

be as many distinct and irreconcilable sets of premisses as there are to be not only differing religions but even differing theologies.

2. Interpretation

While there are broader uses of the word, I shall be concerned with ascertaining the meaning of religious and theological texts.

It may be felt that the area of research should be defined more closely, that something should be said of revelation, faith, tradition, inspiration, sacred books, the true church, its teaching office, heresy. I am, however, of a contrary opinion. * The topics listed pertain, not to research, but to foundations, doctrines, systematics, communications. To want to have them all settled before one begins one's research is to fail to understand what is meant by theology and what is meant by method.

2. Interpretation

Hermeneutics and exegesis are concerned with the meaning of texts. Hermeneutics is concerned with general ~~and~~ principles, exegesis with their application to particular cases.

In general, the more a text is systematic in conception and execution, the less does it stand in need of ~~interpretation~~ any exegesis. Euclid's Elements were written almost twenty-three centuries ago. One has to labor to come to understand them. One's labor is greatly decreased by a competent teacher. But there are no disputes about what Euclid meant, and there exists no exegetical literature on his writings.

~~On the other hand, inasmuch as a text is the product, not of systematic thinking, but of the commonsense mode of human intelligence, then its meaning is quite plain to anyone with the same commonsense.~~

~~The need of exegesis arises when a text~~

However, besides the systematic mode of cognitional operations, there is also the commonsense mode. Moreover, there are many brands of common sense. In other words, common sense is common, not to all men of all places and times,

word for seeing. As the generic, so too the temporal is not directly perceived. Hence, early language has an abundance of tenses but they express, not a synthesis of temporal relationships, but different kinds or modes of action. As the generic and the temporal, so too the subject and his inner experience find expression only through association with the perceptual field. So possessive pronouns, that can refer to visible things, develop before personal pronouns. So in Homer inner mental processes are represented by personified interchanges; where we would expect an account of the hero's thoughts and feelings, Homer has him converse with a god or goddess, with his horse or a river, or with some such part of himself as his heart or his temper. So among the Hebrews moral defect was first sensed as defilement, then conceived as the people's violation of its covenant with God, and finally as personal guilt before God, where each later stage did not eliminate the earlier but took it over and to correct and complement it. The divine, finally, appears in the hierophany, in the object or event, the ritual or narrative, that is the occasion of religious experience.

Ibid., pp. 198-215. See also volume two: Mythical Thought, New Haven 1955, pp. 83-104.

Ibid., I, 199 f.

J. Russo and B. Simon, "Homeric Psychology and the ~~Oral Epic Tradition~~ Oral Epic Tradition," Journal of the History of Ideas, 29 (1968), 484.

E. Cassirer, op. cit., I, 215 ff.

Ibid., I, 251.

J. Russo and B. Simon, op. cit., p. 487.

Paul Ricoeur, Finitude et Culpabilité, II. La symbolique du mal, Paris (Aubier) 1960.

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2. Interpretation

In his monumental Teoria generale della interpretazione

The Tasks of Theology

The tasks of theology were outlined in chapter two, but a fuller treatment of them all is desirable. This I shall now attempt, though only in part. On the first task, research, I shall be brief indeed, because

I have described a single process of developing understanding as ecstatic, selective, critical now is the time understanding as uncovering the evidence, selecting some data out a of a far largēr totality, leading to the perspectives proper to the object,