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Spirit and Letter: A Foundation for Hermeneutics

by Peter Richardson

This reminder of the need for a Spirit-directed hermeneutic of Holy Scripture is the revision of a paper read at a convention of the Society for Biblical Literature. It finds in Paul's interpretation in 2 Corinthians 3 of the Exodus incident of the veiling of Moses' face a model to be followed by others, when Paul's basic hermeneutical principle, the contrast between "Spirit" (pneuma) and "letter" (gramma) emphasized earlier in that chapter, is borne in mind. Dr. Richardson, whose monograph on Israel in the Apostolic Church was reviewed in our pages in July-September, 1970, is Professor in the Department of Theological Studies in Loyola of Montreal.

I AM indebted to Ernst Käsemann for my title:¹ in his essay "Thoughts on the Present Controversy about Scriptural Interpretation" in the volume *New Testament Questions of Today*² he suggests that the Pauline distinction of *pneuma* ("Spirit") and *gramma* ("letter") is "the primary fundamental consideration of hermeneutics in the New Testament." What follows is an attempt to explore this, though in fairness to Käsemann I must add that I have gone my own way.

An emphasis such as I intend to make has two dangers: on the one hand I may seem a simple "pietist" (using that term in its usual but unsatisfactory pejorative sense) or, on the other, a latter day Joachim of Fiore. Like the pietist my concern is to make the Bible available to an ordinarily well-informed Christian; like Joachim I want to allow an adequate place for the activity of the Spirit in the interpretative task.

It is a curious fact of much of the recent hermeneutical enterprise that "the Spirit", or even "spirit", is allocated at most a merely nominal place. Though the reasons for this almost complete neglect need not be gone into here, this observation is a starting-point for my emphasis on "Spirit". I propose this as a corrective for the present absence, although I readily acknowledge that a fully integrated hermeneutic must have a trinitarian base.³ The most fruitful line of enquiry for a Biblical basis for hermeneutics is that which investigates the contrast between "written"/"spirit", because

1 The present essay is based upon a lecture delivered at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in New York, October 25, 1970.

2 English translation of *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (London: S.C.M., 1969), pp. 260-85; see especially p. 270.

3 H. M. Kuitert, *The Reality of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 152.

within this dual focus there is latent the demand for interpretation at the instigation of the Spirit. In 2 Cor. 3 the *pneuma/gramma* contrast is stated more explicitly than anywhere else in the NT:⁴ what sets apart this passage is its inclusion of a concern for *understanding*, and hence it builds in the possibility of considerable relevance for a hermeneutical foundation.

1. The Context

First the place of chapter 3 in the letter. The introductory material is varied: it includes a greeting (1: 1-2), a thanksgiving cast in the form of a *eulogetos* period rather than the more usual *eucharisto* period (1: 3-11), a description of Paul's travel plans (1: 12-2: 13) with an insertion aimed at the situation in Corinth (2: 5-11). What follows, from 2: 14 to 7: 4 or 7: 16 (and we need not concern ourselves with the troublesome 6: 14-7: 1) is an apostolic *apologia* unequalled in the Pauline material.

Containing chapter 3 is a section (2: 14-4: 6) dealing with apostolic self-confidence⁵ which may be further subdivided as to *content* (divisions of *form* lie elsewhere in this section) as follows:

- (i) 2: 14-17, apostolic service
- (ii) 3: 1-6, apostolic confidence
- (iii) 3: 7-18, apostolic glory
- (iv) 4: 1-6, apostolic responsibility.

By emphasizing that the apology is oriented towards the apostle's understanding of himself a problem has been deliberately teased out: how can all this then be related to the problem of hermeneutics? For surely what pertains to the apostle Paul will resist more stubbornly an application to the non-apostle, amongst whom all modern interpreters must be counted?

An answer to that objection is important (see further, p. 215). While it is true that Paul's presentation is directed to a defence of himself as apostle, it is not necessarily limited by that aim. What he says in this apology must be first of all understood within that context, but there may be inherent in the material a wider point of reference not altogether circumscribed by what is uppermost in the mind of the author at the time.⁶ I am of course concentrating on this second problem. The form and content of the material suggests that Paul is incorporating into his argument—and pressing into

⁴ The only other places where it plays an important role are Romans 2: 27-9 and Rom. 7: 6.

⁵ See W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the NT* (London: S.C.M., 1966), p. 206.

⁶ See Robert W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic and Word of God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), pp. 301f.: "What the exegete must take as his responsibility is the intentionality of language in view of its linguistic horizons."

service in his own defence—ideas about the old and new covenants which have been thought out by him earlier in a totally different context, perhaps in a synagogue sermon, and with a very different purpose.⁷ The analogy which he draws between Moses and himself is not only of direct relevance to his apostolic position, it is also important evidence for Paul's understanding of the relation of old and new times, of law and gospel, of written word to verbal proclamation, of *gramma* and *pneuma*.

To the extent that the material had another focus at an earlier stage in its development, and as long as we do not lose sight of its primary purpose in its present context, the ambiguity in the use of this material opens the way for a consideration of the hermeneutical problem.

2. *Pneuma and Gramma as a hermeneutical problem*

We shall have to overlook the two main subjects of scholarly debate with reference to this chapter: who are the opponents who occasion this apology? and what is the meaning for exegesis and theology of the Lord/Spirit identification at the end of the chapter?⁸

Instead we shall proceed to examine the relevance of the *pneuma/gramma* relation for a right understanding and proclamation of God's message. The theme is introduced in an uncontroversial way in 3: 1-3: written letters of recommendation (either carried by or demanded by Paul's opponents) are set against living "spiritual" demonstrations of the reality of Paul's ministry to Christ. This is uncontroversial because it builds upon Jeremiah 31: 33 and other OT passages in which writing on stone is contrasted with writing on heart. There is, however, something new and perhaps controversial: Paul explicitly attributes the inscribing (*engegrammene*) to the work of the Spirit. The closest approach to this is found in Ezek. 11: 19 and 36: 26 where God speaks to Ezekiel about a "new spirit" (*pneuma kainon*) as his gift within the recipient. But in Ezekiel the word *pneuma* is used anthropologically (it is that which

⁷ C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the NT* (London, A. & C. Black, 1962), p. 54, n.l. If so, it is not likely a fixed *Midrash* but an improvisation of Paul's own making; see W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: S.P.C.K., 1948), pp. 106ff; cf. also J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London: S.C.M., 1959), pp. 58-61. Some obvious evidence for this is the shift away from the immediate point at issue in v. 7 (*ei de hē diakonia* etc.), and the attempt in 4: 1 to tie the material back together again (*dia touto, echontes tēn diakonian tautēn*): see further below.

⁸ See recently the very incisive article by James D. G. Dunn, "2 Corinthians III. 17—'The Lord is the Spirit'," *J.T.S.*, October 1970, pp. 309-20. This article and mine, prepared almost simultaneously, dovetail at a number of crucial points. Dr. Dunn's interest is in the use of Exodus 34 and its relevance for an understanding of *pneuma*; mine is in its relevance for an adequate hermeneutic. Dr. Dunn's article should be consulted for bibliography on this question.

is put in man), whereas for Paul, in this passage, the word is used in a distinctive theological sense (he who works in man by writing on the heart is the Spirit of the living God). By linking his original point about written letters of recommendation with the letters written on stone in the giving of the Law Paul has opened up a gap in his logic. But that gap enables us to discern his argument more clearly and to see the point towards which he is moving. He has telegraphed to us that he is concerned with much more than the local and specific situation in which he is under attack. His thought is moving on two tracks—his apostolic defence and a concern for the relevance of written Law.

Had his purpose been simply to defend his apostolic mission, he could have broken off here. But he goes on to conjure up the major hermeneutical problem in the New Testament, and our major hermeneutical problem today, the relation of old and new covenant. Its importance lies in the fact that, as apostle, Paul must have confidence in what he is doing. As he elucidates the problem it is clear that he is confident not because of any inherent merit of his own, but because of his foundation on Jesus Christ and, even more importantly, because of the life-giving (*zoopoiei*) work of the Spirit in the lives of the Corinthians themselves. That is, his confidence rests in the fact that the new covenant has been introduced, that this is the one expected by Jeremiah, and that this new covenant originates in Spirit, not letter. I need hardly add, I am sure, that the contrast in 3:6 is not between the letter of the Law and the spirit of the Law (an idealism that we have inherited from Origen and the Alexandrians), but a contrast between written Law devoid of any life-giving Spirit and the Spirit himself.

We have uncovered then an ambiguity in Paul's thought. He has moved the *pneuma/gramma* theme to a deeper and more controversial level. "Spirit" is set over against "what is written"; *pneuma* is not, as in Ezekiel, an anthropological concept, nor is *pneuma* just the modality by which the writing takes place on hearts; as in 2 Cor. 3:1-3, it is a gift for men that gives life in a way Law could not. He has therefore pushed the language of both Ezekiel and Jeremiah to the limits of its elasticity, introducing a new kind of dynamic, while still remaining in line with the insights into God's action which they anticipated.

As a parenthesis it is perhaps worth noting that the association of the new covenant, Law and renewal is a traditional association, found in Jubilees (6:17, 19) and in Philo (*Spec. Leg.* II, 189) as well as in Ezekiel and Jeremiah. It is also an association found in the account of Pentecost in Acts 2, and there with one new emphasis—the freedom of speech given by the Spirit in the time of renewal. That is, the Spirit moves men from written Law towards fulfilment

and especially towards a verbal proclamation by those made new by the same Spirit's action. It should be, then, no surprise that in Acts there is also, as here in 2 Cor. 3, a clear emphasis upon the Spirit's gift of boldness (*parrēsia*, see Acts 4: 31; 9: 27f.; 28: 31).⁹ We have here another instance of a close conjunction of ideas from the OT and the intertestamental period being absorbed and re-interpreted in the NT writings.

The contrast between *gramma/pnuema* which has been the substantial issue so far is further defined in vv. 7-11. This occurs in two ways: on the one hand by an exclusive set of contrasts (life/death, righteousness/condemnation, lasting on/passing away) and on the other hand by a more gentle—and relative—contrast between a lesser glory and a greater glory. It must be said again that the initial purpose is to buttress the position of Paul's *diakonia* against all others, and for this the example of Moses' *diakonia* serves well to underline Paul's claim to superiority. But at the same time Paul is making several important assertions about the relation between the old and new, assertions which, while we cannot pause to detail them, increase the importance of his understanding of Spirit.

It is the next section which ties together all the previous strands: note the *oun* ("therefore") in v. 12 which links with the expectation of glory, the reference again to *parrēsia*, to Moses, and the fading away of his splendour (*eis to telos tou katargoumenou*, v. 13). What is in view, as the next sentence makes perfectly obvious (v. 14), is the problem of how *understanding* comes in the new time inaugurated by Christ when the written records of the old covenant are used as sources of knowledge and revelation.¹⁰ We should be careful to note that in this new time the source of understanding is still related to reading (*anagnōsis*), that is to *gramma* in some form or other. Moreover, the specific problem for Paul is "the reading of the old covenant". One may presume, I think, that the primary thrust is directed to the event in which the Law is read to "the children of Israel" but they fail to understand. This, though, is not made explicit in v. 14, for objects are lacking for both *me anakaluptomenon*, ('unlifted') and for *katargeitai* ('abrogated'). But the veiling which was characteristic for Moses' hearers (*kalumma . . . epōrōthē ta noēmata autōn*), by a transference typical of certain forms of rabbinic exegesis, becomes applicable to more recent

⁹ W. C. van Unnik, *NT*, vi (1963), 153-69, demonstrates conclusively that "to uncover the face or head" is an Aramaic idiom equivalent to "boldness", i.e. to *parrēsia*.

¹⁰ This is a frequent problem in the NT, e.g. the use of *semeron* ("today") in Luke 4: 21, in the account of Jesus' preaching at Nazareth. Cf. also Rom. 4: 23, Acts 2: 16, the methodology of Matthew in his quotation of Scripture and of the author of Hebrews in his exegetical moves.

hearers also. They are prevented from hearing *today* (v. 14: "but to this very day the same veil is over their understanding"; cf. v. 15 almost identically).

The relevance of this part of the chapter for today's hermeneutical task may now be made more precise:

- (i) We are faced by the nature of the interpretative task with a written text (*gramma*) which for most people is just as lifeless as ever the law of Moses was for Jews contemporary with Paul.
- (ii) The goal of interpretation is understanding: removing the veil, softening what has become hard, writing on the heart.
- (iii) The newness of the new covenant in Christ has for most people today become existentially meaningless, because it rests upon an abstract proposition about its validity devoid of the confirming signs that give confidence.
- (iv) The solution which Paul suggests to the problem of understanding is sufficiently radical to require careful attention. To this we now turn.

3. *The Spirit as Interpreter*

Paul proceeds by alluding in v. 16 to a phrase from the account about Moses in Exodus 34: 34, describing the lifting of the veil when he turned "to the Lord". But the phrase is made by Paul into a deliberately ambiguous phrase, so that its reference extends beyond the original Mosaic context to include any man: "The veil is lifted when a man turns to the Lord".¹¹ As an aside we may note that a part, indeed an important part, of Paul's methodology in the hermeneutical task is to open up the written words (*gramma*) so that the reader must put himself right into it. In this case the reader is moved not only into the Moses incident, but into the place where he must decide whether in his own case the veil is lifted through turning to the Lord. But more important than this is what Paul does next.

To unpack the reference to Exod. 34: 34 he adopts a totally unexpected procedure. On the basis of v. 14 ("the veil is removed *en christo*") one would expect his unpacking of *ho kurios* ("the Lord") to disclose Christ. This would have been consistent both with the

¹¹ He does this by eliminating the subject "Moses" and the verb "to speak", by altering *enanti kuriou* of Exod. 34: 34 (so LXX; MT reads *liphnê YHWH*) to *pros kurion*, by combining one clause with part of another, and by allowing the conditional clause to stand (*hênika de ean* for *hênika d' an* of LXX). By making these moves: (i) the reference to Moses has dropped away, with only the reference to "reading Moses" remaining; (ii) thus the force of the analogy between himself and Moses is blunted; (iii) the quotation takes on a generalized sense, applicable to anyone: "every time that . . ."; (iv) he has dropped the reference to the face being veiled for the people and unveiled before the Lord, implying by this that in the time of the new covenant one's face is always unveiled when one turns to the Lord (cf. v. 18).

identification latently possible in the use of *kurios* as a title of respect for Jesus, and also with an ascension Christology, both important in a developing Christological awareness. However he does not. He reverts instead to the same theme that has run through much of chapter 3 by suggesting that Lord is Spirit: *ho de kurios to pneuma estin* (v. 17).

There can be little doubt about one aspect of the exegesis of the formulation: the Lord referred to in the verse from Exodus, says Paul, is none other than the Spirit. What is more controverted is the intention theologically. Whether he is working with the relation between Christ and Spirit or Yahweh and Spirit is less clear; and whether he wants to maintain an absolute identification between Lord and Spirit, a causal relationship, some other subordinate relationship, or perhaps some very close but still undefined relationship is subject for a full-length paper.¹² But it is hardly adequate to maintain that "the Spirit portrays the Lord so well that we lose sight of the Spirit and are conscious of the Lord only."¹³ It is precisely this that does not happen, evidence the emphasis on the Spirit in the chapter as a whole. What is clear is that this activity of the Spirit leads into "freedom" (as Paul maintains elsewhere also), a freedom which is to be interpreted in the light of the veiling that comes through Law. That is, the Spirit sets free from the obscuring of the *gramma*, he allows an accurate unveiled reflection of the Lord's glory (which should not be confused with an unmediated view of the Lord's glory!), and all this comes *apo kuriou pneumatos*.

This last phrase is very difficult, but it seems best and most natural to understand by it "from the Lord the Spirit" or possibly "from the sovereign Spirit" (grammatically possible also are "the Spirit of the Lord", "the Lord of the Spirit", "the Lord who is the Spirit", or "the Spirit who is the Lord"). However, any translation which obscures the unusualness of the emphasis on Spirit through resorting to the equation 'Lord automatically equals Christ' will go wide of the mark. Paul's emphasis on Spirit as the means by which the veil is lifted must be allowed to stand.

Our conclusion to this point is that Paul is emphasizing almost solely the role of the Spirit as unveiler. When faced with the critical task for his generation of taking the ancient writing which documents the old covenant and making it applicable through a hermeneutical principle to the conditions of the new covenant, he uses as the basis of this hermeneutic "Spirit". In so doing it seems that he is willing to separate rather sharply—more sharply perhaps than most of us

¹² See J. D. G. Dunn, *J.T.S.*, October 1970, as above, n.8.

¹³ N. Q. Hamilton, *The Holy Spirit and Eschatology in Paul*, *S.J.T. Occasional Papers*, vi, Edinburgh, 1957, p. 6.

would be comfortable with—the *gramma* on which he bases his message from the *pneuma* who unveils it. The message, important as it is, can do nothing of itself. It requires not just an effective interpreting agent, it requires turning to the sovereign Spirit who characterizes the new times inaugurated by Christ.

I would suggest also, rather more tentatively, that part of Paul's purpose is to maintain that understanding, interpretation and boldness as gifts of the Spirit (though that term is not used) are more basic than, if not a replacement for, the tongues experience prevalent at Corinth. Not only charismatic language unveils (Paul admits that in 1 Corinthians); even written language (*gramma*) is lifted out of its hiddenness to the level of adequate proclamation by intelligible language which is, like the ecstatic language of tongues-speaking, Spirit-directed.

4. *Thoughts on the Hermeneutical Problem Today*

This does not fully solve our problem. Before making some concluding comments on the present interpretative problem, one point, alluded to earlier, should be met head on. If this is all a part of Paul's apologia, on what grounds can we apply it to the wider group of Christians in Corinth, and then to us? I have suggested that the literary form gave some grounds for a transitional move from the particular to the general. But there are three other factors that make us break its restriction to Paul himself.

(i) in v. 14 *en christo* is not only a statement of the means whereby the veil is removed, it is a pointer to the Christian community as the place where that unveiling takes place.¹⁴

(ii) Paul has deliberately stretched the intention of his quotation of Exod 34: 34 to include all by omitting "Moses" and thereby altering the analogy between Moses and himself (see above, note 11).

(iii) With "we all" (*hemeis de pantes*) in v. 18 he deliberately extends the unveiling activity of the Spirit to all Christians (cf. 1: 22 where the Holy Spirit is the guarantee who seals the fact of being a Christian).¹⁵

A part at least of the purpose of this chapter then is to give a foundation for hermeneutics in the life of the Church at Corinth. It becomes our job then to assess how relevant this might be for today. There is opportunity only for a series of points, though it is obvious that each might well take a book.

(1) Today the notion of Spirit can hardly escape without questioning. When people find it difficult to speak of God adequately it will

¹⁴ See E. Schweizer, art. *pneuma*, *T.D.N.T.* vi, 418ff.

¹⁵ It should be noted that Paul does revert in 4: 1 to the subject of his own *diakonia* and by that proceeds to limit again the reference to himself.

be much more difficult to speak of Spirit. One of the difficulties to be faced here is the fact that both *pneuma* and *ruach* mean Spirit only in a derived or transferred sense. There are then exegetical, theological, and conceptual components to the problem as well as the experiential difficulty.

(2) Extending that, a further problem is the shift that takes place when *hagion* ("holy") is added to Spirit. For the Greeks the thought of a Holy Spirit was alien because it gave to *pneuma* a distinctly personal and supra-sensual meaning.¹⁶ This is part of the new significance added to *pneuma* by Judaism and Christianity. But if so, why is this phrase not used in 2 Cor. 3? And if the concept "Spirit" has gone through some of these important shifts, e.g. from Ezekiel to Paul, is twentieth-century man free to shift again the intentionality of "Spirit" in a direction more congenial to his way of thinking—say towards anthropology or phenomenology? Are we today bound to retain the theological and non-phenomenological approach of the phrase Holy Spirit? My own instinctive answer is "yes", but that might be begging a very important question.

(3) Assuming that we can speak of the Spirit in some intelligible sense, there is a real problem of the "relation between the message of the Spirit and that of the crucified, risen and coming *kurios*".¹⁷ That is, to what degree does the Spirit have a freedom of his own apart from Christ, and to what degree is he bound to the historical acts of Jesus of Nazareth?

(4) This raises the problem of the "distance of faith" from the historical Jesus.¹⁸ How does this distance affect one's perception of Jesus and of the hermeneutical task centring upon his death and resurrection and ascension? I have been suggesting, in effect, that it is precisely the Spirit who foreshortens this distance and who makes intelligible, in a way that can be used as the basis for action, the significance of Jesus (cf. John 14: 15f.; 16: 7ff., 12ff.).

(5) From the opposite direction, the Spirit also brings the *eschaton* into the present. That is, he ties together the concerns expressed by Bultmann on the one hand and Cullmann on the other, by bridging the dichotomy that their methodologies and presuppositions create.¹⁹ This is not to say, of course, that their differences can be resolved, but that the concern for history and eschatology creates no necessary impasse where there is an adequate understanding of Spirit.

¹⁶ See Kleinknecht, art. *pneuma*, *T.D.N.T.* vi, 332ff.

¹⁷ So Schweizer, art. *pneuma*, p. 415, citing O. Michel, *Des Zeugnis des NT von der Gemeinde*, 1941, p. 65.

¹⁸ E. Fuchs, *Hermeneutik*, Bad Cannstatt, 1954, p. 242, cited in H. Koester, *J.Th.C.*, i, (New York: Harper, 1965), pp. 112f.

¹⁹ See Kuitert, *Reality*, pp. 112, 113.

(6) The question of the past and future being linked in the present by the Spirit's action is not new. The development of the canonical scriptures has always included at each stage a reflection upon the preceding stages in the light of God's fresh activity as history moves into the future.²⁰ This is hermeneutics in its most basic form. The prophets apply a hermeneutical principle to the Law, so that it will be adequate for their day. The writings, from place to place, do so for their own day. John the Baptist does it for his day, Jesus for his, and Paul and the others for theirs. In each case the material to be interpreted is the extent of Torah (or of sacred scripture) and of authentic tradition then extant. So that, for example, in Paul's day he is interpreting not just the written Torah, but also the new significance of Torah in the light of the coming of the Messiah and the oral tradition about him and, more than that, with the conviction that the last days have begun in the power of the Spirit. There is then a freshness to Paul's hermeneutical situation—but one which can always be present. It is a freshness that arises out of the tension between old and new, between *gramma* and *pneuma*, between the written message to be interpreted and the action of the interpreting Spirit upon the interpreter.

(7) Even if one concentrates upon the *new* alone, another controverted question is the relation between the historical Jesus, the material about Jesus, the action of the Spirit, the minds and hearts of the interpreters, and the cultural context of the age. Where does the hermeneutical potential lie? I suspect that it lies in all of these, but what Paul has been reminding us is that the Spirit informs the whole process of hermeneutics (and it is a "process") insofar as he is called "Lord".

(8) What difference does the kind of material being interpreted make to the open-endedness of the application?²¹ That is, will the conjunction of the interpreter's cultural situation with the inherent interpretative possibilities of some kinds of Biblical materials predispose him to a canon within the canon? If so, does this constitute an invalid approach to the *gramma*? One thinks today of the interpretative possibilities submerged in Ecclesiastes because of its expression of existential despair, or of the interest in the parables of Jesus because of the indirectness of communication, or of passages full of symbolism which might echo a similar imaginative concern now.

(9) As a conclusion; it seems that on the basis of 2 Cor. 3 we should expect an inevitable tension between *gramma* and *pneuma*.

²⁰ It is one of the merits of O. Cullmann's work that this is stressed; see especially *Salvation in History* (London: S.C.M., 1967), pp. 54, 88ff., 188, 326.

²¹ Funk, *Language*, pp. 134f., 138f.

Paul gives pride of place in the interpretative task to the Spirit and, for evangelicals, he might seem to come dangerously close to denigrating "what is written". Further, while his opening contrast between *gramma* and *pneuma* is a rather extreme one he still bases his whole argumentation upon "what is written" (e.g. his use of Exod 34: 34), albeit his method and his results show a good bit of freedom in the way he interprets and applies scripture. One might fairly claim, however, that Paul's hermeneutic in 2 Cor. 3 can serve as a paradigm for our understanding of the hermeneutical task. If so, it points to the recognition that there is, because of the continuing activity of the Spirit, no final and authoritative interpretation, nor even, perhaps, a final and authoritative principle of interpretation. It may even be that, in the last analysis, there is no need ultimately for Biblical theologians, at least in those places where Christians are aware of their role under the Spirit as interpreters of the Scriptures. It is in this interplay between *gramma* and *pneuma* that the only satisfactory basis for interpretation can be found, a basis that is equally solid for trained theologians and for those who, without formal training, are concerned to hear God's Spirit speaking to them.

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