

Editor's Foreword

The practice of exegesis is currently characterized by the many and even diverse questions to which texts are subjected. There is a very lively debate regarding the suitability and success of the various exegetical methods as well as the possibility and desirability of harmonization. One should however take into account that an exegetical method is the product of a particular theory with regard to the question of how knowledge is arrived at, the character of the text as object of study, and the objectives of the particular textual investigation. For that reason it is possible that certain methods exclude one another and can be regarded as irreconcilable. This can be attributed to divergent theoretical points of departure. There are exegetes who consider that the existence of such exclusive exegetical methods creates a dilemma for biblical scholarship. According to this point of view the lack of synthesis hampers the search for the 'truth' (in this case, the 'meaning' of the text).

Ernest van Eck has examined three different popular questions in the area of Marcan research from the past and the present, namely the historical-critical, the literary-critical and the ideological-critical approaches. It is however not the primary intention of Van Eck to bring about a synthesis between these exegetical approaches. The fact of plurality of interpretation does not therefore, according to Van Eck, provide a dilemma. The application of a variety of exegetical approaches by biblical scholars can be treated positively. The author is rather, therefore, searching for methodological gaps in existing research which can be filled by a new or modified inquiry. In this way progress can be brought about. The result of the new inquiry does not imply that the exegete has come 'closer' to the 'real meaning' of the text. It implies at the most relevant research. The results of a relevant inquiry can provide an explanation for present-day problems and even suggest possible solutions, while earlier inquiries and methods are regarded as inadequate.

The gaps in research that Van Eck has identified with regard to the above three exegetical approaches are related to the emphasis placed on the pragmatical dimension in scientific investigation today. In this connection pragmatics can be represented as a social program. Theology without a 'social program' easily develops into static imaginary propositions. Ernest van Eck shows that the historical-critical study of the opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem in the Gospel of Mark is indeed inclined to do so. As regards this opposition, historical critics identify a tension between 'cultic' particularity and 'eschatological' universality in regard to the Marcan *Sitz im Leben*. 'Cult' and 'eschatology', however, develop into abstract theological concepts when they are not interpreted as being incorporated in Mark's 'social program'.

In the light of the possible hermeneutical relevance that the opposition between Jerusalem and Galilee in the Gospel of Mark can have for present-day social problems, the historical critic therefore represents a gap in existing research. The pragmatic dimension of theological reflection is largely ignored by historical critics. The literary-critical approach has certainly emphasized the interests that Galilee and Jerusalem represent in Mark as narrative. These interests appear to be in conflict with each other. Nevertheless, there are deficiencies in the literary-critical approach, for reasons such as that this conflict of interests is not anchored within a social program peculiar to the first-century Mediterranean world. The ideological-critical approach in the exegesis of Mark indeed places emphasis on such a political and social program. The hiatus with regard to this approach is that references to pre-industrial, agrarian social problems in New Testament texts are erroneously attributed to modern economic and political ideologies, as though the same or similar dominant ideological forces that Karl Marx identified — with regard to the modern industrialized century — had been present in the first century.

Van Eck considers that an association of narratology and social-scientific criticism in exegesis could fill these gaps in existing research. By means of narratology, Galilee and Jerusalem are responsibly studied as spheres of interest in the plot of the Gospel of Mark. Social-scientific criticism enables one to see the advanced agrarian society of the first-century Mediterranean world as the macrosociological framework of the Gospel of Mark. Van Eck regards the narrated world of the Gospel of Mark as a reflexive microsociological version of the agrarian society, seen from a macrosociological perspective. Using an association of narratological and social-scientific criticism, he intends interpreting the ideological communication strategy of the narrator (narrator's point of view) in Mark as a social program without making himself guilty of anachronism or ethnocentrism.

Van Eck's presupposition is, therefore, that the narrator's concern in Mark's story about Jesus is communicated from an ideological perspective. This ideological concern is conveyed with aids such as symbols. Galilee and Jerusalem (as topographical references in the Gospel of Mark) function as symbols that represent particular interests. Galilee represents the interests of the 'open household' ('politics of commensality') and Jesus' message of God's unmediated presence. Jerusalem represents the interests of the temple system ('politics of holiness') and the idea of God's constraining presence. Galilee (household) and Jerusalem (temple) thus function as *narrative* and *sociological* oppositions.

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