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The example of Paul, the instrument of the Lord's revelation, His chosen vessel to bear His name abroad (Acts 9:15), is instructive. Paul insists that his Gospel is not something that lies on a human level (Gal. 1:11), not something that a man can receive from a human instructor (Gal. 1:12). The revelation that gave him this Gospel was not prepared for by anything in Paul;

on the contrary, Paul was in vehement opposition up to the very moment of revelation (Gal. 1:13-14). It was the free grace of God, the grace of the God who chose out Paul before his birth, that revealed God's Son to him. The call of God that reached Paul and turned him completely around was wholly and solely God's doing (Gal. 1:15-16). God's revelation, Paul says, brings to the eye of man what man has not seen, to the ear of man what man has not heard, and into the heart of man what the human heart has not conceived (I Cor. 2:9-10). God's Spirit, the creative power of God, is in the act of revelation (I Cor. 2:10). The Spirit's possibilities begin where human possibilities end.

Revelation is solely God's act; and it is His act all the way. The given gift of revelation remains with man only by God's continual giving. Man never becomes independent over against God. Paul prays, in his letter to the Ephesians, that God may grant to the elect saints who have received the wondrous revelation of God's comprehensive grace (Eph. 1:3-14) the spirit of wisdom and revelation; enlightened eyes of the heart, in order that the given gift may remain theirs and be a working reality in their lives (Eph. 1:17-18).

All this may seem obvious and beyond argument. But it needs to be stressed today. Current theological literature still speaks of prophets and apostles as great religious discoverers, as religious geniuses; although the idea of the religious genius is wholly foreign to the Bible. It would be difficult indeed to find in the Bible itself any evidence for the definition of "inspiration" (which is so intimately connected with revelation) advanced by any eminent British scholar: "Inspiration . . . is the capacity to explore independently the regions of the spirit and to convince others of the reality of that which one has discovered" (Dodd).

In thus revealing Himself to man, God is dealing with man, is entering into man's life effectually and is shaping man's life. When the Father reveals the Christ, the Son of the Living God, to Peter and his fellow-disciples, their whole life is changed by that revelation (Matt. 16:21-27). They are separated forever from "men" who appreciate Jesus and honor Him as prophet (Matt. 16:13-15) but will not see in Him the Christ, the Son of the Living God. They are henceforth committed to the Christ, the Anointed King; they are His subjects destined to live under Him in His Kingdom. In Jesus they have come face to face with the Living God, the Lord of men's lives, the Lord of all history. Jesus calls them "blessed"; "blessed" means that a personal, religious bond, a bond of grace, has been established. Jesus calls men blessed when God deals with them, enriching the beggar, comforting the mourner, giving the world to the meek as his inheritance, feeding full the man who hungers and thirsts for righteousness (Matt. 5:3-6). This revelation given by the Father meant that the disciple enters into the new people of God, the Church (Matt. 16:18). It means that he is drawn into God's own redeeming activity; he is given the keys of the kingdom, to loose and to bind (Matt. 16:19). It means that the disciple is to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus. He must lose his life in order to gain it, give up all dreams of greatness, and face the returning Son of Man as his Judge (Matt. 16:24-27).

When Jesus tells men that He, the Son, can reveal the Father (Matt. 11:27) because He alone knows the Father, neither "knowing" nor "revealing" means mere information about God. It means communion with God. The Revealer summons men to Himself and promises them rest (Matt. 11:28). He lays His kindly yoke on men and puts their burdened, harassed lives in order (Matt. 11:29-30).

When God revealed His Son to Paul, He graciously laid claim to Paul's whole life, his work and his suffering (Gal. 1:16; cf. Acts 9:15). What God reveals to men, Paul says, is what God's grace has bestowed on undeserving men, a gift from God which creates men who love Him (I Cor. 2:9, 12). The Spirit of revelation makes men know God, personally--they know what a hope and what an inheritance God has given them; and they know the power of God which will bring them through all darkness and danger into that inheritance (Eph. 1:17-19).

B. Revelation is a Constant Action of God.

No man ever escapes from God the Revealer. God's hand holds man fast, either in sin, under wrath, unto death; or in Christ, under grace, unto life eternal. Revelation, whether as Law or as Gospel, is a constant reality in the life of man. Rom. 1:18-32; Rom. 3:21, with 1:17; the perfect tense in I Cor. 15:4 and Gal. 3:1; I Thess. 2:13; Paul's use of "In Christ."

No man escapes the Revealer. There is a deep and terrible irony in Rom. 1:18-32, where Paul speaks of God's universal revelation of Himself. Just when man thinks himself free from God, when man has turned his back upon God and refuses to glorify and thank Him, just then he is taken in hand by God and must still face the revelation of God's wrath. God delivers up man--three times this fearful word is spoken--God delivers man up to the very sin which man seeks and makes man feel the hand of God in the shame and agony of the way which he has chosen.

But if the revelation of God's wrath is a reality which is constant and inescapable, so also the revelation of His grace is constant and persistent. The righteousness of God has been revealed, once for all in the cross and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 3:21). The righteousness of God, the free gift of His forgiveness, is being revealed in the Gospel (Rom. 1:17); God's great revealing action is present, continual, and active in the proclamation of that action. It is there, at work in the world.

Paul can express this continually-present character of the past revealing action of God by his use of the Greek perfect tense. This tense emphasizes the fact that a completed action has enduring results; for example, the normal Greek way of saying "the man is dead" is "the man has died". In I Cor. 15:3-4 Paul gives a brief summary of the Gospel which he has preached to the Corinthians; he speaks of Christ's death for our sins, of His burial, and of His resurrection. In speaking of the death and burial of Christ, Paul used the aorist tense, which simply states that an event took place at a point in the past--"Christ died. . . He was buried." But when he speaks of Christ's resurrection, he uses the perfect tense; he is speaking to men who, in denying the resurrection of the dead who die in Christ, are denying the enduring result of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection of Christ is not "over" because it occurred in the past; God's revelation of Himself in His act of raising Jesus Christ from the dead is continually present in the Gospel through which men are being delivered from death (I Cor. 15:2). Similarly Paul in Gal. 3:1 emphasizes the fact that the Cross is not simply "over" because it is past, by speaking of Christ's crucifixion in the perfect tense. The Cross never becomes obsolete or expendable; it continues to dominate the life of the Church, so that the thought of any merit of man or any glory of man is impossible in the Church, hidden as it is under the Cross. The Gospel facts are enduring, continually-working facts; the apostolic word which proclaims these facts is therefore a divine word which is continually at work in the believers (I Thess. 2:13).

Paul's use of "in Christ" (or "in the Lord") is another striking instance of this continually-present character of revelation. God has revealed Himself in Christ, once for all: in Him God's grace, God's love, God's goodness have manifested themselves (II Tim. 2:1) (Rom. 8:39; Eph. 2:7). In Christ God has said Yes to all His promises (II Cor. 1:19-20). In Christ God has delivered men (II Tim. 2:10), has justified (Gal. 2:17), reconciled (II Cor. 5:19), redeemed (Rom. 3:24), created (Eph. 2:10) and effectually called them (Phil. 3:14). And this "in Christ" is a reality and a power which colors and controls the whole existence of the Christian. Paul the Christian is "a man in Christ" (II Cor. 12:2); Christians are saints and brothers "in Christ" (Phil. 1:1; 1:14). Christian activity is an activity in Christ; the preacher of the Gospel fathers children in Christ (I Cor. 4:15), and the opening-up of missionary opportunity is a "door opened in the Lord" (II Cor. 2:12). All aspects of the Christian life are "in Christ"; a man is a prisoner, or he rejoices, "in the Lord" (Eph. 4:1; Phil 4:4). Christian duties such as the obedience of the Christian wife or of the Christian children are duties "in the Lord" (Col. 3:18, 20). The stages of Christian life are likewise marked--men are little children or mature men "in Christ" (I Cor. 3:1; Col. 1:28). Not even death can break the gracious hold of the hand of God: the dead are dead "in Christ" (I Thess. 4:16).

C. God's Revelation Culminates in Christ.

The revelation under which and by which the Church lives and works is the culminating revelation of God in Christ (Heb. 1:1-2). In this revelation God discloses Himself fully as Father and effectually calls man into communion with Himself (Luke 15:11-32; John 1:12; Matt. 11:25-30), a communion which shall be fully known and enjoyed at the return of the Son of Man and the close of the age (Matt. 25:34, cf. 41; I Thess. 4:17; Rev. 21:22, 22:3-5). This crowning revelation in Jesus Christ does not cancel or annul God's other and earlier revelation but confirms it. What God willed in manifesting Himself in His works since the creation of the world, namely that men should glorify Him as God and give thanks to Him, is fulfilled in Jesus and in the new people of God who call Jesus Lord (Rom. 1:21; I Peter 2:9). The Gospel makes the Law to stand (Matt. 5:17f; Rom. 3:31), by affirming the Law's verdict on man (Rom. 3:20), by accepting its witness (Rom. 3:21), and by asserting its good and holy will (Rom. 8:4). And the Gospel of Jesus Christ is God's Yea to all His promises (II Cor. 1:19-20). Man comes to the revelation of God as Father from the revelation of God as Judge. His life of repentance and faith in the Church is a continual flight from God the Judge to God the Father (Phil. 3:8-14). The verdict of the Law is the constant presupposition of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16-17); and the Gospel is the presupposition and motivation for the Church's glad assent to the good will of God in the Law (Rom. 7:12, 22, 25; 8:3-4; Gal. 5:13-14).

The Church lives and works under God's culminating revelation in His Son Jesus Christ. This is most clearly and pointedly formulated in the first two verses of the Letter to the Hebrews: the God who in times past spoke richly

varied utterances by the prophets has now in the world's last days spoken by One Who is His Son. In the Son God's grace and truth have found final expression (John 1:17). Jesus Himself spoke of His mission in the same terms; He describes Himself as the Beloved Son whom the Lord of the vineyard sent last, after sending His servants, to the keepers of the vineyard to bid them give God what is God's (Mark 12:6). Jesus knows and declares Himself to be the Fulfiller of the Law and the prophets (Matt. 5:17); His coming is the time of fulfillment, the day of the inbreaking of the Reign of God (Mark 1:15).

In the beloved Son God discloses Himself fully as the loving Father and calls men into communion with Himself. In the parable of the Prodigal Son Jesus tells men what His coming means; it means that God is welcoming home His wayward, lost, dead, penitent sons in full and free forgiveness (Luke 15: 11-32). The Son, and only He, knows the Father and can reveal the Father and thus give men rest for their souls (Matt. 11:25-30). To those who received Him He gives power to become sons of God (John 1:12). At the close of His days on earth Jesus can sum up His life's work by saying that He has manifested God's name to men (John 17:6). That name is Father.

If much is given, more remains. The communion with the Father established by the Son shall be fully known and wholly enjoyed when the Son of Man returns and bids those blessed of His Father come to Him (Matt. 25:34), and those who have refused the Father's plea shall be forever shut out from His presence (Matt. 25:41). Then those who are the Lord's shall be forever with the Lord (I Thess. 4:17) and see God face to face (I Cor. 13:12). Then God Himself, with the Lamb of God, shall be the mediated Temple-presence, the everlasting Light to those that are His servants and have His name inscribed upon their brows (Rev. 21:22; 22:3-5). The New Testament therefore speaks of future revelation too, of the future revelation of the Son of Man, of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the coming glory of Christ (Luke 17:30; I Cor. 1:7; II Thess. 1:7; I Pet. 5:1). It speaks of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God on the coming day of wrath (Rom. 2:5). It speaks of a final deliverance that is to be revealed (I Pet. 1:5), of the revelation of a glory that shall enfold the sons of God (Rom. 8:18-19), who shall then be transfigured fully into the likeness of the Son of God (I John 3:2; cf. Phil. 3:21).

This crowning revelation in Jesus Christ, which is both fulfillment and the promise of a greater fulfillment, does not cancel or annul God's precious revelation; rather, God's other and earlier revelation is confirmed by it. When God revealed Himself to men by His works, He willed that men should glorify Him and thank Him (Rom. 1:20-21). This will of God is fulfilled in the man Jesus Christ, whose life and death was all one grateful doxology to the Father (cf. Matt. 4:1-11; 11:25; Phil. 2:11). He could say as He went unto His death, "I have glorified Thee upon the earth" (John 17:4). And this will of God is fulfilled in the new people of God, the new Israel that calls Jesus Lord; this people is created by the revelation of God in Christ to show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (I Pet. 2:9), to glorify God by every word and deed (I Cor. 10:31; Rom. 15:5-6).

The Gospel, with its "law of faith" (Rom. 3:27) does not make void God's revelation of Himself in the Law; the Gospel makes the Law to stand, makes it count as it never counted before (Rom. 3:31). No rabbi before Jesus and no moralist after Him ever took the Law so seriously as Jesus did; He makes every jot and tittle count (Matt. 5: 17-18). And Paul, the herald of the Gospel, proclaims the Law with an uncompromising rigor that Paul the rabbi never knew. He affirms with radical seriousness the verdict of the Law on man, the curse that the Law imposes on man, on all men without exception (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3: 10-13). He accepts the witness of the Law to the now-revealed righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21) and sees the institutions which the Law ordained as the shadow of things to come, whose substance is in Christ Jesus (Col. 2:17). And Paul asserts the good and holy will of God as revealed in the Law: God condemned sin in the flesh of His incarnate Son in order that the just demands of the Law might be fulfilled in redeemed, Spirit-led men who walk not according to the flesh (Rom. 8:3-4). The Gospel of God speaks a solid Yea to the Law of God; and the Gospel is God's Yea to all His promises, the fulfillment of what God foretold through His prophets in sacred Scriptures (II Cor. 1:19-20; Rom. 1:2).

The Gospel is the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1:16). "Salvation" according to the Bible is radical deliverance, rescue out of a desperate situation. The Gospel therefore presupposes a desperate situation for man; it presupposes the Law of God in full force, destroying sinful man. Jesus pictures man as a hopelessly indebted slave whose life is forfeit and doomed; man hears the unexpected gracious acquittal of his King in this desperate situation (Matt. 18:23-35). And Paul proclaims his Gospel always under the overarching shadow of the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18), to men under the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13-14), to men who must stand silent before the judgment-seat of God, with no plea to offer for themselves, convicted by the Law which

brings them knowledge of their sin but no release from sin (Rom. 3:19-20; 8:3-4).

And so it is only by the delivering power of the Gospel that man comes to speak a glad assent to God's holy will revealed in the Law (Rom. 7:12; 22, 25). Only the man who has been liberated by the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus ceases to rebel against the just demand of the Law (Rom. 8:2-4). Only the man whom God has set free by His call; only the man set free by Christ, can use his liberty in a slavery of love and thus fulfill the Law (Gal. 5:1, 13-14).

It is amazing to see how often this basic Law-Gospel fact of revelation is overlooked, or slighted, or blurred in current discussions of revelation. One finds revelation described simply as "God's gracious activity." Our Lutheran Confessions have given us eyes for this double aspect of revelation, Law and Gospel, wrath and grace; we can see how the whole New Testament (to say nothing of the Old), from John the Baptist to John the Seer on Patmos, proclaims the Gospel against the stark unchanging background of the Law and the wrath of God. And as we love the Gospel, we must proclaim the Law; for unless the Law is heard in all its rigor, men have no ears for the Gospel. Where the Law is unaccented, the Gospel has lost its real accent too. x

D. The Content of Revelation

God's revelation has a concrete historical content: God's significant revelatory action and God's effectual revelatory speaking in His dealings with His people for the salvation of mankind. God's action and God's speaking, in organic unity, constitute His revelation to man. Matt. 1:1-17; Acts 13:16-41; James 1:18 with I Pet. 1:3.

Current Problem: One-sided emphasis on deeds of God as instruments of revelation. False antithesis between truth as personal encounter with the Revealer and informational truth. John 6:69; 8:24; 20:31; Rom. 10:9; I Thess. 4:14; I John 5:1, 5; I Cor. 15: 1-4.

There can be no doubt of the fact that God reveals Himself by His deeds and that these deeds constitute an essential part of His Revelation. Fifty-eight percent of the New Testament is narrative, the record of what Jesus taught and did, in person and through His Apostles. Moreover, all the New Testament documents center in history, and all of them are historically occasioned and historically conditioned.

To take a concrete example: when Matthew sums up, or recapitulates, all that led up to the coming of the Christ, the whole previous revelation of God which prepared for this ^{coming} revelation, he does so in the clipped, sparse, condensed, and badly factual recital of the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:1-17). Similarly Paul in his sermon in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13: 16-41), employs a very factual recital of the deeds of God to prepare for his proclamation of Jesus as the promised Christ.

But these deeds, as every reader of the Old Testament knew, were not dumb deeds; they were no silent shadow-play but were accompanied and interpreted by the word of God. The readers of the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew would recall how the word of the Lord came to Abraham, how the Lord spoke to David through the prophet Nathan, how the Lord spoke through David himself by His spirit, how the captivity in Babylon had been foretold by the prophets and had been interpreted by them as God's judgment upon His apostate people, how the coming of the Messiah had been held up to the hope of Israel by the successive voices of prophecy. And Paul's hearers in the synagogue knew that the history of Israel, from the patriarchs to Jesus, had been a history in which God's word continually rang (cf. Ex. 14:13, 31; 15:2, 18). It should be remembered, moreover, that in Biblical usage the line between word and deed, particularly the divine word and the divine deed, is less sharp than in our usage. "Word" can be used, in fact, to designate a deed or thing (Luke 1:37). The history, the recital of word and deed, can be summed up in a formulation. The very shape which the recital takes is already a formulation. To take the examples previously alluded to, the genealogy in Matthew and Paul's sermon in Pisidian Antioch: Matthew's recital is anything but a mere chronicle. He arranges the genealogy symmetrically, in groupings of fourteen generations each, and thereby indicates that the history from Abraham to Jesus moves on measured paths of providence, that a divine purpose is working itself out toward a foreseen end. He is, furthermore, selective in his recounting of the ancestors of Jesus. And, startlingly enough, four women appear in the Messianic line. They are not the famous four to whom Judaic pride loved to point (Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Rachel); rather, Gentile women and sinful women, a incestuous woman, a harlot, and an adulteress appear at key points in this history. Matthew is indicating that Israel's failure as a nation cries for a Messiah who will save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21), not merely from their enemies. The Messiah comes as a shoot from the stump of Jesse, from the judged and ruined house of David (Is. 11:1).

Time will hardly permit a complete analysis of Paul's sermon at Pisidian Antioch, but even a cursory reading of the sermon will show that it is shaped by a threefold purpose: Paul wills to show first that this history is God in action, that God is dealing in might and mercy with His people. His recital is theocentric in character. Secondly, he emphasizes the fact that this history is a portrayal of God moving toward His goal. His recital is teleological. And thirdly, Paul is at pains to show that God is acting in this history for the salvation of His people. His recital is soteriological in character.

If the recital is, as we have seen, formulated history, the formulations found in the scripture are crystallized history. These formulations present history in its once-for-all meaning or significance for us now. They are not less than the actual record of the revelatory deed and word but more; the recorded word and deed are pointed up, contoured, and directed toward us by the formulation.

We do the same thing constantly in our daily lives. We crystallize a history in a formulation. Statements like "He is a good neighbor, a good father, a kind man, a patient man, a faithful husband" are resumés of history, crystallizations of history. They cannot be separated from history and should not be put in antithesis to history.

We find both in Scripture, revelatory recital and revelatory formulation. Genesis recounts the fall of man, with its tragic upshot: "He drove out the man" (Gen. 3:1-24). Paul crystallizes that whole history in a single sentence, a formulation: "Through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin, death; and thus death spread to all men" (Rom. 5:12; cf. I Cor. 15:22, 49). And so it is not surprising to find that New Testament writers can employ either the revelatory act itself or the formulation that conveys that act. Peter proclaims that God has begotten us again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (I Pet. 1:3). James asserts that God has brought us forth by the word of truth (Jam. 1:18).

Current Problem.

Present-day discussions of revelation emphasize the fact that "God reveals Himself in action", that He has "spoken through events" (Baillie). There can be no quarrel with this emphasis as such. The festival half of our church year recalls and celebrates the mighty deeds of God; our preaching on both Old Testament and New Testament texts is rich in the recital of God's wondrous acts for us men and for our salvation. We have always brought up our children on both the catechism and the Bible history. And our hymnody and the other sacred arts certainly proclaim the arm of the Lord laid bare. But where is the Biblical warrant for an exclusive emphasis on the deed, in antithesis to the word? Jesus, in His dispute with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection of the dead appeals, not to a recorded action of God (such as the translation of Enoch or Elijah), but to a recorded word of God: "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" and proceeds to reduce even that to a formulation: "God is not a God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22:32). When Paul seeks the light of divine revelation on Abraham's status before God (Rom. 4:1-3) he appeals, not to a deed, but to the verbal record (Gen. 15:6) and finds in the words the mind and will of God. If the deed is so exclusively significant, why is the Son of God, God's ultimate revelation, called the Word? Are we to retranslate the first verse of the fourth Gospel as Goethe's Faust did and make bold to say, "In the beginning was the deed"? In the last analysis even the modern theologians who one-sidedly emphasize the revelatory deed find that they cannot get along without the revelatory word and therefore bring in by the back door what they have thrown out the front (cf. Baillie, pages 64-65). Closely related to this one-sided emphasis on the deeds of God is the false antithesis between truth as personal encounter with the Revealer and informational or propositional truth. Granted that the essential content of all revelation is nothing less than God Himself offering Himself to man for personal communion; does that make truth about God or formulations concerning Him a matter of secondary importance? In fact, can the one exist without the other? Is truth as encounter possible without truth as plain propositional fact? Is it possible to believe in a Person without believing that He is so and so, that He has acted thus and thus and will act thus and thus in the future?

Young people in love believe in each other, or want to, and it is for that very reason that they spend hours telling each other about themselves, their families, their childhood. Certainly faith is faith in a person, but such a faith never exists in abstraction; it always exists in organic connection with the belief that, as a glance at our New Testament should suffice to show. Passages like John 6:69, John 8:24, John 20:31, Romans 10:9, I Thess. 4:14, I J. 5:1 and 5:5 show how powerful and necessary the facts of faith are for the life of faith. The Gospel which Paul proclaimed to the Corinthians (and Paul's conception of faith was certainly a personal one) created faith in the Corinthians by means of the propositions that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He was raised again

from the dead according to the Scriptures. As C. K. Barret has pointed out in his commentary on the Gospel according to St. John, "Knowing and believing are not set over against one another but correlated. . . Knowledge has also an objective, factual side. . . Saving knowledge is rooted in knowledge of a historical person; it is, therefore, objective and at the same time a personal relation."

If we recall what was said above about formulations as crystallized history, we need not apologize for the much-maligned expression "revealed truth" and we need not concede that propositions are any less personal and powerful than the acts of God themselves. After all, is the "I believe that" of Luther's explanation of the Creed any less personal than the "I believe in" of the Creed itself?

II Scripture

A. Scripture as Recital, the Record of God's Revelation.

Scripture is recital, a record of the revelatory deeds and words of God. Scripture recounts the active and eloquent self-disclosure of God in creation, the fall, the flood, the lives of the patriarchs, the exodus, the wilderness years, the taking of the promised land, the history of the judges and kings of Israel, the captivity, the restoration, the witness of John the Baptist, the words and works and death and resurrection of Jesus, the creation of the apostolate and the apostolic church, the apostolic witness to the Christ unto the ends of the earth.

Current Problem: The meaning and the theological significance of inerrancy.

That scripture is recital, the record of God's revelation, hardly needs demonstration. All who read their Bibles know their Bible to be a record; and, of course, they know it to be much more than a mere record. But it is here, where we are dealing with it as record, that the question of inerrancy is relevant and becomes acute.

1. Why Inerrancy Matters

Revelation is both encounter with the Revealer and the receiving of information from the Revealer. Faith is both faith in and belief that, in organic unity; that is, faith in a Person is possible only on the basis of believing that the Person is a certain kind of person and has acted in a certain way. Therefore the record of God's revelatory deeds and words is essential to the birth of faith and to the life of faith.

Now the value of a record is entirely dependent on its truth, its veracity, is factuality, in a word, on its inerrancy. "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" is recital, is crystallized history. Its value as revelation depends entirely on the truth of the fact that God is what the Old Testament proclaims Him to be, the living God, the Lord of history and manifested in history; it depends on the truth of the fact that God did deal effectually, graciously, and faithfully with the Patriarchs. If He did not, in fact, thus deal with them, the record is worthless as a medium of revelation.

The New Testament is conscious of this. Jesus, for all His freedom over against the Old Testament law, a freedom that seemed blasphemous to His scrupulous contemporaries, nowhere doubts or calls into question any event recorded in the Old Testament. He argues from the factuality of the Old Testament event, not about it. He argues from what God has said about man and woman at creation, not about it. Even when the Old Testament record is used by others to embarrass and contradict Him, as when the Jews point out that Moses commanded the bill of divorcement (Matt. 19:7-8), Jesus does indeed, correct their misquotation of the record ("Moses permitted") but

He does not question the accuracy of the record; He does not operate critically on the record. And the apostles follow their Lord in this as in all else. Neither Paul nor James argues about the record of Abraham and his faith; both argue from it.

As with the Old Testament record, so with the New Testament. Paul stakes his whole apostolate and the faith and the hope of the Church on the bare fact that the resurrection of Jesus Christ did take place. Everything depends on these things being so; and Paul cites more than 500 witnesses in proof (I Cor. 15:1-19). Peter protests vigorously against the idea that any humanly devised myth can serve as the vehicle of the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ and emphasizes the eye-witness character of the apostolic proclamation (II Pet. 1:16-18). Inerrancy matters.

2. The Nature of Biblical Inerrancy

God is sovereign, free in His self-disclosure and in the instruments which He uses for His self-disclosure. We should beware lest we invade that freedom and attempt to determine a priori what God's inerrancy must be like. Let us not seek to impose our ideas of inerrancy upon God. Let us rather permit God Himself in His word to tell us what kind of inerrancy He has chosen for the record of His deeds and word. We can only accept what God has given us in faith, in the believing conviction that His idea of inerrancy is better than ours.

We can assume therefore that the Old Testament writings in which Jesus heard His Father's voice and the apostles found the mind and will of God, do the work of God inerrantly, that they are arrows of God which will inerrantly find their mark. We cannot dictate to God how such arrows must be constructed. We cannot even assume that there is one universally valid kind of inerrancy, a best kind which God must inevitably employ.

In history, for example, an account may be inerrant in half a dozen ways, each completely valid in its way and for its purpose. Since we know God to be a God of prodigal variety, we may assume that He has at His disposal many modes of inerrancy. To illustrate: here are six accounts of one event:

1. A said to B in the presence of their common friends, "You are a fool and a coward."
2. A degraded and discredited B in the eyes of his contemporaries.
3. A revealed himself as a harsh and unfeeling judge of men.
4. By his harsh words A put an end forever to a friendship which he and B had cherished for twenty years.
5. A broke B's heart with his cruel words.
6. A by his harsh words to B shocked and estranged their common friends.

To argue that any one of these six forms, the first for example, is in itself more precise or accurate, more completely inerrant than the other five is obviously nonsense. A police portrait, front and profile, does not necessarily tell us more about its subject than an artist's portrait of the same man. A mosaic is not necessarily less accurate than a line drawing, nor is an impressionistic painting less precise than a realistic one. An interpreted history can do its work more inerrantly than a merely factual chronicle. The Bible, the word of God is intended to move men; it is not surprising, therefore, that the inerrancy we find in it is a various one.

Inerrancy is a matter of faith, and for faith the inerrancy of God's word is a matter of course, an axiom. This determines what kind of questions we may ask concerning Scripture and what kind we may not ask. It has pleased Almighty God to give us four Gospels, four accounts of His climactic revelation of Himself in His Son. The question for us as believing readers and interpreters of the Bible is not: Can we work up all that they record concerning Jesus of Nazareth into one consistent chronicle with no gaps, no loose ends, and no overlapping? The one valid question is rather: Do the four Gospels in harmonious inerrancy set one Jesus the Christ before the eyes of the believing and worshipping Church?

Faith will also dictate the kind of question we may ask concerning details in the Gospels. We have two accounts of the Lord's Prayer, in Matthew and in Luke (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). Obviously they do not agree verbatim. If we use Matthew as the standard, we find that Luke besides differing in verbal details, omits the "who art in Heaven" in the address and the third and seventh petitions. Is there a problem in the fact that we do not have a word-for-word correspondence in the account of our Lord's teaching concerning the prayer of His disciples, certainly a matter of prime religious importance? There is a problem only if we consider the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke chronicles of a rabbi Jesus of Nazareth or photographs of a great religious teacher. There is no problem for faith; faith takes the Gospels of Matthew and Luke for what they claim to be; faith understands them on their own terms, as proclamations of the Christ. Faith knows how to answer the question: Are we here getting a prayer-formula from a great teacher, a religious genius, or do we behold the Christ molding the will of His disciples with Messianic authority? Faith will ask: Are Matthew and Luke both Christologically inerrant? And faith will confidently answer, Yes. If the Gospels

distort the image of the Christ, they are errant in the one sense that counts. If they have muffled the voice of the Good Shepherd, they are errant in the one sense that concerns the Church. This does not mean, of course, that inerrancy in historical or geographical matters is a matter of indifference. It is a matter of great importance: for the Christ came, as the Revealer of the Father's grace and truth, in the flesh, in time and space, "under Pontius Pilate." It does mean that these things matter as they relate to the Christ: inerrancy concerning the census of Augustus matters because God used that census to fulfill His promise concerning great David's greater Son. It matters Christologically.

Both the careful harmonizers of the Gospels and the confident critics of the Gospels forget this cardinal point, that of Christological inerrancy. Why is it that a harmony of the four Gospels, to say nothing of a critical reconstruction of the four Gospels, is always somehow less powerful than the individual Gospels? Is it not because each Gospel is functional, Christologically inerrant, is a power of God unto salvation on its own terms, in its own inerrant way? One marvels at the futility of these pious labors. It is as if the Church had been given four luminous and speaking portraits of the Christ, and both the poor deluded harmonizers and the poor deluded critic think to improve upon God's handiwork by somehow blending them or super-imposing them on one another.

3. The Non-demonstrable Character of Biblical Inerrancy

We shall never be able to prove the inerrancy of the Bible to any skeptic's satisfaction. Such proof is always attended by a twofold difficulty. The first difficulty is historical. We simply do not know all the facts in every case. The five arguments used by Strauss a century ago to prove that the account of our Savior's birth in Luke could not be taken seriously as history have all been pretty well exploded by the increase of historical knowledge. Increasing knowledge will solve other difficulties too, but probably never all of them. And faith, over-whelmed by the power and the grace of the Christ, is not dependent on historical proof.

The other difficulty is theological. We can prove according to the testimony of the oldest, the most immediate, and the least prejudiced witnesses that Jesus did perform miracles; but we cannot prove that these miracles are "signs", that is, that they are the works of the Servant of the Lord who took our diseases and bore our infirmities (Matt. 8:17), that they are the revelation of the arm of the Lord (John 12:38). We can prove, that is, we can make it historically probable, that Jesus of Nazareth was executed under Pontius Pilate. We cannot prove historically that which only faith can affirm, namely that the Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was delivered up for our transgressions and raised again for our justification.

Perhaps we should ask ourselves whether we have not, by letting the question of inerrancy become our sole or prime concern, run the risk of losing sight of the power of Scripture. We are the generation upon whom the ends of the world have come-- how much time have we for disproving the errancy of Scripture or for proving its inerrancy? Finally, whatever we may prove or disprove, all Christendom must repeat Peter's question, "To whom, Lord, shall we go"? It is the Bible or nothing. We hear God speak and speak inerrantly in the words of His prophets as recorded in Scripture, or we do not hear Him at all. We hear the voice of the Good Shepherd in the written words of His apostles, or we do not hear it at all. We have no alternative: we hear God's judgment upon us in the Law in this written form which He has willed, and we hear God's acquittal in the written Gospel which it has pleased God to give us, or we do not hear it at all.

B. Scripture as Power, the Continuation of God's Revelation.

This record is not a set of stories that can be told or left untold at will. What this record contains is not subject to the progressive devaluation which attaches to all things past; these deeds and words are not remote and inert because they are past. For this record is a prophetically interpretive record; this record is inspired (I Cor. 2:1-16). Inspiration means that mighty condescension of God whereby He in living, personal, and dynamic presence among and in men spoke His word in the words of men whom He chose, shaped, and endowed. This act of God makes men's words His very own, the potent and inescapable medium of His revelation. These inspired words do not merely inform concerning God's past action and past speaking. They convey God's word and action now (II Tim. 3:14-17). The fact that God created man in His image determines my attitude toward my fellow-man now (James 3:9). God's "Very Good" at creation determines my relation to meat and drink now (I Tim. 4:3-5). How God joined man to woman at creation determines my marriage now (Mat. 19:4-6). Adam's past fall is my present guilt (Rom. 5:12, 18-19). Abraham's faith is significant for the men of Galatia (Gal. 3:6-10), for the men of Rome and Spain (Rom. 4), and for the man of today. Jesus' death is my death to sin, made mine by baptism now (Rom. 6:3-10). His resurrection is the resurrection of the dead (Rom. 1:4; I Cor. 15). His victory is the present power

of my victorious faith (Rev. 3:21; I Cor. 15:57,58; Rom. 6:8,9; 8:37, with 33-36). Scripture is the record of God's revelation and is the continuation of it. Scripture is the Word of God.

Current Problem: The relationship between revelation and Scripture.
Verbal inspiration.

Inerrancy is important and has rightly loomed large in our thinking and teaching on Scriptures. Inerrancy is intimately related to the inspiration of Scripture; but inerrancy is not the decisive aspect of inspiration. That aspect is power; the inerrancy of Scripture is incidental to the power of inspired Scripture. Inerrancy by itself-- the demonstrable veracity of an account or record-- still falls within the area of human means of persuasion; it can be an element in the "persuasive words of wisdom", "the wisdom of men", which Paul disclaims for his apostolic proclamation (I Cor. 2:4-5). Such persuasive wisdom can lead men to adopt certain views or to undertake certain actions. But only "the demonstration of spirit and power" (I Cor. 2:4) can victoriously invade men's lives, to create the saving faith that rests triumphantly on the power of God (I Cor. 2:5)--or to doom men in their wilful unbelief (II Cor. 2:15-16).

It is only natural, therefore, that Scripture does not speak often or expressly of its inerrancy (that is constantly presupposed), but does speak often and eloquently of inspiration and power. The classic passage on the inspiration of the Old Testament is, of course, II Tim. 3:14-17. The context in which Paul's words on inspiration are set is noteworthy. These words are preceded by an appeal to Timothy to remain faithful to Paul and his teaching in spite of suffering and discouragement, in times that shall grow steadily worse (II Tim. 3:10-13). They are followed by Paul's adjuration to Timothy to be mindful of his responsibility to the returning Lord when he proclaims the word, to do the work of an evangelist faithfully, powerfully, patiently and soberly, even though he must proclaim it to men who have no ears for it and must therefore suffer for that proclamation. Paul is pointing Timothy to a source of power for his ministry.

The first thing he says about the sacred writings, which Timothy has known from childhood, is that they have power, power to make him wise for salvation. Scripture has power because the Spirit of God is in it and works creatively by it. It creates nothing less than faith in Christ Jesus. "Every passage of Scripture", Paul says, "stems from the Spirit of God." Therefore Scriptures can do for man what man's reason cannot do; it can teach him, in the full Biblical sense of that word, that is, it can shape and mold man by telling him of God's will and work. Scripture confronts man with God. Therefore its word is a word that convicts man of his sin and makes him bow before the righteous God. This again is something that only the Spirit of God can do, for our own mind will always excuse our sin and seek to conceal it. But if this powerful word brings us low, it does so in order to raise us up again; here too the power of the inspired word is evident--it alone can make fallen man capable of standing before God. This mighty word takes us in hand and puts our whole life in order under the reign of God's righteousness. It creates a man of God, a man able to meet all demands, fitted out for every good work.

Paul links the Old Testament word with Christ Jesus, as the whole New Testament does, and he sets it in parallel with his own apostolic word. He is strongly implying that his word, too, is a powerful and inspired word. What St. Paul here implies is clearly declared elsewhere in the New Testament. The Fourth Gospel records more fully than any other Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit to His own. Jesus, according to John, stakes the whole future of His work and His church on the inspiration of His apostles. Future generations shall come to faith through their word (John 17:20). Their witness to Him will be an inspired witness (John 15:26-27). Through them the Holy Spirit will convict, that is, confront the world with the ultimate issues, the issues of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit, through the word of these men, will confront men with the living reality of the incarnate Christ and thus bring them to repentance (Jn. 16:7-11). And through their word the Holy Spirit will bring men to faith; He will lead the disciples into all truth and bring home to them the full glory of the Christ whom they have seen and known (John 16:12-15). Their word will therefore have in it the whole majesty and mercy of the Christ; their word will have the power to do what only God Himself can do, the power to remit and retain sins (Jn. 20:20-23).

The apostles experienced the fulfillment of Jesus' promise of the Spirit as a reality in their lives. Paul claims that God has given him revelation through the Spirit and that he utters this revelation in words taught by the Spirit (I Cor. 2:10-13). There is no reason to restrict this inspiration to the spoken word of the apostles or to deny it to their written word. Paul in II Thess. 2:2 parallels his written letters with his spoken word and connects both with the working of the Spirit. Indeed, Paul's opponents deemed his letters to be more weighty and powerful than his speech, which they called contemptible (II Cor. 10:10). Similarly, John parallels his written and his

spoken word without making any distinction between them (I Jn. 1:3-4) and says of his written word that through it men may have faith in Jesus Christ and thus have eternal life in His name (Jn. 20:31). And the warning cry in the Book of Revelation, "He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches", refers quite patently to the written word of the seer.

The Relationship between Revelation and Scripture

Current discussions of revelation and scripture weaken the link between revelation and scripture and confine inspiration to God's action in illuminating the minds of prophets and apostles so as to enable them to interpret God's mighty acts correctly. Most modern theologians protest against "any simple identification of the Christian revelation with the contents of the Bible" (Baillie, p. 109) and speak of scripture as the human, fallible witness to the revelation. Karl Barth's statement is typical:

Revelation has to do with Jesus Christ who was to come and who finally when the time was fulfilled, did come--and so with the actual, literal Word spoken now really and directly by God Himself. Whereas in the Bible we have to do in all cases with human attempts to repeat and reproduce this Word of God in human thoughts and words with reference to particular human situations. . . In the one case Deus dixit but in the other Paulus dixit; and these are two different things. (Quoted by Baillie, p. 35.)

It is difficult to see how such an attitude can be squared with our Lord's own attitude and that of His apostles toward the Old Testament, which is uniformly one of absolute submission as to a divine authority. As for the New Testament, one may well ask: Do the apostles anywhere indicate any consciousness of being fallible witnesses to the revelation which they have received? Do they not rather claim the power of the Spirit for both the content and the word of their witness? Is Paul merely speaking figuratively when he speaks of Christ speaking in him (II Cor. 13:3) or when he calls the word that he gave to the Thessalonians the very word of God (I Thess. 2:13)? If Paul's word is merely a human and fallible word, how can he expect men to be responsible over against it? How can he say, "Your blood be upon your heads" to men who have refused it (Act. 18:6)?

Verbal Inspiration

The idea of verbal inspiration today enjoys a somewhat higher degree of respectability than it once did. Even a man like Baillie admits that it is hard to conceive of an inspiration that does not extend to the words. He is willing to accept verbal inspiration. Although he balks at plenary inspiration, since that would necessarily mean inerrancy. There never was, and there is not now, any reason for being apologetic about the formulation "verbal inspiration!" And in the light of the present-day depreciatory attitude toward the written word, the formulation underscores two important truths.

First, it makes unmistakably plain that there is no point at which one may say of Scripture, "Here the word of God ends, and the word of man begins." It makes impossible any cleavage between the human and the divine. It underscores both the human and the divine character of the word; it takes seriously God's condescension in adopting our human speech, so that men moved by the Holy Spirit speak from God (II Pet. 1:21).

Secondly, the formula "verbal inspiration" keeps the idea of inspiration ~~not~~ personal. Communication by means of verba is personal communication. God deals personally with the men whom He inspires, and He sets them to work personally. They are equipped for communication, for ministry to their fellow-men by verbal inspiration. If inspiration is not verbal, it fails at the very point where it is essential; for the prophets and apostles never received revelation for themselves alone but for the ministry to the people of God and to mankind. It is difficult to see why this personal, ministerial verbal inspiration should be called mechanical or artificial--especially when we see how God in the process does not destroy human personality but honors it and uses it. ✕

III The Interpretation of Scripture

A. Interpretation as the Understanding of Recital.

God's revelation, recorded and continued in Scripture, does not lie in some vague region beyond the recital of His words and deeds. It is given in and with the recital itself. It must therefore be apprehended and appropriated as such, in the linguistic and historical forms in which God has caused it to be recorded. The "humanity" of Scripture is not merely to be borne as a burden and a hindrance; it is to be welcomed as God's gift to us, as His free condescension to us in our frailty, as a help to us in apprehending His holy and gracious will for us. Just as in the case of profane documents, so in the case of Scripture: the interpreter must scrutinize the linguistic and historical facts as presented by the text; he must survey them in relation to one another and to the whole; he must immerse himself wholly and sympathetically in the documents and strive to become contemporary with the original

revelatory situation. We must hear what the words and deeds recorded in the documents said in their time and place if we are to hear them as revelation for us here and now.

The Bible is not a lazy man's book, nor is it a dreamer's book. We should thank God for that; we should be grateful for the fact that the form of God's written revelation does not give scope to our fancies but shuts them out. Just because it is so human in form, it calls for sober, thinking, wide-awake work, not for speculations and day-dreams. It comes to us in the languages and the forms of certain times and places. It invites us by its nearness to our humanity and challenges us by its remoteness from our time. It remains always fresh and timely, not because it formulates timeless truths but because it tells an ageless story, a story that concerns all mankind so long as mankind shall live.

We must then, as our traditional hermeneutics has always stressed, study the Bible linguistically and historically. Those of us who have only English or German as our linguistic equipment shall behold great things in God's word if we use our English or German Bibles diligently and faithfully. Those whom God has blessed with a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, however slight that knowledge may be, have been given five talents by our Lord and had better work with them, lest our returning Lord find cause to rebuke us for our infidelity. It is our business to hear our Lord as He has spoken, in the languages which He has chosen. We are to hear Him only and we are to hear Him out; the interpretation of Scripture involves both the scrutiny of the individual part and the survey of the parts in their relation to one another and to the whole. Sola Scriptura means tota Scriptura.

It has pleased God to address us in certain languages; it has pleased Him also to speak to us at certain times and in certain places. Our study of His word must therefore be historical as well as linguistic. We have not, for instance, heard God speak to us in the story of the tribute money (Mat. 22:15-22) unless we have taken seriously the historical setting of the question put to Jesus; unless we have realized that there is a Messianic challenge in the question of the Pharisees and a Messianic revelation in the answer of Jesus. We have not heard "the clearest Gospel" of the Epistle to the Romans fully until we have realized that this Epistle is a missionary document, designed to further the progress of the Gospel in triumphant power to the Western world. We have not used this word of God fully if it has not both deepened our doctrine and heightened our missionary zeal.

If we thus study our Bible, we shall not be tempted to obscure its native meaning by embroidering upon it with far-fetched and alien fancies of our own. The meaning of the text itself will stand out in such bold relief as to be unmistakable; that meaning will be so richly suggestive as to make virtually impossible any play of our fancies. The one intended sense will emerge.

We are to study our Bible linguistically and historically as we should study a profane document such as the works of Homer or Shakespeare. But this does not mean that the Bible ever becomes for us, in any stage of our study, another profane document. Much of the modern Biblical study from the eighteenth century onward is a terrifying example of what can happen when Biblical study becomes secularized.

The Historical-Critical Method

The almost universally practiced historical-critical method starts from the valid assumption that since the Christian faith rests upon a particular event in history, "the Christian religion is not merely open to historical investigation but demands it" (Hoskyns and Davey). Conservative proponents of the method claim for it that it is only a method and does not involve questions of faith or of dogma. But what are we to say of utterances such as the following, chosen from among the more conservative practitioners of the method? Conzelmann in discussing eschatology says: "Jesus connects redemptive revelation with His own person insofar as He sees the Kingdom active in His own deeds and understands His preachment as God's last word before the End; but He does not make His person the express content of His teaching, e.g. by portraying His being, or nature, in Messianic titles. The supplication of such titles to Him (Son of Man, Messiah, Son of God) is probably the work of the Church and therefore took place after His resurrection." Is this merely methodology? Does not this involve both an historical judgment upon the validity of the Gospel record and a theological judgment upon the Christ portrayed in our Gospels? And are not both judgments highly dubious ones? Once it is granted, as faith must grant, that the life of Jesus is a wholly unique life, the life of the incarnate Son of God, how is one to judge historically what is probable in that life and what is not? What analogies can one employ when one has to do with a life without all analogies in the history of human-kind? And where does one get the right, theologically, to the opinion that the Christ of the Gospels is in some part the creation of the Church? This is no longer historical investigation but a prejudging of the history that concerns the Church, on the basis of analogies which do not fit that history.

A British scholar, Blackman, in his Biblical Interpretation pleads for a wider acceptance of the historical-critical method and deprecates the idea that there is anything basically negative or irreverent about it. We have learned, he says, that we can remove the Bible from the glass case in which the piety of earlier generations has enshrined it, examine it and deal with it critically, and be none the worse off for it religiously. In another figure he compares the work of the critic with that of the surgeon, who does not mutilate the body he deals with but must remove dead tissue. We may cite his treatment of the miracles of Jesus as an example of such careful surgery (pp. 189-192). He does not reject all miracles--the greatest miracle of all, the Incarnation, stands firmly established for Christian faith, he says--but he does reserve the right to sift critically the accounts of the miracles in our Gospels. Concerning three miracles--Christ stilling the storm, the coin found in the fish's mouth, the opening of the graves and the rending of the Temple veil at the death of Christ--he maintains: Reason cannot accept them as having happened and piety need not protest the verdict of reason. It was the first-century mentality of Jesus' credulous followers that produced these stories; still, though they are not true stories, they have religious value, for they show us what an overpowering effect the person of Jesus had upon His contemporaries.

Blackman has a further objection to the miracle of the coin found in the fish's mouth. It contradicts, he says, the consistent New Testament picture of Jesus' use of His miraculous powers; according to our Gospels Jesus always uses His power to serve others. In this case He uses it to serve Himself. But according to Matthew's account of the incident (Matt. 17:24-27) it is not even certain that we have to do with a miracle. Matthew does not say that Peter went, caught the fish, and found the coin in its mouth. In the case of every other miracle recorded in his Gospel Matthew does say that what Jesus commanded did take place--the sea became calm, the leper was cleansed, etc. The silence of Matthew in this case is therefore significant; we have to do, not with a miracle, but with one of Jesus' drastic expressions, which assures the disciple that his heavenly Father will provide him with the money to pay the Temple-tax. And "reason" need not to object to a drastic expression.

But what of the other two miracles? Is there any just cause why reason should boggle at these two, while accepting others? Blackman does not show just cause; he simply asserts that reason cannot accept them. If Jesus is the power of God and the wisdom of God in person (I Cor. 1:24), there is no limit to His mighty works; reason has no criterion by which to distinguish between those miracles which are "possible" for Him and those which are not. A judgment like Blackman's is in the last analysis not an historical judgment at all (at least not if we leave God in history and believe Him to be at work in history); it sounds more like a concession, and a rather arbitrary one, to modern prejudice.

After what has been said, we need only touch briefly on another example. Percy, not the most radical practitioner of the method, decides in his Die Botschaft Jesu (pp. 244-245) that the Ransom-saying which Matthew and Mark attribute to Jesus (Matt. 26:28; Mark 10:45) cannot be a genuine saying of Jesus. He gives two reasons for his view: first, the saying views the mission of Jesus as a whole, from the vantage point of its completion, and is therefore rather the fruit of the Church's reflection on Jesus than something which Jesus might have said in the midst of His mission; secondly, the transition from the idea of ministry to that of giving one's life as a ransom for many is a harsh one, a passing from one figure of speech to another without mediation.

One finds it difficult to take such reasoning seriously. The first argument begs the whole question of what Jesus was and knew Himself to be. Every account that we have of Jesus shows Him going His way to the Cross and beyond the Cross to the Father with set, conscious purpose: He knows what He must do and will do. If we are to accept Percy's judgment, we are forced to say that every evangelist has distorted the picture of Jesus and made of Him something that He in His life was not (which is, in fact, what much historical criticism says concerning the evangelists or of the "traditions" which the evangelists used). The second argument of Percy forgets, or ignores, the fact that Jesus' word is recalling the Servant of the Lord portrayed by Isaiah: the prophecy of Isaiah pictures the Servant as crowning a life of ministry by going voluntarily into death for the deliverance of "the many." That prophecy found its fulfilment in Jesus, and this fulfilment makes the Ransom-saying completely natural on His lips.

Demythologization

In a way, Bultmann's demand that the New Testament must not merely be critically handled and selectively appropriated after the manner of the historical-critical method but must be radically re-interpreted and stripped of its "mythological" dress is the logical outcome of the historical-critical method. Bultmann in demythologizing the New Testament is doing thoroughly and

consistently what the method did piecemeal and rather arbitrarily. He is making the full concession to modern man. We need not, indeed we cannot here, go fully into a discussion of his views. Two points may suffice to indicate his trend. For modern man, Bultmann says, it is self-evident and axiomatic that the human personality is something closed and self-contained; it cannot be invaded from without by force either demonic or divine. It is also self-evident for modern man that history runs its course according to immutable, unchanging laws. You cannot therefore, Bultmann argues, reach modern man with a message, like that of the New Testament, which speaks of the invasion of the personality by demonic or divine powers, and of the intervention of supernatural powers in history. These "mythological" features must be stripped off from the message of the New Testament if that message is to reach and move modern man.

Bultmann believes that these features can be stripped away without loss to the essential message of the New Testament; they are, he says, the transient and outmoded dress of the message, not an essential part of the message itself. They are part of the world-picture which the men of the New Testament shared with their contemporaries, which must indeed be sloughed off if we are to get at the heart of the New Testament. But note what Bultmann has done. He has stripped away, not the first-century conception of man and of history, but two conceptions that underly the whole message of the Bible, without which the message of the Bible simply ceases to have its peculiar meaning. According to the Bible, man is created in the image of God, for converse and communion with God. Man is designed to be "invaded" by God. If man refuses to give God room in his life, his life does not remain empty. It is invaded by the powers of Satan, whether man believes it or not, whether man consciously knows it or not. The life which will not be filled by God becomes empty, swept, and garnished house which invites the hosts of Satan (Matt. 12:43-45). And history, for the Bible, far from running its course according to unalterable laws, is always in the hand of God, under the governance of God. It is the scene of His revelation and the medium of His revelation. The God of the Bible is the God of history, the living God who acts and reacts, who in the Incarnation goes deep into the history and the life of man. Bultmann has broken, not with the world-picture of the Bible but with the God of the Bible as He deals with man.

B. Interpretation as Obedient Response to Revelation.

1. Since the inspired recital is revelation; is the word of God, is personal confrontation with the living God as a present actuality in my life, the interpretation of Scripture is a personal act. It is an act of repentance, faith, and obedience, performed by the interpreter as a baptized and worshiping member of the Church. It involves the grace of complete self-subjection to the word, the grace of a determination to hear the word out on its own terms, the grace of a resolute refusal to apply to it alien norms. It means letting Scripture interpret itself.

2. Since revelation is God's action, personal and present in my life, the problem of applying Scripture in a given case is not merely, or even primarily, an intellectual one. The example of the man Jesus is instructive: His sovereign certainty in the application of Scripture at His temptation is due, not to the fact that He is the Son of God but to the fact that He is Son, simply, a Son for whom sonship spells obedience (Matt. 4:1-11). The native clarity of Scripture becomes clarity for man in a given situation, not merely by way of an intellectually painstaking interpretation of relevant texts and a careful analysis of the situation but rather by way of a life of repentance which makes us submissive sons of God. Our interpretation, too, must be evangelical; it must be an expression of that free sonship which values its freedom as freedom from sin and as freedom for ministry to God and man in the unbroken inclusiveness of love. Paul's prayer is an intercession for interpreters: "It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and discernment" (Phil. 1:9).

We have anticipated much of what should be said here in the previous section, in our discussion of the historical-critical method and of demythologization. We need only point up the positive side of what was said there a bit more as we have done. We have seen what happens when men no longer take off their shoes when they enter upon the holy ground of Scripture, when men are no longer filled with holy awe at the speech of God. And we know that our church is not immune to its seductive mode of thought; we know that these bitter and secular waters are breaking on our shores. What should our reaction be? Shall we become "anti-" something--anti-critical, anti-intellectual? Shall we seal ourselves off from all current problems and current developments? We should not, and we cannot. We cannot, for these waters will be breaking still upon our shores, whatever dikes we build. We should not, for we shall not be entering upon our heritage that way. The God of history has given our church this great gift, that for us total submission to the Scriptures is something self-evident, natural, axiomatic. Such submission is not something that happens of itself; it is not automatic, and cannot be automati-

cally transferred from generation to generation. It must be ever and again revived and won anew in repentance and faith if it is to be had and transmitted.

That is why we have emphasized the personal character of interpretation as response to revelation. It is personal, not in the sense that it is individualistic, self-willed, arbitrary; Scripture itself warns us against such an attitude of interpretation (II Pet. 1:20). It is personal in the sense that it involves the whole person of the baptized man. The attitude of the interpreter is the attitude of the man who has gone into death in Christ and has emerged into the newness of a life lived wholly to God, the man who in proud humility wears the kindly yoke of the Son of God. The whole person of the baptized man includes his intellect, the intellect that God the Creator gave him, the brains that God the Redeemer redeemed. Interpretation as a personal act of the baptized, worshipping man of the church will not be anti-anything, not anti-intellectual (that way is the way of murky enthusiasm), not even anti-critical. It will be "critical" in the true sense of that much-misused word, critical not in the sense of standing in judgment over Scripture but in the sense of being under Scripture in an intelligently-active appropriation of Scripture on its own terms. Critical interpretation will mean simply that we reverently and submissively employ disciplined judgment in determining historical and theological relationships within Scripture, tracing the great contours of the Biblical picture and seeing details in their relation ship to the dominant lines. (The Reformation's distinction between Law and Gospel is a supreme example of genuinely "critical" interpretation.) Then we shall have and keep a genuinely Biblical theology and shall be sovereignly free in appropriating all that is good and true in the work of all interpreters.

If our interpretation of Scripture is thus truly personal, we shall develop a sure touch in the application of Scripture. When Jesus overcame Satan (we too are always overcoming Satan when we apply Scripture to our needs in this world), He was doing what any Israelite might do, what any son of God can do. He was hearing His Father's voice in the Old Testament and obeying it. If, after doing the necessary linguistic and historical work, we still find Scripture hard to understand and to apply, there is one great, fearful question which we must ask ourselves. That question is: Do we want to understand it--or are we afraid to understand it, lest, having understood, we must obey it? The Son has set us free; interpretation is the exercise of that free sonship. It therefore grows on the soil of repentance and works by love.

What is the way to certitude? The way of the interpreter is always through tentative; he never reaches the stage where he has left all problems behind him. But if he gives himself to Scripture, and lets the Spirit take over, he shall again and again leave his problems and his questions below him. He will rise on wings of adoration and thanksgiving to those high regions where God's larks are singing and the whining of the gnats of doubt is heard no more.

Note: References to "Baillie" are to:
Baillie, John, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought.
New York, Columbia University Press, 1956.

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