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New Wine In Old Bottles

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After thirty years of teaching and publishing in the area of the Greek classics, and recently privileged to transfer his attentions to New Testament studies, the author is reminded of the phrase of our Lord, "new wine in old bottles" (Matt. 9:17)—the "new wine being the newer subject of Biblical exegesis, and the "old bottles" representing the older methods of classical scholarship, especially in the nineteenth century. The further I delve into New Testament studies, the more I become aware of the similarity between these two periods of alleged scholarship—nineteenth-century classical scholarship and much of twentieth-century Biblical studies. Please do not misunderstand. The author is *for* scholarship—true, genuine, scientific scholarship. Not everything put in print, however, even in professional journals and books, under the threat of "publish or perish," represents true scholarship. Genuine scholarship is rare. Much of what passed for "scholarship" in the Greek classics in the nineteenth century was based largely on subjective opinion, not objective logical conclusion. The same may be said for much of the alleged "scholarship" in Biblical studies of the twentieth century. One prime difference is that classicists have tried and tested the subjective premises of the nineteenth century and have found many of them wanting, while Biblical exegesis to a large extent is still under the influence of assumptions formerly followed by classicists, but now discarded. To be specific, let us look more closely at an example of nineteenth-century "scholarship."

PLATO'S DIALOGUES AND SUBJECTIVE OPINION

The approach to the dialogues of Plato furnish an excellent example of nineteenth-century *subjective* "scholarship." Since the thirty-five dialogues seemed to some students of Plato to contain discrepancies, varying approaches to similar topics, and differences in style, two questions assumed prime importance in interpreting Plato. First, the genuine dialogues had to be separated from spurious treatises. Second, the genuine writings had to be placed in the chronological order in which they had been written. Only then could authentic statements be placed into a sequential order, to determine the evolution of Plato's thought, variations, and mental development. The logic behind such an approach appeared so scholarly that practically all Platonic scholars of the nineteenth century concentrated on the two questions of the authenticity and of the chronological order of the dialogues.

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That the criteria by which these students of Plato judged the question of authenticity were their subjective opinions rather than scholarly evidence is clear from the results of their varying conclusions. No major disagreement on the genuineness of the Platonic canon appeared before the nineteenth century, when Kant's philosophy gave impetus to the speculative mind. Friedrich Ast, for example, accepted only fourteen of the thirty-five dialogues as genuine, presumptuously regarding as spurious, among other dialogues, such compositions as the *Laws*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Meno*, *Laches*, *Charmides*, and *Lysis*. Socher, by contrast, accepted as authentic twenty-four treatises, including several rejected by Ast (e.g., *Laws*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Meno*), but rejected such basic dialogues as the *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman* (which had been accepted by Ast). K. F. Hermann and Stallbaum concluded that there were twenty-eight genuine compositions of Plato, while Susenich asserted that only twenty-four were authentic. Munk put his stamp of approval on twenty-three, and Ueberweg accepted only twenty-two of the thirty-five compositions, rejecting the *Parmenides*.¹

Subjective judgment was the primary standard on which these scholars based their varying conclusions. They studied Plato, his tenets, his approach to questions and his manner of treatment in a few dialogues, expecting all genuine compositions to have the same characteristics and to betray signs of a mental development. The dialogues which did not in their estimation measure up to these characteristics, or did not fit into a previously conceived plan of Platonic development, they were prone to pronounce spurious. It is only natural that such subjective judgment should produce numerous contradictory views on the genuineness and chronological sequence of basic Platonic works and should lead to the rejection by some scholars of such dialogues as the *Laws*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Parmenides*, and *Statesman*.

PLATO'S DIALOGUES, STYLOMETRY, AND LOGIC

The extremely subjective criteria of nineteenth-century Platonic scholarship have happily been replaced in part by more objective attempts to arrange in sequence the dialogues which are assumed to be authentic. Two basic criteria have been stylometry and the alleged development of Plato's logic. Aristotle states that the *Laws* was Plato's last work; scholars have noted numerous peculiarities of style in this and the other dialogues. Those dialogues which contain stylistic traits most similar to the *Laws*, Plato's last composition, are placed toward the end of his life, while the treatises which differ greatly in stylistic characteristics are put early in Plato's career as an author. Likewise, it is assumed that Plato's principles of logic grew and developed during his career. Some

dialogues contain faint, undeveloped, poor, and even fallacious reasoning, while others exhibit logical arguments which are sound, good, much improved, and equal to a philosopher. The former treatises then must belong to Plato's early career, and the latter are supposedly specimens of Plato's thought after more mature development in the study of logic. ²

Although the criteria of stylometry and logic are more objective than subjective opinion, yet it must be noted that even these criteria are based on two presuppositions—namely, that Plato was not aware of erroneous reasonings in composing early treatises, and that stylistic peculiarities in dialogues have the same implication as in narrative. Both presuppositions fail to recognize that Plato wrote dramatic dialogues in *fact* as well as in *form*. That is, Plato purposely could have varied his style and his logic to suit the characters participating in each dialogue. When Socrates, for example, in the *Meno* discourses with a neophyte in philosophy who has been exposed merely to a few lectures by a skeptical sophist, Gorgias, the style and logic of that dialogue are suited to the personality of the dialogist. Any loose logical arguments on the part of Socrates serve to portray the mental deficiencies of Meno, not the embryonic logic of Plato. Also, stylistic peculiarities could depict purposely the variations in the style of the speakers, rather than a development in the writing ability of the author. Striking evidence is the difference in style, approach, and arguments in the *Republic*, *Laws*, and *Menexenus*, the genuineness of each of which Aristotle substantiates. ³

PAUL'S EPISTLES AND THE TÜBINGEN SCHOOL

Having glanced briefly at some examples of the "old bottles"—the subjective opinions and presuppositions of previous classical scholarship—let us recall that we are not to put "new wine" in these "old bottles"—that is, we are not to employ secular presuppositions in our approach to Biblical studies. If subjective opinion and untested assumptions have been discarded by classical scholars, we are to be wary, lest we be misled by similar suppositions in our study of the Holy Scriptures.

One of the most glaring examples of subjective opinion in Biblical studies was the acceptance by the Tübingen school of only four of Paul's Epistles as genuine—namely, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, and Galatians—rejecting the remaining nine as spurious. These scholars of the nineteenth century based their judgment merely on subjective opinion. They formulate in their minds certain ideas—based on their study of Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, and Galatians—ideas which they labelled Pauline. Since the other letters contained what they considered non-Pauline thoughts, these Epistles they termed

spurious, not withstanding the solid evidence of early church tradition and of textual criticism. I mention the example of the Tübingen school, because the methods and conclusions of such an approach are rejected today by all reliable students of the Bible as most un scholarly, since the basis of their approach was subjective opinion pure and simple.

Or was the basis entirely subjective? If we look a little deeper, we may observe that behind subjective opinion was a basic philosophical assumption—the assumption of the nineteenth century that the key to the understanding of history, philosophy, and religion was development. The development in political theory, the development in scientific progress, the development in the industrial revolution of that time were immense. Hegel, furthermore, had taught that “the movement of human thought followed the dialectic pattern in which a position (thesis) was countered by an opposite position (antithesis) and from an interaction of these two emerged a new insight or aspect of reality (synthesis). Hegel saw in the history of religion the evolution of Spirit in its dialectical apprehension of the divine, from nature religions, through religions of spiritual individuality, to the Absolute Religion, which is Christianity.”⁴ As the assumption of progressive development no doubt lay behind the attempt of the classicists to see a development in Plato’s thought, logic, and style, so the same assumption of Hegelian dialectics influenced the approach to development in early Christianity. Paul, taking the position that the Christian is freed from the Law, represents the *thesis*. James and Peter, taking the opposite position that the Law was permanently valid and an essential element in Christianity, represented the *antithesis*. Apostolic Christianity, therefore, so it was claimed, must be read as a conflict between Pauline and Petrine Christianity, from which conflict emerged in the second century the Old Catholic Church, which represented the *synthesis*, or a harmonization of thesis and antithesis, of Paulinism and Petrinism.

ACTS AND HEGELIAN ASSUMPTIONS

It was against the background of the Hegelian concept of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis that the Acts of the Apostles was viewed as a second-century document which bolstered the synthesis or harmonization of Paulinism and Petrinism. It is true that an impressive list may be drawn up of parallel Petrine and Pauline events in the Acts of the Apostles, which might seem to argue for the Hegelian approach. Both Peter and Paul healed the lame and the ill, both opposed magic, both raised the dead, both were imprisoned and released miraculously, both were beaten by authorities, both warded off attempts to be worshipped, both addressed the Council at Jerusalem, both were encouraged by visions to continue to

preach, both observed Jewish ceremonies, both appeared before the Sanhedrin. But when more objective facts—rather than assumptions—are studied, the conclusion is established that the Acts of the Apostles is a first-century treatise—not a second-century document. I am referring, of course, to the work of Sir William Ramsay, who began his career under the assumption that the Acts of the Apostles was a more or less fictional account with an “axe to grind”—namely, to bolster the synthesis or harmonization of Petrine and Pauline factions. His archaeological research, however, soon convinced him that the objective facts of correct titles for provincial officials and geographical borders point definitely to an earlier composition of the Acts of the Apostles. Harnack is a good example of the influence of facts rather than assumption on the dating of the Acts of the Apostles. He also assumed at first that it was a second-century document, a view which he expressed in a volume dated 1887. Ten years later, however, he designated the period between 78 and 93 A.D. as the date of composition. After another nine years Harnack suggested the year 80 A.D., and finally in 1910 he concluded that the Acts of the Apostles was written before 64 A.D.⁵

ACTS AND TODAY'S SCIENTIFIC AGE

So we see that not only can purely subjective opinion be misleading, but also assumptions derived from contemporary thought may be equally misleading. We again employ the dating of the Acts of the Apostles as case in point. Today we are living in a scientific age. Conclusions are drawn on the basis of the test-tube and the laboratory experiment. Natural laws of physics and chemistry must be adhered to. The assumption that all events must agree with the laws of nature and ordinary human experience has permeated much of current theological thought and Biblical scholarship. The power of predicting future events is, therefore, questioned. Passages in the Old Testament which predict future events, therefore, must have been composed after the event, merely giving a false impression that these events were predicted at an earlier time.

A similar argument is used by many today in dating the Acts of the Apostles. Acts is the second volume of a two-volume work, Luke-Acts. Acts no doubt was written after the Gospel of Luke. But Luke gives a vivid description of the fall of Jerusalem, which occurred in 70 A.D. The Gospel of Luke, therefore, must have been written after the event—that is, after 70 A.D.—and the second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, should not be dated before about 80-85 A.D. The argument is based on the current assumption that the two-volume work of Luke-Acts could not have been composed until after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., mainly because the

power of supernatural prediction is denied to the authors of Scripture—and also is denied to our Lord and Savior, who foretold the destruction of Jerusalem in the Gospels.

We, of course, who accept Jesus as the Son of God, true God as well as true Man, as our Savior who possessed the supernatural power to heal, raise the dead, rise from death Himself—we have no problem in accepting in Jesus the ability to predict future events. But for the moment, let us examine the argument concerning the dating of the Acts of Apostles merely on the human level—even on the assumption that supernatural prediction of future events is impossible. I refer not to a theologian, but to a classicist who has no theological “axe to grind.” The question is discussed by C. H. Rieu in the introduction to the Penguin translation of the Acts of the Apostles as follows:

. . . The date of the writing of Luke's Gospel and the 'Acts' is still usually assessed as in the 80's A.D. The main argument for this late date hinges on the date of the Jewish war with Rome, 66-70, and the sack of Jerusalem by the Romans (70) which terminated it. The argument runs: Mark, the earliest Gospel, gives Jesus' prophecy of disasters in Judaea in general terms (chapter 13), but Luke is far more specific. In Luke 19:43 Jesus is recorded as saying 'Your enemies shall fix a palisade around you', and in 21:20f. 'When you see armies closing round Jerusalem, know that her desolation is at hand. . . Pagan feet will tread Jerusalem till pagan days are done'. Luke, it is argued, altered the version he found in Mark to make the prophecy fit the facts after the event. Therefore Luke wrote his Gospel after 70 A.D., and his second book the 'Acts', after that. The argument is not conclusive. The description of the siege and the sack are in general terms and could apply to almost any siege of any town. Jerusalem had been sacked and the Holy of Holies desecrated four times in the previous 500 years, and it did not need Jesus to prophesy that Jewish intransigence was leading to war with Rome, or who would win.

The same author continues:

The evidence seems to point to the period of Paul's imprisonment in Rome, namely 60-62, for the composition of the 'Acts', and Luke's Gospel too. It is unlikely that Paul was kept in prison for more than two years, and likely that he was either set free or tried and acquitted. In 64 Nero began the dramatic persecution of the Christians for which he is chiefly famous. In 67, it is thought Peter and Paul were martyred. Can anyone who reads the last eight chapters of 'Acts', which describe Paul's capture,

preliminary trials, and journey to Rome for trial by the Emperor, believe that if Luke had known of Paul's trial or acquittal or condemnation he would not have mentioned it? Or that the 'Acts', with its cool defence of Christianity, its calm optimism about it, and its unfeigned approval of Roman rule and law, was written after Nero's lions had been let loose on the Christians? Or that Luke knew about the martyrdom of Peter and Paul when he was writing? Or that he would have refrained from mentioning or hinting at retribution to come on the Jews if he had known about the sack of Jerusalem? It may be taken as likely, then, that the 'Acts' was written when the reader imagines it was written, during the two years of Paul's imprisonment described in the final paragraph, and the date for that we can fix with some certainty as 60-62. And the material for the 'Acts' and the Gospel was probably collected in Judaea during Paul's captivity in Caesarea, 57-59.⁷

THE GOSPELS AND MODERN ASSUMPTIONS

The assumptions of our current scientific age have affected also the approach to the accounts of the life of our Lord which constitute the Gospels. It is assumed by many twentieth-century students of the New Testament that historical reality must be understood only in terms of unbroken historical causality. All ideas of supernatural acts—not only the predictive power of Christ, but also His real incarnation, virgin birth, miracles, bodily resurrection, etc.—are *ipso facto* unhistorical, i.e., mythological. The Gospels, therefore, present a theological picture of Jesus that cannot be historical, but must be mythological. It is the function of the student of the New Testament to "demythologize" the Gospel accounts—to ascertain the theological truths by separating the mythological additions.

The argument of many current critics may be summarized briefly. The death of Christ occurred at approximately 30 A.D. The Gospels, which allude to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., must have been written some time after 70 A.D.—possibly as late as 80-85 A.D. During the intervening fifty years the historical Jesus became "mythologized." That is, the words and deeds of Christ were told and retold numerous times. In the retelling of these events the historical facts gradually became embellished, changed, and distorted. Additions were made to historical fact. The Gospels, therefore, represent the "mythologized" Christ. The Gospels are a portrayal not of the historical Jesus, but rather of the faith of the church about fifty years after the death of Jesus. The Gospels; then, include much of "myth," of non-historical additions—yet these additions contain theological truths.

Two accounts in the Gospels may serve as illustrations. At the baptism of Jesus the Gospels tell of the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and the sounding of a voice from heaven declaring: "This is my beloved Son". According to many current interpreters, the Gospels do not relate historical facts at this point, but additional embellishment by the early church. These interpreters would "demythologize" the Gospel accounts by asserting that the appearance of a dove and the voice from heaven are merely later distortions added through the telling and retelling of the event of Jesus' baptism. Yet, they would hasten to add, that the mythologized account is true in that it teaches a theological truth, although not historical facts. The theological truth taught in the embellished version of the baptism in the Gospels is that Jesus is the chosen One, the Anointed One, whom God has picked to reveal His will to man.

Another account of interest in this connection is the transfiguration. Our Gospels relate that Jesus took Peter, James, and John to a mountain and that there appeared to them Moses and Elijah. Again, numerous current interpreters of the New Testament claim that the Gospels do not present historical facts here; for the details in the account of the transfiguration as recorded in the Gospels do not square with the knowledge and assumptions of our scientific age. The appearance of Moses and Elijah, these moderns would claim, in an additional embellishment which resulted from the telling and re-telling of a historical incident. Yet, they would hasten to add, the mythological embellishment teaches a theological truth—namely, that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament Law, which is represented by Moses, and the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophets, which is symbolized by Elijah.

PLATO AND MYTH

This use of myth as a form of presenting truth, although not historical fact, goes back to Plato. Since Plato held to a dualistic world—a world of eternal, unchanging, perfect Forms or Ideas beyond and above the world of the senses—it is only natural that myth plays an extraordinary role in his dialogues. For Plato myths were symbolic of the reality existing beyond the perceptive world. Plato's myths are the product of great imaginative and inventive power, which both fuses traditional elements to create new philosophical and mythical statements, and also produces completely new mythical constructs as being the only adequate means to express true thoughts. Plato uses reason (*logos*) as the dialectical presentation of thought, and myth (*mythos*) as the illustration of the metaphysical. Myth, to Plato, carries the arguments of reason beyond the frontiers of conceptual knowledge. This distinctive union of reason and myth in Plato is linked with the fact that his philosophy is a

doctrine of salvation—the destiny of the human soul. Plato, to be sure, presents *rational* arguments for the immortality of the soul in dialogues such as the *Phaedo*. But he also depends largely on myth—the myth of Er in the *Republic*, the myth of creation in the *Timaeus*, the myth of the tripartite soul in the *Phaedrus*—to illustrate philosophical truths which are beyond the realm of logical proof.

Plato's use of myth to carry the arguments of reason beyond the frontiers of conceptual knowledge may be seen, for example, in the myth of Er at the conclusion of the *Republic*. The soul of Er, a man who has been killed in battle, is transported to a meadow, where he sees a gap in the earth leading downward, and a corresponding gap in the heavens above. Souls of individuals lately deceased are departing through the two gaps, after judgment has been passed on them, to receive their respective punishments or rewards. There are also two similar gaps from which other souls are returning either from heaven or from Hades, after a period of rewards or punishments, to choose a type of life for their next existence on earth. Er observed these souls making their choice and then passing on to a new birth, to a juncture with a new physical body, before he is allowed to return to life and to report his experience. This myth is not meant to represent historical fact, as if there ever were a person Er, who had such an experience. Plato employs the technique of the myth to teach truths which are beyond the realm of conceptual knowledge—such as the immortality of the soul, rewards and punishments for the good and evil respectively after death, personal responsibility for human actions in contrast to any fatalistic determinism.

NEW TESTAMENT AND MYTH

Other ancient authors, in addition to Plato, employed myth in various ways. Myth was used by the Greek poets such as Homer and Hesiod—largely for the enhancement of their poems. It was used in the mystery religions to bolster the faith of the adherents. It was used for allegorical reinterpretation by some Stoics. There existed also cases of frivolous mockery, criticism, and rejection of the use of myth on ethical and rational grounds. But there is no fundamental repudiation on religious grounds until we come to the New Testament.

In the New Testament there are five occurrences of the noun *mythos*—four in the Pastoral Epistles and one in 2 Peter. In each case the term occurs in a negative statement, with complete repudiation of *mythos*. It is the means and mark of an alien proclamation, especially of errors combatted in the Pastoral Epistles. The *mythoi* are invented stories or fables destitute of truth. Here are the five passages:

1 Timothy 1:4, "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith."

1 Timothy 4:7, "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness."

2 Timothy 4:3-4, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

Titus 1:14, "Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth."

2 Peter 1:16, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty."

Note the derogatory descriptions of myth—or, as translated in the King James' Version, fables—they are classified with endless genealogies, described as profane and old wives' fables, as opposed to sound doctrine and truth, as Jewish fables that turn from the truth, and as cunningly devised or invented.

It is highly probable that these myths or fables referred to in the Pastoral Epistles and in 2 Peter derived from an early form of Gnosticism which flourished on the soil of Hellenistic Jewish Christianity. Of fundamental significance is the antithesis between myth and truth. Also in Philo and in Origen myth is the direct opposite of truth.⁸ In general, there can be no doubt that the church in every age has insisted that there can be no relation between the *Logos* of the New Testament and myth. Myth as such has no place on Biblical soil, either as a direct impartation of religious truths or as symbol. Myth is not a form of religious communication. In the Bible we have from first to last the account and narration of facts, plus revealed interpretation of these facts. The essential theme is the same throughout, namely, what God says and what God does; neither of these things is myth, a symbol of truth. To Plato myth may be a symbol of eternal verities which are independent of all history. The central symbol of the Gospel, however, is the Cross, and this embodies a hard and unromantic historical reality. No myth can be interpreted into or imposed upon this symbol in any form, for the *logos* of the Cross would be made of no effect (1 Cor. 1:17). Nor can this

symbol be separated from its personal representative or historical setting, for without Christ at Golgotha the cross is indeed *kenos mythos*, a meaningless symbol or pagan sign.

Is there another way to make myth at home in the Biblical world? This question has to be faced in view of the current situation in Biblical studies. In spite of the facts adduced above, there have been and are many attempts to introduce myth into Christian terminology as something opposed to historical truth and yet containing positive value. Even when myth is used positively it tends to imply merely human interpretation.

MYTH IN CURRENT CLASSICAL STUDY

The question remains as to why the term "myth" was chosen for a theory in New Testament studies, although this term is so fraught with anti-Biblical connotations both in the New Testament and in early church history. A ready answer might be Plato's use of myth as a description of eternal verities which are beyond the concepts and rational proof of the material world of perception. The parallelism between Plato's use of myth and Bultmann's contention of seeing theological truth, but not necessarily historical mundane fact, in the Gospels may have played a part—even a substantial part—in the selection of the terms "myth," "demythologizing," etc. But one wonders whether another element did not play an extremely large part in the use of the term "myth" in recent New Testament studies. I am referring to the use of the term "myth" among current students of Greek mythology.

Students of Greek mythology distinguish three general types of stories, largely according to their development. One type is labelled *saga*, from the Scandinavian word for "tale" or "story." These stories supposedly originated with historical events. They are the results of legends developed around a historical person or event. Aeolus, for example, became in Greek mythology a character who controlled the winds with the power to soothe or excite them according to his pleasure. The origin of Aeolus, according to students of mythology, was probably a historical character who understood the techniques of sailing and who could tell the changes of weather and winds from the signs of the atmosphere. Through the telling and re-telling of his unusual accomplishments, the historical character of ages past soon developed into a mythological character who controlled, and not merely foretold, the weather. Another example of *saga*, of legend growing up around a historical event, is the Trojan War. There did occur in history a conflict between the Greeks and a town on the Dardanelles. This conflict was apparently due to economic causes—the attempt by Troy to assess a tax or tribute on all Greek ships passing through the Dardanelles. Later romanticism, however, altered

the economic cause of the war into a struggle over the return of a beautiful woman, Helen, the wife of Menelaus.

A second type of mythological story is labelled *märchen*, from the German word meaning "fairy tale." Its sole purpose is to amuse or entertain. It did not develop from any historical person or event. It is a story pure and simple and makes no pretense at being anything else. *Märchen* would be the imaginative accounts of giants, witches, dragons, nymphs, etc. that inhabit forests, seas, and rivers. Parallels in modern mythology would be the fairy tales of Baron von Münchhausen.

There is also a third type of mythological story, which is called *myth proper*. It attempts to *explain* a name, a custom, or to *teach* a philosophical truth. The account of Icarus, for example, who escaped from Crete through the use of wings supplied by his father Daedalus—and then unfortunately fell into a sea and drowned—explains and accounts for the late name of that sea—the Icarian Sea. Another example of *myth proper* is the story of Cronus, the father of Zeus. Cronus had dethroned his father, Ouranus, as king of the gods and was told that some day he would be dethroned by one of his offspring. To avoid such a fate Cronus decided to devour each offspring of his at birth—and so he did devour, or swallow, each of his first five offspring—Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, and Poseidon—until he was tricked at the birth of his sixth offspring Zeus. According to many current students of mythology, this story is a *myth proper* in that it serves to teach a truth—although the events are not historical truth. The name Cronus means time. So the story of Cronus devouring his offspring teaches the philosophical truth that time destroys whatever it brings into existence. It is this use of "myth," as an explanation or a mode of teaching truth, which is parallel to the use of the terms "myth" and "demythologizing" in New Testament studies—a form conveying a theological truth, but not necessarily historical fact.

NEW WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

"New wine in old bottles"—our Savior advises against this combination, whether the "old bottles" are subjective opinions, or assumptions of scholarship supposedly based on contemporary scientific and rational premises. Nor are we to equate Biblical accounts with myth, whether myth is based on Plato's use of the term as beyond the *logos* of logical human narrative, or derives from the use of the term by current students of Greek mythology as a mode of teaching truth, but not historical fact. For, while Plato views *mythos* as on a higher plane than *logos*, many contemporary New Testament scholars regard *mythos* as a *distortion* of the *Logos*, the Word that became flesh. Jesus advises, not "new wine in old bottles,"

but "new wine in new bottles." For we have a new *Logos*—a Savior who, in addition to His work as our Redeemer, prepared His disciples to carry on the work of the kingdom of God, and who in His high-priestly prayer thought of all future generations in God's kingdom—including us of the late twentieth century—when He said: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them who shall believe on me through their *logos*," i.e., their word (John 17:20). The *Logos*, Christ, has given us the *logos* of the apostles and prophets, their written word, our Scriptures, which is inspired truth—not merely containing truth, or teaching truth through myth. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). The new *Logos*, Christ, is comprehended and comprehensible only through the Biblical *logos*, inspired Scripture, which contains fact, not mythological fiction, and which harmonizes with true, genuine, unbiased scholarship.

The basic ingredient of "new wine in new bottles" —the reverent approach to Scripture as God's holy Word—is and must remain the Biblical teaching of inspiration. But inspiration, critics will maintain, is a matter of faith and not of history. These critics wish to place faith and history in opposite categories. Whatever, for example, in the Gospels speaks to Christian faith, they claim cannot be historically true, but must represent merely the faith of the church a generation after Jesus' death when the synoptic Gospels were composed. This assumption, however, does not stand the test of genuine scholarship. Let us in conclusion bring out several points of genuine scholarship as applied to the accounts of the synoptic Gospels.

CONCLUSION

The idea that faith and history are antithetical is a false assumption alien to true historiography. True history is not a mere chronicle of facts, dates, events, and persons. Most historians today admit that all good history is *interpreted* history. History always tries to understand the meaning of the events. The fact that a writer has a viewpoint does not mean that he is a poor historian and distorts the facts to support his interpretation. An unbeliever could not have written a gospel. He could report Jesus' words and deeds, but he would do so in a context of doubt and scepticism that would view Jesus either as a charlatan or as a deranged person. Only a believer could write a gospel which presents the good news of what God has done in Jesus. So the current trend to place faith and history in opposite categories is a false assumption, not substantiated by genuine scholarship.

Another false assumption of many current critics is that the Gospels represent a fourth stage in development—not (1) the historical Jesus, not (2) the early Jewish church, not (3) the

Hellenistic Jewish church, but (4) the Hellenistic Gentile church. Again, these alleged stages do not emerge clearly from our historical sources, but are the result of a methodology based on a set of presuppositions as to how history must have unfolded. This methodology does not take into account the fact that the Gospel tradition throughout its entire life was under the control of eyewitnesses who had seen and heard Jesus (1 Cor. 15:6). The Gospels assumed written form within about a generation after Jesus' death, when eyewitnesses were still in the church. The controlling influence of eyewitnesses is a fact of genuine scholarship that is too often ignored by many current critics.

As can be substantiated by genuine scholarship, the Gospels contain many evidences that the tradition was not completely recast by the faith of the early church, but does embody sound historical truth. Although in the early church, for example, the title "Christ" soon became a proper name for Jesus, in the synoptic Gospels Jesus avoided the title "Messiah" or "Christ." His favorite designation for himself was "the Son of Man," a title which apparently was not picked up by the early church. Again, while the early church called Jesus "the Son of God," in the synoptic Gospels Jesus does not attribute this title to Himself, but only the veiled term, "the Son." Also, Jesus was called the "Servant" (*pais*) in the early church (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:25, 30), but this usage was not read back into the synoptic Gospels. Other evidence in addition to the varied terms for Jesus likewise substantiates the view that the Gospel tradition is historically sound and not the creation of early Christian theology. I refer to the fact that the synoptic Gospels have little to say about the meaning of Jesus' death, although the redemptive meaning of Jesus' death was a central theological tenet in the early church. I refer to the fact that the Lord's Prayer in both Matthew and Luke contains no word that is uniquely Christian. I refer to the fact that the Sermon on the Mount has not a word about the grace of God. I refer to the fact that the synoptic Gospels do not attempt to answer one of the most pressing issues in the early church—the terms under which Gentiles might enter the church.

Genuine scholarship, based upon such facts, does not reject the Biblical portrait of Jesus in favor of a hypothetical historical Jesus; genuine scholarship rather substantiates the Gospel portrait as basically sound and in harmony with the Scriptural teaching of inspiration. Genuine scholarship merely substantiates, however; it does not prove. For we are dealing with "new wine in new bottles"—the reverent approach to Scripture as God's holy Word. Our faith, while merely substantiated by genuine scholarship, is in the final analysis the divine work of the Holy Spirit. It can come only by hearing,

and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). The *Logos*, the Word that became flesh, is revealed to us through the *logos* of the apostles and prophets.