

## **Introduction to Biblical Interpretation**

**William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbard**

Dallas, London: Word Publ., 1993, 518 pp., £14.-, hb., ISBN 0–8499–0774–8

## **ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

*Die Autoren bieten eine hervorragende Einführung in die Auslegungsprinzipien der ganzen Bibel. Es geht über Grundfragen der Hermeneutik, Auslegungsgeschichte und Kanon zum Ausleger selbst und dem Ziel seiner Auslegung. Das Buch behandelt Sprache (Prosa und Poesie) und Gattungen der Bibel, ihren heutigen Gebrauch und ihre sachgemäße Anwendung (jeweils mit reichlich Beispielen). Abschließend werden neuere methodische Zugänge knapp vorgestellt und beurteilt. Der Band ist allgemein verständlich gehalten und am gegenwärtigen Forschungsstand orientiert. Die spezifische Fragestellung und Problematik historisch-kritischer Hermeneutik und Exegese erscheint kaum. (Nicht nur) Aus solider evangelikaler Sicht gibt es bisher in deutscher Sprache keine so umfassende, brauchbare und praktische 'Methodenlehre' für interessierte Bibelleser, Studenten und ihre Dozenten. Übersetzung (mit leichter Bearbeitung, s.u.) wäre wünschenswert (vgl. Rez. H. Pehlke in JETH 9, 1995, 182–85).*

Those who learned from and treasured the volumes on biblical interpretation by B. Ramm and A.B. Mickelsen will cherish this book. Those who found these volumes wanting, will enjoy this book more. A team of three well-known evangelical scholars from the faculty of Denver Seminary set out on and mastered the task of writing a solidly based textbook, each author contributing from his area of expertise (two NT, one OT scholar). The book forms an integrated whole and indicates that its content has been often tested in classrooms, wrestled with, revised and improved and matured with time.

The book is subdivided into five sections. In The Task of Interpretation (3–78) the authors consider the need for hermeneutics, the history of interpretation and the canon (briefly touching on canon criticism and on the texts and translations of the Bible).

The Interpreter and the Goal (81–151) outlines the interpreter's qualifications (faith, obedience, illumination, membership in the

church) and the presuppositions of correct interpretation (about the nature of the Bible, the interpreter, methodology and the goal of hermeneutics), and points up the presuppositions of the interpreter and how to accept and overcome them. The chapter on the goal of interpretation raises and answers crucial questions: Does the text have one fixed meaning or several levels of meaning? Is textual meaning the singular goal of interpretation? Can we achieve a legitimate reader-response interpretation? How can we validate our interpretation? The authors provide a good introduction and a clear orientation in the current debate regarding these issues.

Understanding Literature (155–255) shows the nature of biblical prose and poetry and presents general hermeneutical principles. Headings for the former include literary context, historical-cultural background, word meanings, grammatical-structural relationships; for the latter: the dynamics, sounds, structure, language and larger unity of poetry. A tremendous introduction for many younger people who as readers of the Bible only now are beginning to discover the beauty, force, intricacy and many more features of language and literature.

Part four (Understanding Bible Genres; 259–374) lists the genres of both Testaments (narratives, law, poetry, prophecy, wisdom, Gospels, Acts, Epistles, Revelation) and discusses the implications for their interpretation (and for some key theological issues). As in other sections, well chosen examples (often disputed passages or issues) illustrate the principles propounded and explained, as the authors strive 'to show students not merely what interpretation is all about, but how to interpret' (XIX). These examples will also inspire preachers. Those expounding biblical books in various settings will find in this part valuable preparation. Their ministry will be enriched (and challenged) by studying and referring to the entire volume.

The authors do not leave their readers in the 'then and there', however fascinating and illuminated it has become! In The Fruits of Interpretation (377–426) they show the relevance of proper biblical interpretation 'here and now', surveying the use of the Bible today in gaining information and understanding, in worship, formulation liturgy and theology, in preaching, teaching and pastoral care, and for spiritual formation in the Christian life. The last chapter deals with the importance of application and its pitfalls (such as total or partial neglect of the literary or historical context, or



insufficiently analogous situations) and develops a fourfold strategy for legitimate application: determine the original application(s); evaluate the level of specificity of the original application(s); identify the cross-cultural principles; find appropriate applications that embody the broader principles. Lest the reader be dismayed, this part closes with brief considerations on the role of the Holy Spirit in this process.

This well balanced treatment (in stance and proportion) of the various issues is followed by an appendix dealing with various modern approaches to interpretation. Under literary criticism appears structuralism, narrative criticism, post-structuralism; classification and the interpretation of advocacy groups come under social-scientific approaches to Scripture (427–57). It is refreshing that these approaches, presented, promoted, discussed and often predominating elsewhere, receive comparatively little space at the end of a book which presents, explains, illustrates and defends the traditional conservative approach of interpretation. From this perspective these fashionable approaches, often in their own way attempting to correct the deficiencies of liberal approaches, will be used with caution and no little gain (cf. J.B. Green (ed.), *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995). The volume ends with more than thirty pages of annotated bibliography of hermeneutical tools and sources, 'widely accepted as the best currently available' (459, English titles only, including translations), which will be an excellent guide for students and those in charge of building up libraries (best buys indicated, obviously the assessment of individual works is subjective). One should distinguish between Friedrich and Franz Delitzsch (46, 487, cf. RGG3 II, 74–75). *Elenchus Bibliographicus Biblicus* (485) appeared since 1920 (cf. IATG2, 264). In a revision a brief survey of computer based aids for Bible study might be included. The bibliography is followed by indices of authors, references and subjects.

This volume, very good value for money, will prove to be an excellent textbook for seminars, taught courses and correspondence courses (and for those preparing them), and for the individual student who will find rich reward. Each chapter is a self-contained unit. It is a fine example of a text not too technical, yet never simplistic. All the way through the authors provide footnotes with selected references that lead into the current academic discussion including

'main stream' and evangelical contributions. Also scholars will find quick access and orientation. Though possibly not the most exciting volume on this topic, the IBI of KBH is certainly the most helpful recent volume for the student wishing to learn sound conservative interpretation. Methods come and go and it is encouraging to see inadequate methods wane. But as much academic literature (commentaries and monographs, these titles appear in the bibliography!) is still influenced by the 'historical-critical method' or its variants, more thorough treatment of its presuppositions and a critique would be valuable. From p. 44–45 the impression could arise that this method was a phenomenon of the nineteenth century. G. Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994), 247–306, offers a broader discussion of this issue. At the same time it is also refreshing that these questions of the past do not dominate the presentation.

Dr. Christoph Stenschke  
Stralsund, Germany

EuroJTh (2000) 9:1, 96–98

0960–2720

### ***New Testament Theology***

**G.B. Caird, completed and edited by  
L.D. Hurst**

Clarendon Paperbacks

Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, xix, 498  
pp., £18.50, ISBN 0–19–826660-X

### **ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

*Diese neutestamentliche Theologie des verstorbenen Oxforder Neutestamentlers steht über dem Methodenkonflikt, der ähnliche deutsche Publikationen bestimmt. In seinem Modell einer 'apostolischen Konferenz', will Caird die verschiedenen ntl. Autoren miteinander ins Gespräch bringen. In acht Runden geht es um den göttlichen Plan, die Notwendigkeit des Heils, seine drei Zeitstufen, die Tatsache, Erfahrung und Hoffnung des Heils und um Christologie. Durch dieses Vorgehen wird immer wieder, trotz verschiedener Schwerpunkte, die Einheit des NT erkennbar. Ein abschließender Abschnitt behandelt die Theologie Jesu. Die Ergebnisse sind oft erstaunlich konservativ, in vielen Ergebnissen und Argumentationen werden sich Evangelikale wiederfinden. Die Darstellung ist nicht mit Sekundärliteratur und Forschungsmeinungen überladen, sondern stark exegetisch geprägt, ferner wird der atl. Hintergrund berücksichtigt. Viele Themen und*