

## MARTIN BUBER'S DIALOGICAL BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

STEPHEN KEPNES

In his famous book, *Wahrheit und Methode*, Hans-Georg Gadamer suggests that interpretation is a matter of developing a „dialogue” with a text that culminates in a „fusion of horizons” between the world of the reader and the world of the text. This dialogue is based on an immediate relation to the text that is destroyed by excessive attention to critical methodologies. In *Ich und Du*, Martin Buber presents a model for conditions that foster genuine dialogue. In this paper the author argues that Buber used his philosophy of dialogue as the hermeneutical principle through which he read the Hebrew Bible. The principle of dialogue lead him to regard the biblical text as „sacred”, „whole”, as „Thou” and fostered his sensitivity to the literary and poetic quality of the text. The author also argues, however, that in contrast to Gadamer, Buber saw that historical critical methods did not destroy the I-Thou dialogue with the text but could be used to further that dialogue. Thus, Buber's biblical hermeneutics combines literary with historical critical methodologies in an endeavor to bring about a genuine dialogue with the biblical text. The philosophic grounds for a combined dialogic and critical hermeneutic method are most eloquently expressed in the hermeneutical philosophy of Paul Ricoeur and the author briefly refer to Ricoeur at the end of his paper.

BIBLICAL CRITICISM AND THEOLOGY:  
TOWARDS A NEW BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

WERNER JEANROND

This article investigates the relationship of biblical studies and theological thinking in the light of recent hermeneutical reflection. It raises the question of what is the next step in a constructive theological programme after David Tracy's important insights into the hermeneutical character of theological reflection. In a first section the author examines both the hermeneutical imperative of critical theological thinking and the call for praxis with which all critical theology is confronted today. The second section deals more specifically with the relationship between biblical criticism and theology in view of this persistent call for a more praxis-oriented theology. It discusses briefly the hermeneutical models of Fuchs, Ebeling, Gadamer, Barth, and Tracy and then addresses the question of what it means „to understand” the biblical text. Relating Tracy's pluralistic hermeneutics and Schleiermacher's programme for a genuinely dialectical theology, the author concludes that biblical criticism is only one of the essential tasks of theology which may be distinguished but never separated from the overall ethical (or

political) concern of Christian theology. Thus, some new form of biblical theology is called for, not a renewal of older attempts to impose theologies on the Bible, but a genuine reflection on the contribution of biblical criticism to the larger theological project of searching for ways of living responsible lives today.

### **LITERARY MODERNISM AND BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS: THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE?**

BERNARD ZELECHOW

Modern consciousness contributes both to the devaluation of and paradoxically to the revaluation of the biblical texts in contemporary culture in relation to art. Literary modernism leads to an appropriate hermeneutical secularism that transforms the Hebrew Bible specifically, and biblical texts in general, into analogues of modernist literary products. The modernist critics include Robert Alter, Gabriel Josepovichi, Harold Bloom offer hermeneutical insight that are provocative and penetrating. However, these theorists have failed to explore the underlying presuppositions which ground the literary hermeneutical theory. This paper will examine the implicit intellectual cultural underpinnings that incorporates the biblical texts into the literary corpus of Western culture. The literary critic asks, can the Bible be read in light of modernist literature? The answer for these thinkers is, yes. For these writers the values imbedded in the biblical texts. Implicitly these writers assert that we turn to literature for indights into the meaning of life in the way our ancestors read the Bible. As a benefit to both biblical study and literature a biblical hermeneutics and a theology of art should reverse the contemporary question. The new question is: can a work of literature be read meaningfully in the absence of the biblical framework? The question implies the necessity to examine the nature and function of art in Western culture, the meaning of a biblical platform in a secular world, the nature of biblical critique and the aesthetic unmasking tradition, the biblical conception of the paradox of freedom, the nature of human action and the biblical structure of redemption and sanctification at its relation to the aesthetic concept of transformation. The underlying argument behind the reversal of the question of the relationship of art to the Bible is the premise that the implicit and unacknowledged grounds of modernity is biblical. In other words the Bible is the archetype of all speech and discourse. The praxis of biblical interpretation is the grounds of all reading and therefore of all theory. Concommitantly a theology of art requires the illumination of the relationship between critique an hope, social description and personal transformation. Finally this paper will sketch the ways in which art that is not grounded implicitly falls into nihilism and self-contradiction. Conversely this paper will explore the way in which biblical presuppositions potentially redems explicitly unredeemable works of art.