

SUMMARY

NOT THROWING OUT THE BABY WITH THE BATH-WATER. THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF A CRITICAL BIBLE READER

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Degree : D Litt et Phil

Subject : Biblical Science

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The hypothesis debated here is that a critical reading process leads to a responsible use of the Bible. The metaphor of birth and growth is used autobiographically in order to illustrate the mastering of a critical reading process. Fundamentalism as condition *before the birth* indicates a pre-critical reading and understanding of the Bible. The transition to a critical reading and understanding contains certain psychological effects for the reader. In some instances it may even be called a painful *birth process*. The *growing process* progresses slowly. Concepts like inspiration, canon, Scriptural authority, the Bible as Word of God are once more scrutinised in the light of a critical reading process. Aspects that need to be settled with any critical reading are surveyed and may be seen as proposed directives for the mastering of the process: the strangeness of the world of the Bible, the evolution of the Bible, the Bible as literature and the critical Bible reader and objectivity. A critical reading process has certain *implications* for the traditional understanding of certain Bible themes. This, for example, is illustrated in view of the relation between the two testaments, prophecy, human thinking about God in the Bible and the liberating energy of justification through faith. New insights also establish the necessity for contact with believers within and outside the Christian tradition.

With regard to the New Testament and the Jesus movement, a critical reading also leads to new insights. Historical Jesus research is handled and settled in earnest in an attempt to reflect new insights in the Christian tradition. In conclusion, the role of the church is surveyed through a critical reading process. A few personal contentions and conceptions of faith are presented as a survey of the growing process up till the present time. The Divine image of a critical reader is argued in the light of the knowledge of science and the provisional nature of human knowledge about God. That the baby is not thrown out with the bath-water, implies that a critical reader's faith in God need not be sacrificed. On the contrary, it can lead to an enriching spiritual experience.