

Title: "The Limitless Horizons of Proximity" The Contemporary Relevance of Kierkegaard's Critique of Biblical Exegetical Method and Practice

Author: Bruce P. Baugus

Date: 2009 Degree: Ph.D., Calvin Theological Seminary

Supervisor: Ronald J. Feenstra

External Reader: C. Stephen Evans

Digital full text: http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/dissertations/Baugus_Bruce_P.pdf

Call Number: BV4070 .C2842 2009 .B285

ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to demonstrate that Søren Kierkegaard's critique of biblical exegetical methods and practices, and corresponding proposal, offers an interesting and relevant contribution to the current debate on biblical exegetical methods and practices taking place within the contemporary theological turn in biblical interpretation. The contemporary theological turn in biblical interpretation is represented in this dissertation by Timothy H. Polk, an important interpreter of Kierkegaard's exegetical method within the post-liberal tradition, and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, a leading contributor to the theological turn in contemporary biblical exegesis.

Despite significant advances in understanding Kierkegaard as an explicitly Christian thinker there remains a significant gap within Kierkegaardian scholarship related to his thoughts on biblical exegesis. Although this gap has been noted for decades, this dimension of Kierkegaard's thought has only very recently attracted significant attention. Likewise, despite common interests and concerns between Kierkegaard and at least some noteworthy contributors to the theological turn in biblical interpretation, Kierkegaard's critique of and proposal on biblical exegesis remains largely neglected within the current discussion. This is all the more surprising given Kierkegaard's recognized and much debated influence on Karl Barth, whom many contributors to the contemporary debate on theological exegesis identify as a founding father of this movement. This dissertation attempts to address both gaps by exploring the intersection between Kierkegaard's critique of and proposal on biblical exegesis with the current debate on exegetical methods and practices within the contemporary theological turn in biblical interpretation.

Located primarily in his discourse "What is Required," Kierkegaard's critique and proposal is especially directed towards and applicable to the family of critical exegetical methods as construed and practiced in modern, critical-era biblical studies. Kierkegaard's critique is radical, however, and its application extends far beyond the kind of exegetical methods and practices that tended to dominate modern, critical-era biblical exegesis. Ultimately, Kierkegaard's proposal calls contemporary exegetes to adopt a largely precritical (though not anti-critical) exegetical paradigm that conceives of the exegetical task as a profoundly spiritual discipline of faith *coram Deo*.