

unattested outside of its own legendary setting) we meet the miraculous, the bizarre, and the unlikely. In reconstruction we may postulate a cause for its writing, theorize about the background of its characters, and seek to place a scenario for its plots and movements. If we are able to come up with a satisfactory reconstruction of this and similar pieces of literature we may well develop a better attitude and understanding of an entire age.

When reconstruction leads to a determinate revision, the cause of history is jeopardized. This does not mean that all revision is bad but revisionism tends to become the new norm and thereby to lose the distant facts in the dusty clouds of soil reshuffled. In our present view the great service of reconstruction is academic and theoretical in the hope of increased appreciation. It is important to remember that reconstruction does not remove what we know but aids in better assessment. Biblical critics often use it as a means of denial of established matters but reconstruction neither denies nor confirms; it merely tends to line up the matters involved into a fuller perspective.

(4) Vocabulary

An important part of the subjective assessment is what pertains to vocabulary: knowing how the people of history used words and how those who heard them understood them. Semantics should not be used to make dissimilar propositions sound similar but we can only conjecture how many situations would have had different outcomes if the words had been understood equally. Perhaps Thomas Beckett's whole career would have been different had Henry been more explicit in his statements or his followers less anxious in their understanding. Terms such as "victory", "filioque", "millennialism", "supralapsarianism", etc., have all had roles in movements of historic importance. Having an appreciation of the vocabulary of history is objective in what the lexicons may say but highly subjective in the way in which words are used.

(5) Analysis

Perhaps the most subjective of all the assessments is the matter of analysis. This is best defined as the study of events with a resultant prescription that seeks to apply the findings to the present setting. Analysis is very much conditioned by a number of our previous concepts and has fewer safeguards in that its only real check and balance is in the mind of the analyst. Recorded history is full of analysis and the resultant analogy. It is a necessary tool but one in which the findings must be considered very tendential at best.

To be with Allan MacRae in church history was to find oneself not only committed to the knowledge of some basic facts but to considerable effort to determine what those facts meant. There was the search for meaning and motive that led the student to realize one was working in a living field. The subjective assessments became the "bread and butter" in a field that