hymnic forms were more consciously adopted and made the vehicle of theological expression in the era when the church moved out into the hellenistic world. Three prime examples of this style of writing are

seen in the Pauline corpus. In each case there are good grounds for thinking that Paul is quoting from some independent source and using a piece of Christian liturgy (in some cases suitably edited by him) to enforce a point of teaching.

## (i) 1 Timothy 3:16

The chief literary feature here is the use of antithesis to express two stages of Christ's existence. These are denoted, as we have seen, by the terms: flesh/spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 5:16 for the formula).

Since the pioneering work of E. Norden,[47] other literary forms have been detected in this short, creed-like statement. The authority for these forms is the rhetorian Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria*. The repetition of the verb at the beginning of each line and in the same grammatical form produces a species of rhythm known as *parison* and *homoioptoton* (*Inst. Or.* ix. 3. 76, 78). In the first couplet the verbs have the same syllabic length (5 beats) and this leads to *isocolon* (*Inst. Or.* ix. 3. 80). Moreover, the phrases which close the lines of the couplet:

ἐν σαρκί (in the flesh)

ἐν πνεύματι (in the spirit)

have a similar sound in their ending and this device is known as *homoioteleuton* (*Inst. Or.* ix. 3. 77). These poetic forms make the short verse one of the most precious instances of a literary piece in the entire New Testament.[48]

## (ii) Ephesians 5:14

This single verse provides another good example of Greek poetic structure. The text of this baptismal chant divides into three lines (a feature unfortunately overlooked by RSV) and there is a swinging trochaic rhythm which cannot be reproduced exactly in English. The nearest we get to it is offered in the translation:

Awake, O sleeper,
From the grave arise.
The light of Christ upon you shines.

Even that rendering fails to capture the assonance of the final syllables of lines i and ii:

ὁ καθεύδων

ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν

which employs the device of *homoioptoton*. It is interesting that it was precisely this triplet-form which was used in the initiation chants of the hellenistic mystery cults (especially the Attis formula[49]) and in the Hermetic literature.

(iii) Philippians 2:6–11

This text yields to the same literary analysis. Since Lohmeyer's study [50] this passage has been recognized as hymnic in form and capable of division into strophes. Lohmeyer postulated six such stanzas. Later attempts to improve on this arrangement produced a three strophe hymn in which the device of *parallelismus membrorum* was utilized and a tacit acceptance was given to Aristotle's judgment that a perfect literary composition requires "a beginning, a middle and an end" (*Poetics* 1450b 26). This is held to correspond to the three states of Christ: pre-existent, incarnate, enthroned. [51] The permanent contribution of Jeremias is that, in his view, the entire hymn is built up in couplets, though his analysis suffers from some weaknesses. Yet another proposal is to discard the notion of a hymn set in stanzas and to see the passage as structured in the form of a set of antiphonal couplets. [52] When this is done, the several rhetorical and lyrical features which we observed in respect of 1 Timothy 3:16 are also seen to be present in this *carmen Christi;* and the same is true in regard to Colossians 1:15–20 which has been subjected to scrutiny with a view to discovering items of poetic structure such as metrical quantity and syllabic length. According to Ch. Masson, there are patterns of metre in Colossians 1:15–20 which are the result of the regular sequence of syllables and stresses. If his case could be regarded as plausible, this hymn to the cosmic Christ would be the nearest approximation in the New Testament to a Greek poem, with both rhythm and rhyme. But his case has not convinced many readers. [53]

(iv) Some comments on New Testament hymns

It may be thought that the classification of parts of the New Testament according to the basic patterns of poetic and hymnic form is an interesting exercise but nothing more. This is not so; and at least three consequences follow from our conclusion that these passages are set in lyrical form.

First, we are introduced to the worshipping life of the apostolic church and reminded that the church which meets us in the pages of the New Testament is a worshipping company of believing men and women. This is clear from the descriptions in the Acts of the Apostles (1:42; 2:42, 46; 4:31; 5:12, 42; 13:1–3; 20:7–12) as well as from the statements of Paul in his letters (notably 1 Cor. 10–14). Since the post-Pentecostal church and the Pauline mission churches still retained the first flush of enthusiastic experience and the dynamism of a new-found awareness of God, it is not unexpected that this new life imparted by faith in the exalted Lord by the Holy Spirit and expressed in a "conquering newborn joy" would find an outlet and vehicle in religious song. [54] For the modern reader it is a fact of some importance that our study of the documents of the early church is not simply a piece of academic research or an investigation of principles and practice of Christian belief and behaviour in a clinically detached and "scientific" way. Rather we are reading the literature of a highly charged religious movement, which was

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conscious of living in days of God's special grace and which reflected that awareness of the divine presence and power in an uprush of spiritual energy. The literary deposits of that activity are to be seen in the fragments of creed-like hymns and confessions which lie just beneath the surface of the literature and which put us into touch with pulsating life in the apostolic communities.

Then, we see that much of the hymnic language is poetic and suggestive of deep spiritual reality rather than prosaic and pedestrian. The early Christians, giving vent to their deepest emotions as these were stirred by God's Spirit (as we learn from 1 Cor. 14:13ff., 26ff.; Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16: it has been maintained that glossolalia was a form of rhapsodic prayer-speech "sung with the spirit"), were seeking to interpret their understanding of God's salvation in Christ in a way which defied rational and coherent statement. Hence they had recourse to the language of symbol and "myth". Examples of the symbolism used in the hymns will come readily to mind, e.g. the imagery of light and darkness; Christ is likened to the sun which banished gloom and the shadows; the totality of the universe is summed up in phrases such as "every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Phil. 2:10), or "thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities" (Col. 1:16). Exegetical questions which are raised by these sonorous descriptions are more satisfactorily negotiated if we remember that Paul's language is consciously poetic. Otherwise, we shall be hard pressed to say exactly what is meant by demonic forces located in subterranean regions or to explain how Christ's death on the cross of Calvary in Jerusalem at a specific time in history affected the astral deities which hellenistic man thought of as controlling his fate and destiny. Paul is dealing with very real problems – specifically the overthrow of evil and the relaxing of the grip which planetary powers exercised over his readers when they were still victims of bad religion under the tyranny of "the elemental spirits of the universe" (Col. 2:8, 20); but he is couching his thought-forms in a language which his fellow-believers would appreciate and learn from; and in some cases he is borrowing concepts and terms from his opponents' vocabulary, and either arguing *ad hominem* for the sake of his churches or disinfecting the terms by placing them in his own frame of reference. This is very noticeable in Colossians 1:15–20. See the references given in footnotes 53 and 58.

This brings us to the vexed question of "myth". Some scholars deny outright that the New Testament makes use of myth at all, and there are substantial grounds for this conviction.[55] Myth is set in antithesis to truth, and the New Testament is shown to be exclusively concerned with the record of "divine fact with all the weight of historical reality" (Stählin, loc. cit., p. 786). There is no denying the force of the assertion that if "myth" means non-historical make-believe or fairy tales or the product of the human inventiveness, there is no evidence that the writers interpreted the gospel in this way. Quite the opposite, as the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1:4, 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:4) make clear. But if the term "myth" is differently defined and regarded as a

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language-form needed to express in human terms and with human analogies the transcendent world of God and angels and spirits, then it seems that we *must* have recourse to pictorial and mythopoetic language. The issue is whether, to avoid confusion, we should use a new term or at least qualify the word "myth".[56] Within this restricted definition we should recognize that Paul and John do use the scaffolding of the story of the heavenly Redeemer who "comes down" from the high God and returns thither after his mission of redemption (Phil. 2:6–11; Jn. 3:31; 6:62). But it is not the use of the framework which is important nor the presence of a kinetic imagery to denote the "movements" of katabasis and anabasis which is vital. Both writers utilize the first century "stage props" and simply use the "myth" to their own ends by re-casting it in terms of a human life of the earthly Jesus whose feet stood firmly on Palestinian soil and who tasted the bitterness of human misery and endured death before his exaltation to the rank of cosmic Lord. The "evangelical" content which is fitted into the "mythical" framework really destroys it. There is thus a "mythoclastic" element in the New Testament.[57]

Thirdly, this discussion brings us to the great contribution to exegesis offered by a study of these "hymns to Christ". They are set in a polemical context as part of the apostolic concern to defend the gospel against false christological notions and to ward off heretical attacks on the infant churches. Paul in particular makes appeal to the common deposit of Christian teaching in these hymns with a view to showing how the churches should remain steadfast; and he enforces his teaching by supplementing the "received text" of the hymns and modifying it to his own purpose. This is very probably the case with Colossians 1:15–20 where Paul has edited an already existing hymn to bring it into line with his teaching.[58] A simpler case is seen in Philippians 2:8 where most modern commentators see Paul's hand in the insertion of $\theta a v \acute{a} \tau o v$ $\delta \grave{\epsilon}$ $\sigma \tau a v \varrho o \tilde{v}$ (even the death of the cross) to emphasize that Jesus' obedience to death meant a death on a cross and so a death of atoning value (Gal. 3:13).

## 3. LITURGICAL EXPRESSIONS

Several words and phrases in the New Testament belong to the actual liturgical vocabulary of primitive times. They are most easily recognized by the simple token that in the Greek of the New Testament they have been allowed to remain in their original Semitic form, sometimes with a Greek interpretative translation to accompany them. The most interesting examples are Abba, Amen, Hosanna, Hallelujah and Maranatha.

*'Abba* was Jesus' favourite name for God. While it was the child's title for his earthly parents (meaning "dear father"), there is no evidence that the pious Jew, either in private prayer or in the synagogue liturgy, ever used this precise form for invoking God.[59] Instead he used a variant form such as *'Abi* or *'Abinu* ("My Father, Our Father"); but *'Abba* was avoided because

it was thought to be too daring and presumptuous for a mortal to call upon God in this familiar way.

The wonder of this address to God is that Jesus used it as part of his filial obedience (Mk. 14:32–9) and taught his disciples to use it in their approach to God (Lk. 11:2). Undeniably there is no mistaking in this word the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus; and so much of his characteristic teaching about God as Father is expressed in this caritative form of the word for father. That it quickly was seized upon and passed into the worshipping life of the Gentile churches is seen from Paul's use of the exact word (in Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6) where he regards the invoking of God as *'Abba* as the sign of the Spirit's presence and the hallmark of the new life in Christ.

*'Amen* is known from the Old Testament times as a vocal response made by people as they endorsed the words of the speaker (*e.g.* Ne. 8:6). The verb underlying the cry means "to be firm, true" and is connected with the verb "to believe". It has a place in the synagogue service when the congregation replies to the precentor's call or the minister's prayers, and it serves to endorse the worship or the prayer as something the people believe and accept. There are many examples of this usage in the New Testament, usually at the close of doxologies or ascriptions of praise (e.g. Rom. 1:25, 9:25, 11:36; Eph. 3:21; 1 Tim. 1:17, 6:16; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 4:11 *et al.*). It belongs too to the scenario of the heavenly sanctuary and its worship (Rev. 5:13, 14), though as we indicated this probably reflects the worship of the Asia Minor churches and is extrapolated from a liturgy with which John and his readers were already familiar.

There are two special instances of the use of Amen in Paul's epistles, which take on a distinct significance. First, in 2 Corinthians 1:20ff., the language is rich in liturgical overtones. Paul is probably alluding to baptism under the figure of a seal applied by the Spirit. The thought is: As God is faithful in fulfilling his pledge to give the Spirit to all who trust him, and confess Christ in baptism, and we attest his faithfulness with our Amen, so we as apostolic messengers can be relied on to keep faith with Christian people and not to play false.

At 1 Corinthians 14:16 Paul is describing the scene at a worship assembly at Corinth and points to the need for intelligibility in the service so that an outsider who comes into the room and hears the church at prayer may not be utterly confused but may know when to express his agreement (by saying "Amen") with the prayer of thanks. It is shown by this incidental allusion that Amen was in common use among the Pauline churches as the worshipper's assent to what he heard from the lips of his fellow-believers.

Special interest attaches to Jesus' use of the single or double *'Amen* placed as a preface to his public and private teaching. As with *'Abba,* this exact formulation is unique; and by the stringent criterion of eliminating from the records all that has parallels in Judaism and early Christianity, [60] the logia which contain this usage manage to survive. In the gospels the prefacing Amen (now to be taken as adverbial and meaning "certainly") is found only on Jesus' lips (familiarly in the Johannine "verily, verily") and in all the

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strata of gospel tradition.[61] The fact that it is retained in its Semitic form before the Greek λέγω ὑμῖν shows that the evangelists attached importance to it. Its purpose was to draw attention to the vital words of Jesus who in turn adopted the formula as One standing in the prophetic succession (the prophets used "Thus says Yahweh" as a claim to an inspired utterance) and going beyond them in his sublime authority to override the law of Moses and to utter oracles in his own name as God's unique Son and messenger. [62]

*Hosanna* is a Jewish ejaculation meaning "Save now!" and is addressed as a petition to God the Saviour (Ps. 118:25). Other references to the Hebrew expression (*hoši'an na'*) are in 2 Samuel 14:4 and 2 Kings 6:26, but these are non-significant for our purpose since they are cries addressed to men.

Psalm 118 was used at the Feast of Tabernacles and the Passover, and at the former celebration branches of trees were carried by the pilgrims and waved. These branches took their name from the festival and were called "hosannahs". This looks to be the most natural setting for the incident of Mark 11:1−10 and par.[63] In view of the evangelist's silence as to what the cry was intended to mean it is uncertain whether we should take it as an appeal for God's aid or as a greeting or benediction addressed to Jesus. However, the word soon found a place in Christian liturgy. In Didache 10:6 there is a strange snatch of liturgical dialogue in the form of a versicle and a response. To the invitation −

May Grace come, and let this world pass away,
the congregation's reply is:
Hosanna to the God of David! [64]

*Hallelujah* is another Hebrew ascription of praise (meaning "Praise be to Jah", Israel's covenant God). It is found in the New Testament at Revelation 19:1, 6 as a song of triumph to celebrate the victory of the heavenly host.

*Maranatha* is a more decisive term, since it has considerable christological interest. In the context of 1 Corinthians 16:22 it voices the appeal of the community for the coming and presence of the Lord, and most likely the *Sitz im Leben* of the word falls in the dialogue pattern of versicle and response at the eucharistic service. These are the two conclusions reached by J. A. T. Robinson following suggestions made by H. Lietzmann and G. Bornkamm,[65] viz.

(a) that in 1 Corinthians 16:20–24 the language is "not merely of epistolary convention, but of one worshipping community to another, the converse of the saints assembled for Eucharist" and (b) that in this pericope there can be traced the remains of the earliest Christian liturgical sequence which we possess, and which is pre-Pauline in origin.

These conclusions are now generally accepted;[66] and with this confidence in a *sententia recepta* we can proceed to draw out some indications of the ways in which exegesis is helped.

The meaning of the Aramaic expression *Maranatha* is a matter of some debate since a decision about the division of the composite word affects its sense.[67] Most commentators agree that it should be divided as *Maranâ thâ*

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with the translation, "Our Lord, come" (cf. Rev. 22:20; Didache 10:6: both contexts require an imperative) and this settles the nature of the expression as a petition for the Lord's coming. In the light of the eucharistic setting of the passage in 1 Corinthians 16 the cry seems to be one of invitation that the risen Christ will come to meet his people at his table and be present with them as they celebrate in his name. [68] But an eschatological "coming" is not excluded (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26), and probably is the dominant theme of the cry. [69]

The christological meaning of *Maran* (our Lord) is also a controverted issue. The title cannot refer to God the Father (as was suggested years ago by some German scholars [70]), nor can it be placed in any other original setting than the Aramaic-speaking Palestinian church (against Bousset who wanted to locate it in a bilingual region of the hellenistic communities of Antioch, Damascus or even Tarsus). [71] It is now accepted that, on linguistic and ideological grounds, this watchword is embedded in Palestinian Christianity and represents a species of early christological belief. [72]

But even with this admission it still becomes a question of debate whether the term means that the early Jewish Christians offered cultic veneration of Jesus (as Cullmann insists) [73] or whether this is no more than an expression of hope that he will return as Lord-Son of man (so Fuller). [74] It is hard to accept the attenuated significance given in the latter view, and when Fuller writes that "even in the later Hellenistic church the exalted Jesus was never the direct object of worship", the significance of such texts as Acts 7:56–60; Romans 9:5 and Pliny's report of Christian worship as *carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere* has been overlooked.

*Maranâ thâ* stands as a monument to Christian belief in Jesus' present lordship and the hope of the parousia. It places him on the side of God in a unique way by appropriating a title which properly belongs to God and shows that, from its inception, the Christian church has felt no incongruity in confessing one God (1 Cor. 8:6) and in the same breath in hailing Jesus as *Deus praesens*, God-with-us.

## 4. FIGURES OF SPEECH AND LITERARY DEVICES

In this section we shall include a variety of literary forms which the reader of the New Testament is likely to encounter and which need some brief comment.

### (a) *Wisdom Sayings and Parables*

We have already mentioned that much of the gospel speech-forms is derived from Old Testament precedents, and this is only to be expected since both Jesus and his hearers stood in that tradition. Jesus himself was regarded as "teacher" and "prophet", and more than one aspect of his recorded teaching is modelled on the wisdom literature of the Jewish people.

The most elemental "form" in this background is the *maŝal*, a word which contains several shades of meaning. It stands for an aphorism used to express succinctly some proverbial wisdom, a legal axiom, a philosophy of liv-

ing or a rule for conduct. The teaching of Jesus offers examples of all these:

Matthew 6:34: Do not allow tomorrow's troubles to affect you today.
Mark 8:38: Whoever disowns me will be disowned.
Luke 12:48: All who have great privileges have great responsibilities.
Mark 2:27: The sabbath day is for man's benefit not the other way round.

Sometimes the *mašal* takes on the form of another Old Testament nuance, namely a riddle. Examples from the great sermon are: Matthew 5:13 (How can you season salt once it has lost its tang?); 6:27 (Can you increase your height by worrying over it?); 7:16 (Can you pick figs off a thistle bush?). These are conundrums drawn from experience. Some of the *m'šalim,* however, are given to awaken interest at a deeper level and to set the enquirer or the audience thinking about God and his kingdom and the meaning of life. These are the "dark sayings" which needed Jesus' interpretation (Mk. 4:11, 34); and often the disciples were utterly bewildered (Mk. 8:17; 9:6, 11; 10:10, 24; and the upper room sayings in John's gospel). J. Jeremias points out that this type of saying was original with Jesus and could not have been invented by the church which was interested in explanations, not riddles.[75]

When the *mašal* is extended into a larger story or comparison drawn from a life-situation, it forms a parable. The rabbis told parables and illumined their teaching with analogies drawn from everyday life.[76] But the parables of Jesus are in a class by themselves for many reasons:[77] (a) they are not fables which make animals their main characters, nor do trees or bushes speak (as in Jdg. 9:8–15; 2 Ki. 14:9; Ezk. 17:3–8, 31:3–14); (b) little use is made of extensive allegory (as in Enoch 85–90 where the history of Israel is told in great detail by means of speaking animals: cf. the use of animals and reptiles in Dn. and Rev.). Mark 12:1–11 is the closest the parables of Jesus get to the allegorical form; (c) the chief part of Jesus' parables is not the tale as such so much as the "punch-line" which usually comes at the climax of the story (cf. 2 Sa. 12:1–7 which ends on the note of a rapier thrust, You are the man!); and (d) Jesus used parables not to amuse or to gain a hearing but to proclaim the kingdom as a present reality. In that sense his words were performative of the grace of God which his message of the kingdom brought with it (see Luke 15 especially). Where this message was refused, his words took on judgmental force and were "weapons of warfare" (Jeremias[78]) attacking Pharisaic pride (Lk. 18:9) as well as announcing the presence of the kingdom. Above all (e) Jesus' parables were calculated to make the hearers feel that they were involved in the action of the story. The parable brings home to the listener the "existential" dimension of Jesus' teaching and confronts him here and now with a situation from which he cannot escape but which forces him to take sides. See Mark 4:24, 25.

## (b) *Gematria*

A device that is likely to cause some trouble to the present-day interpreter is known as *gematria*. Since neither Hebrew nor Greek had separate characters for numerals, the letters of the alphabet were used by being given a numerical value. When the letters were added together a sum total was reached; and by reversing this procedure and using the aggregate number as a cipher it was possible to convey a message in a cryptic way. The most obvious case is Revelation 13:18 where after the lurid description of the beast which came out of the earth to embark on a persecuting rampage against the saints the seer remarks to the reader: "Here is the key; and anyone who has intelligence can work out the number of the beast. The number represents a man's name, and the numerical value of its letters is six hundred and sixty-six" (NEB). The commentaries should be consulted for a full discussion of this text. Solutions begin with the simplest idea that 666 falls short of the "perfect" number of 777 just as the numerical addition of the letters for the name "Jesus" in Greek is 888. The message then is that Jesus' name is supreme, while the name of "Man" (generically considered) means a persistent falling short.[79] A popular view sees here a concealed allusion to Nero Caesar who is referred to in the image of the beast with a mortal wound (13:3, 15). If this name is written in Hebrew characters and the vowel letter (*yôdh*) omitted, the sum of the letters is 666; if the Latin form of the name is examined, it yields 616; this is a variant reading of the text of 13:18. But this seems to be a complicated method of arriving at a solution, however much it may be conceded that the myth of *Nero redivivus* as an epitome of the church's enemy appears to underlie the Apocalypse's message to the Asian churches. There is an even more intricate solution offered by E. Stauffer who takes the five names by which the emperor Domitian was known, and uses the first letters of those titles in Greek. In this way the total of 666 is produced.[80] This idea has the merit of setting the Apocalypse in the reign of Domitian where the early fathers placed it and where it finds its most natural background. But there are difficulties. It is obvious therefore that this verse has not yet yielded its secret.

The other instance of *gematria* is easier to see. In Matthew's birth list (ch. 1) the account of Jesus' ancestry has been set into the framework of selective periodization with groups of fourteen names built around king David. This is artificially contrived, as we can see from a counting of the names; and it leads to the suspicion that the evangelist is deliberately using the name David with its numerical value of fourteen (Hebrew characters *daleth-waw-daleth* add up to 14) to set the pattern for this roll-call (1:17)[81] and so to prove that Jesus is "great David's greater Son".

## (c) *Greek Rhetorical Forms*

Greek rhetorical forms, in addition to those we mentioned earlier, are further represented by some passages in which Paul is the speaker.[82]

They include Acts 17:22ff. (Paul's address on Areopagus) where the speech falls into clearly defined sections corresponding to the rhetorician's model of *exordium* (verse 22), *narratio* (verse 23), *divisio* (verses 24ff.) and *conclusio* (verses 29ff.); and Romans 2, 3 which contain several direct questions as though Paul were addressing a hostile audience. This is the device of *diatribe* by which a speaker or writer enters into imaginary debate with an interlocutor, raising points which he would make and objections he would voice, which are then answered and refuted.[83] There are other brief examples of this in Paul (1 Cor. 9 and 15:35, 36) and the influence of this Cynic-Stoic method of argumentation has been traced in James, especially 2:2f.[84]

Paul's versatility as a writer is seen in the epistle to the Romans. He can move with agility from the employment of a hellenistic debating style such as *diatribe* to a careful piece of exegesis based on the Old Testament. His exegesis follows the rabbinic principle of *g<sup>e</sup>zerah šawah* and such illustrations as the "light and the heavy". These are two principles of exegesis which Hillel included in his list of seven (the *middoth*).

The principle of "analogy" (Heb. *g<sup>e</sup>zerah šawah,* lit. "similar decision") states that when the same word or phrase is found in two passages of the Old Testament, one can be used to illumine the other. This is Paul's key to the Christian use of Genesis 15:6 adopted in Romans 4.[85]

The principle of *a minori ad maius* (which is what the Hebrew, translated literally "light and the heavy," means) is also seen in Romans (at 5:15; 8:32).

Perhaps these final *exempla* are themselves a parable, for they remind us that Paul's exegetical methods are as varied and suggestive as the often unexpected turns in his thought; and such versatility will put us on our guard against reading Scripture without regard to its literary style and cultural setting, and encourage us to bring as lively a mind to the interpretation of Scripture as was employed, on its human side, in composing it.

NOTES

1. Denzinger and Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (1963) 1637, quoted by R. E. Brown, *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London 1968) 71:87.

2. Cf. R. M. Enroth, E. E. Ericson, Jr., C. B. Peters, *The Jesus People*. Old-Time Religion in the Age of Aquarius (Exeter/Grand Rapids, 1972), p. 167.

3. For an elaboration of this statement, see G. E. Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (London/Grand Rapids, 1967), ch. 1.

4. I owe this example to Dr. J. P. Kane.

5. J. Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation* (London 1966), pp. 192–96: "One of the theological functions of biblical interpretation is that it must expand our conceptions of what is relevant and introduce new perceptions. Any attempt to judge relevance at the beginning of our study must only perpetuate the value systems we previously accepted. Where this is so, the relevance conception works like tradition in the negative sense" (p. 193).

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6. For the place of Dilthey, see later, pp. 313–315. See too the discussion in R. Kieffer, *Essais de méthodologie néo-testamentaire* (Lund 1972), pp. 46–50, who distinguishes between the text's "sens" and its "signification" and insists rightly that the two must be kept separate: "Nothing can be more disastrous for investigation of the 'sens' (explanation) of our text than to announce vigorously certain propositions which spring from an interpretation required by the 'signification' (understanding) of that text" (p. 50). For a comment on the New Testament problems seen in this light we may refer to W. Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Oxford 1968), p. 27 and more fully in his *The New Testament as the Church's Book* (Philadelphia 1972).

7. See a critique of Fuchs and Ebeling in P. J. Achtemeier, *Theology Today* 23 (1966), pp. 101–19.

8. For a discussion of this definition of *sensus plenior* see R. E. Brown, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture,* Baltimore 1955), especially pp. 92f. supplemented by the same writer's articles in CBQ 25 (1963), pp. 262–85 and ETL 43 (1967), pp. 460–69.

9. Y. M.–J. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (E.T. London 1967), especially pp. 63f. This view of regarding tradition as having an interpretative function in bringing out truth from the Scripture in a complementary way has been justly criticized by R. P. C. Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church* (London 1962), pp. 239–45. Cf. EQ 40 (1968), pp. 79ff.

10. Congar cites the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Papal Primacy and Infallibility, the Assumption of Mary as dogmas which the Magisterium has decreed "either come from, or are based on, Scripture" (op. cit., p. 64 n. 2).

11. See G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology* (London 1957); and the several contributions to *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation* ed. C. Westermann (London 1963).

12. For this term, see O. Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (London 1967).

13. For many of these questions we may refer to the study of G. A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (New York 1927), O. Roller, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe* (Stuttgart 1933), and B. Rigaux, *The Letters of St. Paul* (Chicago E.T. 1968). For a discussion of Roller, see C. F. D. Moule, BJRL 47 (1964–5), p. 449.

14. See the chapters in the present volume, written by J. W. Drane and E. E. Ellis, on the backgrounds of the New Testament writers.

15. To take a well-known illustration. Methods of shepherding in Eastern lands differ from what are customary in rural districts in the Western countries. The meaning of John 10 is greatly enhanced by a reading of George Adam Smith's description of "the grandeur of the shepherd's character" (*The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (London 1966 ed.), p. 210.

16. For the meaning of redaction criticism, which is concerned to investigate the Gospel writers' theological interest, see S. S. Smalley's essay in the present volume.

17. See the distinction drawn by J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology,* (London 1971), Vol. I, ch. 1.

18. For this view of Matthew's stress on the validity of the law and the call to a higher righteousness see G. Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law" in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* by G. Bornkamm, G. Barth and H. J. Held (London 1963), pp. 159ff.

19. See R. S. Barbour, *Traditio-Historical Criticism of the Gospels* (London 1972), p. 19. See also J. I. Packer, "Biblical Authority, Hermeneutics and Inerrancy" in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius van Til,* ed. E. R. Geehan (Philadelphia 1971), pp. 146ff.

20. H. J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (London 1958 ed.), pp. 135ff. (p. 136).

21. The reasons for the development of this term are mentioned in my book *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (Exeter 1972), ch. 1.

22. A. N. Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric* (London 1964), pp. 36f.

23. See now W. G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia 1973).

24. E. J. Goodspeed, *The Formation of the New Testament* (Chicago 1926), p. 25.

25. See J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London 1963), pp. 25ff., who argues that the linguistic and literary features of these letters may be accounted for on the supposition that Paul employed a new secretary at this juncture in his life, "a Hellenistic Jewish Christian, a

man skilled in rabbinical lore and at the same time a master of the higher *koinē*".

26. So A. Wikenhauser, *New Testament Introduction* (Dublin 1958), p. 348.

27. W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London 1966), pp. 178.

28. O. Roller, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe*, p. 148.

29. P. Schubert, *Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgivings* (Berlin 1939), pp. 71–82.

30. J. T. Sanders, "The Transition from Opening Epistolary Thanksgiving to Body in the Letters of the Pauline Corpus", JBL 81 (1962) pp. 348ff. See the forthcoming study of P. T. O'Brien on "Pauline Thanksgivings". See too H. Boers, NTS 22 (1975–76), pp. 140–158.

31. This conclusion has been demonstrated by L. G. Champion, *Benedictions and Doxologies in the Epistles of Paul* (Oxford 1934).

32. These are the chief data discussed by J. M. Robinson in "Die Hodajot-Formel in Gebet und Hymnus des Frühchristentums", *Apophoreta: Festschrift für E. Haenchen* (Berlin 1964), pp. 194–235.

33. See for details D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (London 1964).

34. Dualism is taken to be *the* characteristic of apocalyptic by C. E. Braaten, *Christ and Counter-Christ* (Philadelphia 1972).

35. In the case of the synoptic apocalypses, it is the series of events prior to and including the outbreak of the first Jewish war with Rome, A.D. 66–73; in the Revelation it is the conflict between the church in Asia Minor and the emperor cult in the time of Domitian, A.D. 90–96.

36. For this understanding of a double vision, see Karl Heim, *Die Königsherrschaft Gottes* (Stuttgart 1948), pp. 55f. (as quoted by C. E. B. Cranfield, "Mark 13", SJT 6 (1953), p. 300): "But all this (i.e. the destruction of Jerusalem and the events connected with it) is for Him only a *Transparent* standing in the foreground, through which He beholds the last events before the End of the world, in which all this will at last come to its real fulfilment." See too the use of Heim made in Daniel Lamont, *Christ and the World of Thought* (Edinburgh 1934), especially ch. 16: Ethic and Apocalyptic.

37. For these forms see the discussion by K. Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition* (New York 1969), pp. 91–100, and T. R. Henn, *The Bible as Literature* (London 1970), pp. 128ff.

38. See the full study by N. W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament* (Chapel Hill 1942). This work needs to be supplemented by the more recent investigations, e.g. of E. Schweizer in TDNT 6, pp. 416f. There is a critique of aspects of Lund's book in J. Jeremias, "Chiasmus in den Paulusbriefen" ZNW 49 (1958), pp. 145–56.

39. For the Semitic background of this logion see M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford 1967³), pp. 200–2. Cf. G. Schwarz, "Matthaus vii 6a. Emendation und Rückübersetzung", Nov.T 14.1 (1972), pp. 18–25.

40. E. Bammel, "Versuch zu Col. 1:15–20", ZNW 52 (1961), pp. 88–95. The clearest example is in verses 16c and 20:

    a τὰ πάντα    b καὶ δἰαὐτοῦ

    b δἰ αὐτὸν καί    a τὰ πάντα

But there is objection to the systematic way Bammel applies this method, voiced by H.–J. Gabathuler, *Jesus Christus. Haupt der Kirche-Haupt der Welt* (Zürich/Stuttgart 1956), pp. 118–21.

41. E. Käsemann's essay carries this title in his *New Testament Questions of Today* (London 1969), pp. 66–81. For a discussion see K. Berger, "Die sog. 'Sätze heiligen Rechts' im N.T.", Th.Z 28 (1972), pp. 305–330.

42. See J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, Vol I, pp. 9ff. and W. Popkes, *Christus Traditus; Eine Untersuchung zum Begriff der Dahingabe im Neuen Testament* (Zürich/Stuttgart 1967).

43. See Popkes, op. cit., pp. 144: "Subjekt des Geschehens kann letztlich nur Gott sein . . ." It is wrong to translate: After John had been delivered *into prison.*

44. J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London 1966²) pp. 112.

45. See A. Hamman, *La Prière 1: Le Nouveau Testament* (Tournai 1959).

46. See W. D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship* (Oxford 1936), pp. 8f. But see W. C. van Unnik, "1 Clement and the 'Sanctus' ", VC 5 (1951), pp. 204–48.

47. E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos.* (Stuttgart 1923), pp. 254ff., 272.

48. J. Schmitt, *Jésus ressuscité dans la prédication apostolique* (Paris 1949), p. 100 speaks of "un rythme hiératique". For a full study of this hymn see R. H. Gundry, "The Form, Meaning and Background of the Hymn Quoted in 1 Timothy 3:16", in *Apostolic History and the Gospel,* Essays presented to F. F. Bruce (ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin, Exeter 1970), pp. 203–22.

49. See the data displayed in H. Schlier's commentary, *Der Brief an die Epheser* (Düsseldorf 1957), p. 241.

50. E. Lohmeyer, *Kyrios Jesus* (Heidelberg 1926).

51. So J. Jeremias, "Zur Gedankenführung in den paulinschen Briefen", in *Studia Paulina in honorem J. de Zwaan* (ed. J. N. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik, Haarlem 1953), pp. 154.

52. See R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians ii. 5–11* (Cambridge 1967), pp. 36ff. and *idem, The Epistle to the Philippians* (New Century Bible) (London 1976), pp.109–112.

53. Ch. Masson, *L'épitre de S. Paul aux Colossiens* (Neuchâtel 1950), pp. 105. Cf. C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Cambridge 1957), p. 61: "Arguments based on rhythm, parallelism, and supposed strophic arrangement are precarious enough at the best of times, and most of all when there is no recognizable quantitative metre by which to judge." See a discussion of the literary background of Colossians 1:15–20 in R. P. Martin, *Colossians and Philemon* (New Century Bible) (London 1974), pp. 61–66.

54. See A. B. Macdonald, *Christian Worship in the Primitive Church* (Edinburgh 1934) for an elaboration of this thesis.

55. G. Stählin, in TDNT 4, pp. 781ff. See too C. K. Barrett, "Myth and the New Testament", Exp.T 68 (1956–57), pp. 345–8, 359–62. For a consideration of the meaning of "myth" in the New Testament, see J. D. G. Dunn's contribution to the present volume.

56. T. R. Henn, op. cit., p. 19 borrows the term "mythologem" in place of "myth" from G. C. Jung and C. Kerényi, *Introduction to a Science of Mythology* (New York 1951).

57. To use the expressive word of A. N. Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric* (London 1964), p. 129.

58. For details see my essay in *Reconciliation and Hope* (Exeter 1974), pp. 104–124.

59. This is a conclusion maintained in the several works of J. Jeremias, most recently in his *New Testament Theology,* Vol. I, pp. 61–8.

60. See for this criterion D. R. Catchpole's essay in the present volume.

61. See J. Jeremias, op. cit., p. 35. One example may suffice. Luke 4:24: "Amen, I say to you that no prophet is accepted in his own locality."

62. Therefore the occurrence of ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν in the Sermon on the Mount is highly significant as Jesus displaces Moses' authority. See E. Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus", *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London 1964), pp. 37f.

63. Though a case has been made (by F. C. Burkitt, JTS o.s. 17 (1915), pp. 139–52) for the dating of the Entry into Jerusalem at the Feast of Dedication (based on the incident of 2 Macc. 10:8); and this setting at a time when nationalist feelings were running high has suggested to J. S. Kennard (JBL 67 (1948), pp. 171–76) that the crowd's cry had definite political overtones. For the development of the meaning attached to the word, see E. Werner, " 'Hosanna' in the Gospels", JBL 65 (1946), pp. 97–122.

64. For the textual question here, see J.-P. Audet, *La Didaché. Instructions des Apôtres* (Paris 1958), pp. 62–7, Audet supports the reading. "Hosanna to the house of David", and argues that the liturgical prayers of Did. 9, 10 belong to a special breaking of bread service modelled on a Jewish precedent (op. cit., pp. 422f.). For the later liturgical usage of Hosanna, see J. A. Jungmann, *Missarum sollemnia* ii (Vienna 1949), pp. 161–67 (E.T. *The Mass* (New York 1951), pp. 379–84).

65. J. A. T. Robinson, "The Earliest Christian Liturgical Sequence?" JTS n.s. 4 (1953), pp. 38–41, reprinted in *Twelve New Testament Studies* (London, 1962), pp. 154–7. H. Lietzmann, *Mass and Lord's Supper* Fasc. i (Leiden 1953) pp. 186f., 192f. and G. Bornkamm, "Das Anathema in der urchristlichen Abendmahlsliturgie", TLZ 75 (1950), cols. 228f., reprinted in *Das Ende des Gesetzes: Paulusstudien* (Munich 1961), pp. 123–32.

66. But see C. F. D. Moule, "A Reconsideration of the Context of *Maranatha*" NTS 6

(1959–1960), pp. 307–10 who revives E. Peterson's view that *maranatha* is part of the *anathema*-formula which acts as a ban. So in 1 Corinthians 16:22 the term is not a eucharistic invocation but a formula to sanction the "fencing of the table" preliminary to the eucharist.

67. See K. G. Kuhn, TDNT 4, pp. 467–9.

68. So O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (London 1953), pp. 13f.

69. So H. Conzelmann, *History of Primitive Christianity* (Nashville 1973), p. 51; "The Supper turns the gaze toward the advent of the Lord; hence he is begged, 'Come!' – i.e., 'Come soon!' "

70. For example, R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (E.T. London 1952), Vol. 1, p. 52.

71. W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (E.T. Nashville 1970), p. 129. Bousset's position was vigorously opposed by A. E. J. Rawlinson, *The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ* (London 1926), pp. 231–7.

72. R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London 1965), pp. 156ff.

73. O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London 1959), p. 214; cf. F. F. Bruce, " 'Jesus is Lord' " in *Soli Deo Gloria. New Testament Studies in Honor of William Childs Robinson* (Richmond 1968), pp. 31f.

74. R. H. Fuller, ibid.; S. Schulz, "Maranatha und Kyrios Jesus", ZNW 53 (1962), p. 138 argues that the *maranatha* formula did not acclaim Jesus as divine Lord who was present, but prayed for his coming as Son of man and judge.

75. J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology,* Vol. I, p. 31.

76. See R. A. Stewart, "The Parable Form in the Old Testament and the Rabbinic Literature", EQ 36 (1964), pp. 133–47.

77. See M. D. Goulder, "Characteristics of the Parables in the Several Gospels", JTS n.s. 19 (1968), pp. 51–69.

78. J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London 1954), p. 19.

79. L. Morris, *The Revelation of St. John* (London 1969), p. 174.

80. E. Stauffer, "666", *Coniectanea Neotestamentica* 11 (1947), pp. 237 ff.

81. See G. H. Box, "The Gospel Narratives of the Nativity", ZNW 6 (1905), p. 85; and M. D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies* (Cambridge 1969), pp. 223ff.

82. Other specimens are discussed by J. Weiss, *A History of Primitive Christianity* (New York 1937), pp. 399–421 and J. Nélis, *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 70 (1948), pp. 360–87. See too the examination of rhetorical figures in Galatians by H. D. Betz, NTS 21 (1974–75), pp. 353–79. Included here may be the few allusions in the New Testament to the world of Greek literature. In Acts 17:28 Paul's reference to "For we are also his offspring" comes from his fellow-Cilician Aratus (*Phainomena* 5), and the earlier part of his statement, "For in him we live and move and have our being" is apparently drawn from a poem of Epimenides the Cretan. In Titus 1:12 the same Cretan poet is cited in a complete hexameter. Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* also contains a reminiscence of the Aratus quotation.

In 1 Corinthians 15:33 the Athenian comic poet Menander (4th cent., B.C.) is quoted as the author of the moral tag, Bad friends ruin the noblest people (JB), from his play *Thais.*

83. See R. Bultmann, *Der Stil der paulinischen Predigt und die kynisch-stoische Diatribe* (Tübingen 1910).

84. Cf. M. Dibelius – H. Greeven, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (Göttingen 1957), pp. 120–22.

85. See J. Jeremias, "Zur Gedankenführung", *Studia Paulina,* pp. 149ff., on rabbinic exegesis in Romans 4.

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CHAPTER XIII

# APPROACHES TO NT EXEGESIS

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*Best read:* Doty (or Ladd).