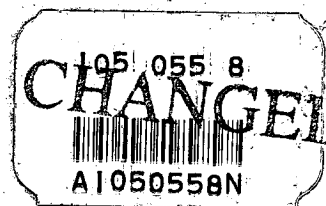


THE CONCEPT OF TIME
IN
THE NEW TESTAMENT

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"THE CONCEPT OF TIME
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT"

Introduction

When trying to decide upon a B.D. thesis subject, I was in search of that which by its very nature was fundamental. It can be argued that much more basic to one's theological appreciation is the study of sin and grace. Nevertheless, rather than go over ground that has been covered explicitly by various other students, this undertaking should prove equally desirous and rewarding.

My primary concern is not Biblical research but theological understanding and with this assume the right to bring all my past years of study to bear upon this undertaking. Thus I would withstand the charge that my thinking has been more influenced by present day theological writings rather than actual Biblical investigation. Nevertheless, I have tried to bring my thinking in line with that of the Protestant Reformed strand of the Christian Church, for it, to my knowledge, is true to the Biblical revelation.

More than one point of departure can be used in any field of historical study, i.e. present, the earliest period known and the centre. For the Christian Church the cross not only is centre but must remain central. For us it is the centre of man's history and thereby gives it meaning and illumination. The task of theology is to present and explain the Gospel, the proclamation. Always the question of authority is vital. With what authority do we and can

we speak? The first is the Bible; second - human reason; third - the history of the Church; fourth - the Holy Spirit. (Even though I have placed the Holy Spirit last in order, He is and must remain primary, for without His witness our witness is uncertain and without His initiative and creative activity we have no proclamation.) This poses the question of the problem of theology and it is with that that I wish to deal now.

Chapter I

The Problem of Theology

More than one factor is involved in one's particular theology. Some of these are implicit while others are explicit. Some influences are conscious; others are unconscious. C. C. McGowan has suggested five considerations in the writing of a history of Jesus Christ. These, I think, are basic considerations for an adequate theology.

- "(1) The concept of the nature of religion, i. e. the philosophy of religion, adopted by each scholar or writer.
- (2) His conception of the nature of history, i. e. his philosophy of history.
- (3) His conception of critical method, i. e. how does he sift his sources so as to separate fact from fiction?
- (4) His rules of interpretation, i. e. how does he seek to acquire a proper understanding and appreciation of his facts? and
- (5) His methods of reconstruction, i. e. the manner in which his historical imagination uses his documents and the facts elicited from them to

recover the best possible approximation to the original, full-flowing current of experience." (i)

In the first consideration there are two issues involved, that of philosophy and that of religion. Usually some kind of philosophic position explicitly and implicitly is assumed in the presentation of a theology. The study of "time" being on the borderline between philosophy and theology would lend itself very easily to a philosophic explication. Nevertheless I wish to treat it directing the investigation towards the centre of theology leaving the philosophy implicit rather than explicit. As Nels Ferre has pointed out, "The work of the philosophy of religion, moreover, is not to bring out the implications of one religion; philosophy is inclusive. Nor is it to find a common denominator among the actual religions; that would be to deny the full claims of religion because of man's general failure to accept them and to embody them either in system or in life. The philosophy of religion is, rather, concerned with all the realms of religion from the point of view of rational knowledge, as far as that can possibly go." (ii) Valuable and necessary as such an undertaking is, yet I deem it of secondary importance because I see Christianity as the religion of revelation which is its deviating and distinctive and fulfilling characteristic among the living religions of mankind. A later portion of the thesis is devoted to revelation which will make clear what is meant in the

(i) C.C. McCowan - "The Search for the Real Jesus"
New York. Charles Scribner's Sons 1940 (p. 121)

(ii) Nels F.S. Ferre - "Faith and Reason"
New York. Harper & Brothers 1946 (p. 137)

above statement.

The argument between philosophy and theology is a very old one. Philosophers of the naturalistic bent part company with theology and there does not seem to be any solution for the philosophers maintain the theologians have no autonomous discipline. This philosophy uses the analytic method.

A much more lenient philosophy is the synoptic approach which tries to include the claims of religious faith within its own purview. Faith is only one among several ways of knowing God. It accords God's self-disclosure a subordinate position, alongside other aspects of human experience, - a distortion if not a renunciation of the claims of faith. For if the revelation, the self-disclosure of God, is authentic then we must adjust our philosophy to it and not vice versa.

How can theology and philosophy be brought together from within the Christian standpoint, that is with revelation as the key to the discipline? Revelation here is understood in the sense in which Richard Niebuhr speaks of it in his book, "The Meaning of Revelation." By making revelation central and keeping it thus the above understanding as an initial approach is discredited. Theism, by this I mean the general approach of the men studied, resents this for it holds the conviction that every aspect of human experience - religious, ethical, aesthetic and scientific - can be knit together into a harmonious whole because a unifying and intelligible principle runs through them all. The issue lies in what is to be the

final court of appeal - this universal principle which the philosopher has gotten hold of, or the unique event wherein God discloses himself in the Person of Christ? We can regard the Incarnation as one instance, perhaps a supremely illuminating instance, of some principle which runs through the whole of creation and is generally knowable. But if it is regarded as bringing into the world something not otherwise found there, all our principles must be judged in its light. Either redemption is from within the world or it is brought from without. The two are not merely complementary ways of reaching the same truth nor can we have it both ways at once.

The theistic philosopher resents being charged with concluding an impersonal God. His teleological principle and hierarchy of values are manifestations of the activity of a personal Deity. Why then is the theologian's insistence on revelation and divine initiative not satisfied? The usual answer has been that this deals with God's work and not Himself. The theist replies that we can know something about even a person by observing his activity - and so we can; but one cannot know the inner secrets of his personality unless he chooses to communicate them by a directly spoken word. It is the difference between knowing God as he sustains and orders the world and knowing him as he addresses the individual directly in Jesus Christ. This is the "I - Thou" relationship which when genuine transcends space and time, thus Christ becomes not only a figure of history of about the year one but is our con-

temporary. Our knowledge of God's work in nature and conscience must inevitably be interpreted in the light of our knowledge of what he is, as directly disclosed in his Word.

The theistic philosopher reaches the idea of a transcendent God mainly by inference from nature, history and conscience. The validity of this inference is questionable. Modern theistic arguments frequently rest upon an assumed identity between what is highest in human nature and what is divine. This is an opposite approach to that of where revelation is the basis and our knowledge through nature, history and conscience is made regulative to it. Here again we cannot have both ways at once, the two methods are not merely complementary, we must choose.

Those who have tried to mediate these two views put forth a moral argument. It is in man at his best that God reveals himself most fully. The Incarnation is Jesus Christ in highest human goodness as the real meeting between God and the world. The divinity of Christ is upheld or else we deny that God actively reveals himself most fully in such human goodness. God claims us in our moral values. Thus Christian experience of faith is something received as well as sought; something given in a Person instead of some principle or proposition arrived at merely by inference. Here God's transcendence is appealed to in seeking to interpret a power already resident in the world instead of being regarded as bringing into the world a power not otherwise possessed by its creatures anywhere. A contrast between nature and spirit has been substituted

for the contrast between all creation, including man, and God.

But this concept of God as either made in our highest ideal or the true God as revealed in Jesus Christ is a fake antithesis. The antithesis hides the real point. So it may be argued - either similar to man's highest ideals or a god who is less than perfectly moral. What vagueness in "man's highest ideals"! We here use our conception of conscience as a standard and interpret the moral perfection of Christ as he does or does not conform. Is man really that sound in moral intuition? We must here overlook the relativity of our ethical judgments and the prudential character of the motives from which many of them spring.

If we add "as fulfilled in Christ" then His life becomes the standard and ours are being judged. Nor is His life and teaching then the expression of the race conscience; even it is judged by Him. Contrast back with nature and spirit with man's natural morality on side of creation and God's self-revelation, including his ethical demands, on the other side. By this we must show the relevance of the Christian revelation to natural morality instead of isolating each. It is important to stress the fact that insofar as our ethical judgments are right they do conform to God's will. Here philosophical theism and Christian theology are in accord. Philosophical theism goes wrong in seeking to interpret God's will and the Deity of Christ in terms of human morality instead of judging the relative worth of every human ethical system in terms of its relation to the absolute ethical claim of God as revealed in Christ.

This does not mean that "God's revelation of His will and right ethical judgment are seen to be correlative." The ethical ideals reached by man are not the best clue to the nature of God. Rather the ethical obligation is a divine imperative which man cannot fulfil by simple moral effort. The revelation of God does not say we are morally sound but that we are defective, enslaved and in need of salvation. In Christ's atonement God does for man what man cannot do for himself, making available for the race the right relationship with God and victory over sin. "But if man cannot so transcend his own selfishness by an act of will as to meet the demands of perfect love, how can a righteous God break through this encircling selfishness, destroy the power of sin, and restore man to fellowship? Certainly not by merely turning a blind or indulgent eye toward his shortcomings. And yet if he forgives only to the extent that one responds to the example of Christ, man is left in the despair of trying to do the impossible and Christianity is only another form of bondage to the law." (1)

But Christianity claims for man that he can enter now into that fellowship which his own moral 'imperfection' does not merit. The trust in God's love through this is the Christian's source of moral liberation and improvement.

If the will of God is perfectly revealed in Christ, whose interpretation is right? We cannot answer this by turning back to the world but rather to God's Word. If theology's subject matter

(1) D.E. Roberts - "Is a Christian Philosophy of Religion a Contradiction in Terms"
Journal of Religion, Vol. 19, 1939.

is real at all it is not arbitrary to maintain that the only corrective for bad theology is to come into a better relationship to its subject matter. "But revelation and reconciliation go together. That is why knowledge of God as taking the initiative is not simply available to anyone who happens to be interested in the matter but falls within the act of being confronted and transformed by him." (1)

Thus the only basis for a Christian philosophy is one which makes its own ultimate criterion identical with that of faith. If revelation is self-authenticating as it is then a Christian philosophy can criticize itself. This is in fact the antithesis between general and specific revelation. It is the communication through the media of nature and conscience and communion where God speaks directly in his Incarnate Word. The correct way to reconcile these two is to make the latter regulative for the former and not vice versa or to obliterate the distinction between them. "If the Christian gospel is true it contains the fulfilment of the philosophic quest. If the meaning of life can only be understood in terms of the relation of the world to a transcendent God, then a philosophy which confines itself to a study of this world may be true as far as it goes, but it remains incomplete. It can postulate what sort of God must be at work in the world, if there be a God; it can formulate what the general character of his ethical demands must be if he possesses a will of absolute goodness. But what such a philosophy can only state hypothetically, belief in the Incarnation

(1) *ibid* (p. 127)

makes categorical. This God after whom the mind seeks and the heart yearns has come to mankind. He has entered history and united himself with a life of perfect human obedience and love. Such a gospel illuminates everything the philosopher has been studying, because it provides him with the needful clue for the furtherance of his task; it can enable him to transform his discipline from a collection of intellectual puzzles into a way of life." (i)

In his discussion of the relation of philosophy to theology, Dr. Ferre implies that philosophy is objective while theology is subjective. "We end this chapter by saying that we shall surely not get to the truth that saves if we neglect either the full interpretation of fact or the full interpretation of faith. The former is the task of philosophy; the latter of theology." (ii) Here I think Dr. Ferre has fallen prey to that antithesis which has hounded the Church down through the centuries, i.e. the Object-Subject antithesis. By ascribing the objective interpretation to philosophy and leaving the subjective as theology does not solve our problem. Nor is it right to confuse the terms "subjective" and "existential" because they are so different. Subjective time is the time within us. Existential time is that time within which we are. Thus we must find a more adequate basis.

In the understanding of history, I wish to point out at this time that I agree with the understanding that C. H. Dodds has in that the facts plus the interpretation equals the event. As for

(i) *ibid* (p. 131)
(ii) *ibid* (p. 137)

the establishment of the facts of the faith-history, I shall deal with that later when I consider the work of R. Bultmann. The interpretation of history is done by means of accepting a principle outside of history 'revelation' rather than 'reason' within history which itself needs explaining.

My principle of interpretation refers back to a previous paragraph where we touched on the Objective-Subjective antithesis. Dr. Emil Brunner who has made a study of how the Church has fallen prey to this fallacy says, "For this reason it is the urgent imperative of the hour to search, by means of reflection about the Word of God itself, for this 'beyond' of Objectivism and Subjectivism which is the secret of true Christian faith. Quite naturally the first thought is that the truth must be somewhere in the middle, like the arithmetical mean between two ultimate values. The task for the exponent of Objectivism, as of Subjectivism, according to this view, would be for each to help the other toward a true evaluation and thereby to a correct delimitation of his own position: this is the expedient of mediation. But one glance at history, specifically at the Reformation, makes this way appear like a feeble compromise which only obscures the real problem but does not solve it. There is no right middle way between Objectivism and Subjectivism: there is no correct mean between two errors." (1) By this, Dr. Brunner does not eliminate either the subjective or objective element in faith. Both are vital and both are necessary but as a

(1) Emil Brunner - "The Divine-Human Encounter"
tr. Amandus W. Loos. Philadelphia. The Westminster Press
1943 (p. 40)

method of interpretation either alone or together they prove to be false. In solution to this problem he suggests the "epistemological" principle of the Reformers which was a dialectic: "that is, its form of expression was never the use of one concept, but always two logically contradictory ones; the Word of God in the Bible and the witness of the Holy Spirit, but these understood and experienced, not as a duality, but as a unity. (1)

In the method of reconstruction, I am following the procedure of making revelation the norm, and guiding principle for all other doctrines of the faith, but for my understanding of revelation itself I aim to approach it through the understanding of time. This procedure involves me in a bit of doubling back which I think is necessary, for, as Kierkegaard has pointed out, one cannot reason out love before experiencing its power. (11)

My thesis is that in the New Testament we have united in one dynamic, vital, living sense the three concepts of time which we all know, the existential, the chronological and the cosmological. The inter-relatedness of these three modes of existence in one overcomes the contradiction in which nature, man and the individual find themselves and thus we find here the intent of Creation fulfilled and the new age begun.

(1) *ibid* (p.29)

(11) Kierkegaard, S. - "Philosophic Fragments"
Princeton University Press, 1946 (Intro. p.24)

Chapter II

The Problem of Time

To every man there openeth,
A Way, and Ways and a Way,
And the High Soul climbs the High Way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth,
A High Way, and a Low,
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go. (1)

Toward the last phase of the recent World War the note of reconstruction was sounded time and again. Peoples in Europe longed for that day when eventually they would be free to remould and reconstitute their civilization. On this side of the water we too were awakened to the awful fact that "it is not all gold that glitters" and that in spite of our favoured economic position there was much to be desired in respect to a healthy civilization. The element of self-criticism which was forced upon us in certain areas has spread to all areas of life. It is time now for constructive thinking all around. Not only is there wide longing and deep need for it. There is also good chance for it. Forever we must guard against the temptation to take unhealthy short-cuts. This usually is more tempting to youth than to the mature thinker. It is very hard for Youth to study while Rome burns. Like the race-horse that has succeeded in his first trial run, he chafes at the bit in anticipation of that great day when he will run in the King's

(1) John Oxenham, 1852-1941.

Plate, fretting vehemently because he has to run so many minor races first and forever be engaged in mere practice. Now that we have had a considerable time to take stock, we come to the conclusion that the crisis of our day is a religious crisis. But why? The main reason for this is because it is religion that deals with the problem of meaning. "The word 'meaning', as we ordinarily use it, has two senses: one abstract, the other concrete; one formulable in terms of ideas, the other even partly expressible only in terms of art or action. In the first sense, 'meaning' is truth understood; in the second it is reality experienced." (1)

The dispassionate search for truth must be continually carried on but alongside of it and undergirding it must be an increase of one's own faith. The latter is also uniquely imperative because we can never approach the Christian faith as completely convinced believers so we must try to increase our own faith. At the same time we are impelled to attempt to more adequately understand the reality experienced and understanding must try to communicate it to our fellow man. For unless we can express what we know we only half know it. What Dr. Minear has said about the interpretation of Biblical eschatology applies well to the interpretation of the Biblical faith as such. "It is a problem not of modernization but of communication; communication, not across the barriers of language but across the barriers between one structure of experience and another. Or to use pedantic jargon, the terminological problem arises out of an epistemological problem, and the latter arises out

(1) John Knox - "Christ the Lord"
Chicago, Willert, Clark & Co. 1945 (p. 1)

of an ontological problem." (i)

But aside from dealing with the problem of meaning, the Christian faith gives meaning to existence. "Our life is 'superficial', without depth or meaning, so long as it does not have its roots in eternity. Either it has eternal significance or it has no significance at all. Temporal sense is nonsense. The Bible permits us to see this eternal depth; 'thine eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.... Deep, deep are the roots of our life. Far beyond all temporal visibility it roots in the divine invisibility, in the eternal 'counsels'." (ii)

Today we are unusually ready for the positive approach. In science, philosophy and religion alike past methods and conclusions are being questioned. Honest and competent thinkers in all fields realize how self-defeating the dogmatic attitude is. New and misspent knowledge join insistently to demand that we criticize each field first of all from within itself, and that then we criticize our criticisms. "To acquiesce in discrepancy is destructive of candour, and of more cleanliness." (iii)

We all need to stop, look and listen, for something is wrong with our way of living. We must do a little fighting for time to accomplish the important things and learn to cast out of

- (i) Journal of Religion, Vol. 28, July 1948. No. 3 (p. 182)
Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- (ii) E. Brunner - "Our Faith"
Student Christian Movement Press Ltd., London 1936
- (iii) A. N. Whitehead - "Science and the Modern World"
The Macmillan Co. New York 1925 (p. 265)

our lives the cluttering mass of unimportant activities that have attached themselves to us. It will do us all good to be a little more discriminating in allocating our hours. The church can call out to the adult members of its congregation: "Come to the church for the general education you need so sorely. Come back for a little while to the school and in the light of your mature experience seek out again the fundamental principles and values of life. Review in an orderly way the sum of human knowledge as it exists today. Free yourselves from the smothering mass of disconnected, ephemeral information which is poured over you by modern communication - the printing press, the telephone and telegraph, the radio and the motion picture. Re-educate yourselves directly to the point of discriminating with knowledge, and with judgment based on knowledge, between false and true, good and bad." (1)

Re-examination is needed from all phases of our existence. We need an honest and thorough re-examination of how we know, what we know, and why we know, and a more constructive and co-operative thinking all around, because of the confusion, the moral weakness, the misguided energies and the revolting destruction of our kind of civilization. Two basic needs for the modern world are adequate authority and intrinsic motivation.

But apart from meaning for life, authority and motivation there is also another factor that justifies our turning to the "Pre-exilic Prophets and the Religion of their day" and that is the question of "time".

(1) The Christian Century, December 17, 1947 (p. 1553)

The crisis of our time has resulted, among other things, in an investigation of the meaning of history. Time is the central category in the description and analysis of the historical process. Everyone has some concept of time whether articulate or not. And in that concept is implied his philosophy of history. It characterizes the particular culture in which it prevails and is an integral part of the genius of that culture. In our day philosophers have rejected the conventional ideas of time. The re-examination of history and a new interest in eschatology have had important repercussions in concepts of time.

For us as Christians the interest in time is vital and perennial because our faith springs from the unique activity of God within the historical process. The continuing reality of the Incarnation is testified to by individual and social experiences such as the first glimpse of the World Church at a National S.C.M. Council or a Mid-term International Conference. The Eucumenical Movement has been termed as the greatest event in our time - and so it is in many ways. History is important to us not only because God acts within it but also because history becomes meaningful only in the light of the Incarnation, when seen within the larger perspective of God's creative purposes. In the Incarnation we realize that the source, meaning, direction and goal of history lies beyond history. So our hope is the Kingdom of God, that end-time wherein God's reign will be fully established. By viewing each moment in the perspective of the purpose of Him who is Alpha and Omega it

takes on rare significance. Like the miles are measured and tallied by the racing automobile's speedometer, so each moment for the Christian is measured by the yardstick of Eternity and recorded in "The Book". Each moment is an irretrievable opportunity continuously arriving on the threshold of consciousness like the steps of an endless escalator - never to return. So for the Christian, because his faith is by nature eschatological he is impelled repeatedly to examine the presuppositions of his view of history. And we are forced to raise the insoluble but inescapable question: "What is time?"

Our age is marked by a great consciousness of time. We begin classes a certain hour each morning; a warning bell tells us the period is over. For years we have been disciplined in beginning school at 9 a.m. - lunch at 12 noon, resume classes at 1 p.m. and retire at 3:30 (unless misdemeanours caused "staying in after school") with a 15 minute recess morning and afternoon. For 10 months we look forward to the summer holidays and then hate to see those 60 days melt away like ice in the July heat. This is an example of one of the two concepts of time to be considered - the measurement of the development of human history. The other is the measurement of inanimate nature - minutes, hours, days, months, years, seasons, ages. Clock time and calendar time are relatively artificial tools used for measuring the movements of the solar or lunar systems. They are fixed, arbitrary, and absolute. Historical time which measures the development of human societies is relative, variable and dependent on the course of human events. Men of the Bible make primary reference to this latter concept - "their history is not in time; rather time is in their history." For them time gains

meaning because it is related to three dynamic aspects of life, -

- (1) It is related to the past, present and future destiny of a particular society or individual or group within that community. It is not related to society in general as such but to a particular one - one called by name, by God Himself.
- (2) Time marks the development of God's purpose with the particular group or person in question.
- (3) But because man opposes God's plan for him, history is the record of this conflict and time becomes the tool for measuring the development of this conflict and detecting the present stage in its fateful course. In a way too man searches God, and history and time have each its measure of that but I agree with Dr. Barth when he says: "We seek Him because He first loved and found us."

Contrast between Biblical and calendar time can be seen in the following: (1) The rate of movement between the two is different. Calendar time moves in unchanging tempo. The Second Law of Thermo Dynamics may insist on an ultimate slowing down but this from man's point of view is sufficiently insignificant that it is not noticeable. Historical time varies in tempo. It crawls, walks, runs or flies. The decisive factor is the number and importance of the events with which it is filled rather than upon the number of hours spent, e.g. the boys who saw action in this last war matured much more quickly than is usually the case. (2) Calendar time is limitless, infinite. All events must be fitted into its framework. Biblical time is no longer infinite. "God overreaches the whole course of time. Time is a whole in Him and through Him. He is the beginning and He is the end of time.... The purpose of God frames

time. ... Time becomes an instrument in the hand of God: it becomes eschatological. (1) (3) Calendar time is a single, all inclusive process; in Biblical thought, time consists of multiple and exclusive processes. For the creature there are many times and in the Bible the plural is often used. The source and end of time being in God, which man cannot see constitutes Time's unity. "There is a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up" (ii) Time is relative to each created process; it is relative to history, and there are only separate histories, not one single world-history. And because the history that matters is our history, the time that concerns us is our time. (4) Calendar time is external and impersonal. Time is a "dimension of our life." Our time duration is "the time of our lives". It is not measured by speculative objective reference but requires inner, direct, personal response to the meaning of events in which we are involved. God must reveal this to us since its meaning is derived from God's purpose. "Calendar time we measure by reference to some date in the past; historical time we measure by reference to our own present, looking backward and forward from this moment. My autobiography, as long as it is mine is always concerned with the present and is always incomplete. When it ceases to be mine, then it deals with the past and is complete. (5) For Calendar time the past has gone and the future has not yet come; both are therefore

(1) Richard Kroner - "Anglican Theological Review
XXV No. 2 (April 1943) (p.208

(ii) Eccles. 3:1 ff.

quite unreal in the present. In Biblical time both the past and future affect us. Our sense of guilt testifies to the presence of the past. Today we stand in judgment upon yesterday's rebellion and seek release from its penalties. The sense of guilt is subject to our awareness of a previous covenant with God. The covenant He made with our fathers He also made with us. "God's purpose and our purpose alike bind the past into the living tissues of present reality." Today's hope and fear testify to the presence of the future. We do not know what tomorrow will bring but we act in the light of its possibilities. The future demands condition our choices today, and we view the present not as a strategic means for securing a future good; but rather from the standpoint of the future; it is the point in which God's will for fulfilment becomes the active agent in determining the present. Calendar time permits us to ask, "What is time?" Biblical time makes us ask, "What time is it for us?" To answer such a question calls for gauging not the tides of the ocean but the tides of the spirit. We need to measure not the journey of the earth around the sun but the stages in the tragic conflict within which our lives are set. And the question, accordingly, is not what time is it by the clock but what time is it in terms of the cycle of frustration and fulfilment which characterizes our life. What time is it now "by" the Creator's purpose? To Him a thousand ages may seem as short as "a watch in the night" but to man a single instant may be absolutely decisive. To discern and respond to His immediate purpose is an absolute imperative.

In the New Testament calendar, time is called *chronos*; historical time is called *kairos*. For the Christians the future

and the present ages were united, standing in closest proximity and kinship whereas for the non-Christians they stand in sharpest antithesis. The nature of transition from one chronos to another and from one kairos to another brings out this distinction. Chronos must be either present or future, it cannot be both at the same time; kairos may be both present and future - in fact, it always involves both. In the chronological present the past is already gone and the future has not yet come. The point of transition is an increasingly fleeting instant. If we focus attention upon this split-split second of clock time, trying to draw a sharp line between present and future, life becomes absorbed in flux and illusion. But in terms of kairos the point of transition from past to future is not an unreal lightning flash that is gone before we see it, but a real moment in which the ultimate purpose of life is grasped. As this moment is wholly defined and determined by God's act, it constitutes 'an atom of eternity rather than an atom of time'. In this living situation my entire past is concentrated; now, too, my destiny is at hand in the decision which that future impels me to make. To focus attention upon the present moment in this sense is to enhance and intensify my consciousness of the presence of the past and the presence of the future.

But wherein lies the essential continuity in the temporal process? For chronos the only link of absolute continuity between past and future is the rate of temporal change. Only the impersonal laws of time remain constant, everything else changes. For kairos the link between past and future is found in personal purpose. In

the present purpose which characterizes my existence, the past and future meet; they determine its essential meaning. Chronos measures the impermanence of man's purposes; kairos measures the permanence of God's sovereignty and the irresistibility of His will.

Thus, for those who accept God's kairos, a bridge has been thrown across the canyon which separates past and future. They already stand on the road to the new order of existence; they are on the bridge, citizens of two worlds. The future can only bring completion of their present life in Christ and in his kairos. The transition which they have made from the world's kairos to the new kairos is the decisive transition. They are now closer to the future consummation than they are to the age which they have left. But for those who persist in rebellion against God, the canyon between the two worlds is unbridgeable. Their fate is identified with the dying order.

This understanding of time, of history, of life is based upon the revelation of God in Christ; but I have placed it here since I feel it was at the time of the prophets that this revelation began to dawn. Kraemer, in "The Christian - Message In a Non-Christian World" takes this position that prophecy is the beginning of the revelation of the transcendant God. We shall now turn to the Prophets themselves to substantiate the position put forth.

Agriculture was predominant at the time of the Prophets. Underlying this economy was a world view which exalted material values and urged the necessity and worthiness of wanting material satisfaction. The obtaining of material goods was the issue of predominance; the securing of a surplus amount was conceived as affording security for

all phases of life for all time. Yet their world was very unstable, with gods who were not cosmic beings, but mere aspects of nature mythicized. The many gods were in constant conflict and displayed no unity or ultimate meaning to life. These gods were subject to the control of men by means of a "super power", non-personal; hence it could be used, but not entered into communion with nor had particular moral demand upon men. Basically it was an anthropocentric world view, implying that there existed no mind or purpose in the world beyond that of man himself. Material satisfaction was the motivating power to survive in an undependable and capricious world which could be coerced by man if proper methods were used.

We might also break up time in another fashion, that of cosmic or cyclical time; that of historical or straight-line time; and that of existential or dot time. Man lives in all three of these times and when we consider the relation of time to eternity, we may group them all under the general heading of time.

But what, might we ask, is the relation of time to eternity? In Greek philosophy, eternity is viewed as being timelessness. An order of existence without time. O. Cullmann (1) points out that such thinking when transferred to Biblical understanding falsifies the picture. He maintains that there is not that kind of difference between time and eternity and proposes eternity as being endless time. This understanding is very illuminating and helps much to gain further perspective. But I cannot quite agree. I would rather think of the relationship between the two as being similar in form but entirely different in content. It is like the similarity and difference between

(1) O. Cullmann - "Christ and Time"

The Westminster Press Philadelphia tr. by Floyd V. Filson

a World Series baseball game and the kind of game we used to play in the back yard while youngsters. Surely the rules, procedure and outward form between the two types of games were similar, but in actual play, quality of performance, there is so much difference that the one is entirely different from the other.

Then too, we must ask the question, "What kind of time do we deem eternal time, historical, cosmic or existential?" Or is the contextual difference between eternity and time this, that in earth's time, time itself has been broken up while in eternity there is not such a brokenness. But as natural man we live primarily in historical time and when we speak of man being in contradiction with himself and the root of his existence, we imply above all that there is no actual continuation from times knowing of its continuation with the source or ground, maintenance and end of its existence. As we know this time from its own determining and man's comprehension of it, we realize that it is not self-sufficient in itself. It is when the eternal breaks into time that we realize that we live between the times. We no longer live in the time of creation, that is passing for us. Nor do we yet live in the time of redemption (later I shall deal with futuristic and realized eschatology) for when that is fulfilled, time as we now know it shall cease. We live in the time of decision, of damnation or lostness where the Kingdom, the time of redemption has the character of being hidden. This does not mean to say that the Kingdom cannot be known, but it does mean that it cannot be known in categories of historical time. Nor is revelation received primarily there but rather in the existential and this is

why in part it retains an illusory quality.

As Dr. Paul Tillich points out, time enjoins three mysteries, "the power to devour everything within its sphere; the power to receive eternity within itself; and the power to drive toward an ultimate end, a new creation." (1)

The power to devour everything within its sphere is the distinctive contribution of cosmic time to our existence. That facet of our experience has no respect for man's highest ambitions or most lasting value. It ruthlessly marches on, demolishing and bringing to dust all man's achievements. The civilizations rise and wane and die out, devoured by time.

The power to drive towards an ultimate end is noticed primarily in the sphere of historical time. Because this quality was viewed as supreme in liberal theology, it was enabled to develop the idea of progress. Even now this theory is clung to whether inevitable or possible, but to rest a theology upon this basis is, I think, missing the essential differing kinds of time, or the differing aspects of time, and so fails as an answer.

It is existential time that is referenced as receiving eternity within itself. This lies at the heart of our faith, revelation. It is to this that we must turn now.

Chapter III

The Problem of Revelation

If there is any lesson that theology has learned by its travel up and down, in and out, along the road of life, it is that

(1) Dr. Paul Tillich - "The Shaking of the Foundations"
Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1948 (p. 35)

it has a voice of its own and a way of its own. As Richard Niebuhr has put it, "Theology has been taught by many sad experiences that the only point of view from which the God of Christian faith may be understood is that of the Christian faith itself." (1) This point of view referred to is that of revelation. Either we begin there or we do not, and if not, we end up at some idol worship. If we begin with the premise of man's own knowing, science or otherwise and then still claim to worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are permitting our conclusions to go beyond our premise. We are in brief being inconsistent. We may under these circumstances be Christian in sentiment but not in our thinking. We are in effect living a lie.

But the way of revelation is primarily confessional. Such is the characteristic of the existential time. It can only be objectified and placed within the framework of historical time at the expense of its actuality. Thus whenever we begin to talk about revelation to explain what we mean, we are confronted with that which lies at the heart of our faith.

As Richard Niebuhr summarizes the situation, "Christian theology must begin today with revelation because it knows that men cannot think about God save as historic, communal beings and save as believers. It must ask what revelation means for Christians rather than what it ought to mean for all men, everywhere and at all times. And it can pursue its inquiry only by recalling the story of Christian life and by analyzing what Christians see from their limited point of view in history and faith."

(1) H. Richard Niebuhr - "The Meaning of Revelation"
New York. MacMillan & Co. 1941 (p. 35)

(ii) *ibid* (p. 42)

But if we speak of revelation as being in nature alien to the natural content of knowing, we touch in part upon that double aspect of our life. We must at all times insist upon the historic interest of our faith - historic in two ways. One, that of the fact of the incarnation, of God's active participation in man's life and also of its relevance to all of man's life. That is to say, Christ must be Lord of all of life if at all. Let us, however, guard against the ladders from earth to heaven that have always tempted man, that of some continuous movement from man's knowing, an objective inquiry into the life of Jesus to a knowledge of Him as the Christ who is our Lord. "Only a decision of the self, a leap of faith, a metanoid or revolution of the mind can lead from observation to participation and from observed to lived history." (1)

When we speak of revelation in the Biblical sense, we speak of making known that which was hidden. But both the hidden and that which is made known possess an absolute character and therefore it is a way of acquiring knowledge that is absolutely and essentially and not only relatively opposite to the usual human methods of acquiring knowledge, by means of observation, research and thought. A supernatural kind of knowledge - given in a marvelous way - of something that man of himself could never know. So often when one mentions supernatural, we shy away. But let us put it this way: - if we think of eternity in terms of this world's knowing, it belongs to this world. And what belongs to this world is not eternity for therein lies one of the basic distinctions of the Christian understanding, that man is set over against God. The world is created, not emitted. The

(1) *ibid* (p.83)

absolutely mysterious is not only partially hidden from the natural knowledge of man; it is wholly inaccessible to man's natural faculties of research and discovery. This no doubt is a big stumbling block for us because we as college graduates have been disciplined in the practice of finding out for ourselves. Now that we should have to set this procedure aside and set every other procedure aside that is of human devising, is quite hard to permit.

In the Bible, God and revelation are so intimately connected that there is no other revelation than that which comes to us from God, and there is no other knowledge of God than that which comes to us from God, and there is no other knowledge of God than that which is given to us through revelation. The real content of revelation in the Bible is not "something" but God himself. The explanation that Richard Niebuhr uses in reference to revelation of being an act which illumines the past, present and future, and is itself explanatory as thus happening on the level of human relationships is very profound. Nevertheless, illustrations are to illumine and not for verification. There is a profound difference between revelation in terms of faith and in terms of human relations. In human terms we are in equal time categories, to begin with. And it may be explained that when revelation occurs on the human level, two persons cease to communicate in terms of historical time categories but permit themselves to give and receive each other in terms of the existential. That is to say, he who lives in terms of the existential lives in terms of that which can only be so upon surrender. When we reveal ourselves to others, we give ourselves to others. And

when another reveals himself to me, he gives himself to my conditions - he surrenders. It is an easy matter for revelation to occur on human terms. There is no other obstacle but lack of knowledge, while in faith much more is involved. Furthermore, in personal communication the primary issue is that of knowing and getting to know the other, while in faith, self-knowledge is closely linked with God's revelation. So much God's revelation of himself is a judgment, a revealing of man to himself, as he really is and not as he thinks himself to be.

Revelation everywhere includes within itself a negative presupposition; without it man is always in some kind of darkness or bondage. In the Bible this darkness or bondage is absolute and personal. Man himself is dark and fettered; he "walks in darkness"; he is "lost". This negative presupposition is in a real sense that which makes revelation necessary. Without it, the darkness and bondage of man would not be broken. All efforts, good or bad, by man himself to break it would merely intensify his captivity. Unless the bond is broken from the outside, man remains a captive. This is the excruciating fact about revelation. It can only come to us when we admit that we have need of it. May it be noted that the negative element in this consideration is a presupposition and not a concomitant or an appendage. This means that basically man has need of revelation before he really knows what he needs. He is like the man who decided to go to a city in the east and then through a lack of proper direction, knowledge, boarded a train going west. This man does not know that he is going the wrong way until the conductor tells him so. If the conductor cannot convince him of this, if the man will not trust in the conductor's statement, the man will continue going the wrong way.

And no amount of effort on the man's part can rectify the situation. It is with such a basic presupposition of misdirection that revelation deals. And until man submits to this reorientation, he remains bound to his misdirected condition. But what man would not accept the correction of the conductor? Does he not speak with authority? Does he not wear the uniform of a railway official? Is he not empowered by accepted authorities to regulate traffic on the rail lines? No man would argue the point. But if the conductor would not be in uniform, in the usual garb of his office and would appear before the misdirected passenger as another passenger, would he believe him? It is difficult to imagine. It is like the man who was once a conductor and is now travelling as a citizen. How would he know? Furthermore how could he convince the man that he was right in what he said?

Revelation is always the communication of unusual knowledge. This different kind of knowledge is not only one of degree but of quality. It is a difference between personal and impersonal truth. Personal truth is known in the category of existential time while impersonal truth functions in the category of historical and cosmic time. There are some differences that must be noted between these two kinds of truth. In the realm of non-existential time, reason has pre-eminence. Strange as it may seem, both reason and revelation claim truth. But just as the qualities of historical, cosmic and existential time differ, so too does the truth each yields differ. But just as man experiences, participates in, and to some extent transcends each time category, so too he can know these two different kinds of truth. But as I pointed out above, different as these time

concepts are, yet they cannot be separated from man's life. They are different sides of the picture. So too with these two different kinds of truth they yield. They cannot be torn apart, only for purposes of understanding. In actual life they overlap, interfere at times; support and at times contradict each other. One has pre-eminence here, another there. Here then are some of the things to be considered. The truth of reason is universally recognized. It is not only recognized in the sense that one becomes aware of it as being worthy of consideration but it has the quality of being recognized as being true. It speaks of the universal laws, of the nature of things. That which is verifiable by acceptable logical criteria. The truth of revelation is universally valid but is not everywhere recognized as such. That two times two equals four is a truth for everyone but the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Redeemer of the World is not recognized by all as such. This fact in itself is often so confusing for the Christian. If it is so that He is the One, why does not everyone recognize and acknowledge him as such? But that is precisely the illusory undertone of the existential -- it cannot be forced; it must be received.

All rational knowledge is impersonal. The fundamental category of this knowledge of truth is called "it". This is obvious in the field of natural science and in the humanities. When we deal with people we may apply the concept of person but concept is fundamentally impersonal and must remain so and merely because we attach a personal qualification unto it does not make it personal in the existential sense. All this truth is truth I acquire for myself. The "other" who confronts me as a person is a part of my world, of the

world in which "I" as the subject am the centre. He, even as person, is the object of my knowing. He remains with the historical time category of which I am the lord. The process of knowing is regulated by me and subject to my dispensation. Consequently, even knowledge of the other person is regulated by myself and I shall only know him as I wish and not necessarily as he wishes. This is true also, or should one say, especially, of the rational knowledge of God. Even God is here part of my rational world, in which I am the centre; even He is the Object of my knowledge. It is true I think of Him as Subject, as the absolute Subject; but I myself am the subject of this thought. It is my thought. I introduce God into the world of my thought.

And even though I may address the person, or the God, whom I know through rational knowledge as "Thou", yet neither changes my life. My poor fellow man is my equally poor fellow self. The God I think is within my own thought and therefore gives me nothing at all. But if God, instead of being "thought" by me, were to impart Himself, that would be an absolute self-communication. God imparts Himself like humans, in love. But only God can truly self-surrender. Unconditional love can happen only as the love of God. Why? I think for two reasons. In the first place, the love of God is sufficient unto itself. It needs nothing to substantiate it or make it valid. It needs nothing to recognize it and give it status. It proceeds and is maintained on its own right. Furthermore it does not fear being conquered as human love always is -- that is, it is love without reservation. Man always makes some reservation in his love for other men because, I think, we do sense that the basis of

our existence has been shattered. And so we cannot give ourselves wholly to the kind of love we know because the element of annihilation would be given recognition and we would perish. This must always be remembered when speaking of revelation in human terms -- in the real sense of the term it is not revelation at all. At best it could be said that some human activities and experiences have a revelatory quality about them while others have not.

Reason knows nothing of this unconditional love of God, nor of such an event. Reason cannot conceive that which transcends it, which breaks through that ring of immanence of the self world in which the rational self is the centre. This self-communication of God is revelation. It is truth which happens. It is encounter. For our rational understanding this is an absurdity. Truth has nothing to do with happening; truth "is". Rational truth is timeless; that is, it is not subject to the vicissitudes of human surrender to it -- it exists apart from the act of communication and when it is discovered it bears with it the knowledge of having been there all along. "I should have known that" is often the reaction to it. The truth of revelation is bound up with the act of communication. It is dynamic.

In Christ, God reveals Himself as the God-for-us, as the God of grace, and He reveals us to ourselves as those who are loved. What we receive through Jesus Christ is something given; which is at the same time the Logos, the eternal Word of God, as something given personally and in time. But we have this truth only when we continually receive it afresh. This central fact regarding revelation

cannot be emphasized too much. It is so tempting to transfer the truth of revelation received in the existential to the historic. Tempting because when we can transfer it to the historic we have control and the security is vested in us on our terms. But to continue to have to receive it means that we, and our knowing, remain subject to the revelation. This I think is the better way of interpreting passages in the New Testament which emphasize "seeking", "coming". From this point of view these "anthropocentric" emphasis have a double meaning. First, they are the prerequisite conditions for our receiving. A sort of getting ready to receive. As some would say, "All we can do is get ready for salvation." But the most important aspect to remember is that the creaturely activity is retained in its rightful secondary position to the Creator. In other words, it keeps the relationship subsidiary to the two subjects of the relationship, and keeps the two subjects in proper order of Creator as primary and creature as secondary. It means that God remains Lord of the relationship and of us who are related to Him through it. For genuine love has the quality about it -- he who would reckon with it must reckon with it on its own terms and succumb to it, thereby he is subject to change, transformation, rebirth. As Kahlil Gibran has put it, "and think not that you can direct love's course, for love if it finds you worthy will direct your course." But when we do receive it we know that it is truly meaningful. It is self-authenticating.

"I am the Truth and the Life." Here at last the dualism of truth and life is overcome. In the natural-rational world, truth and reality are two. The true man is something other than the actual man; the true life is something other than the actual life. What I mean

when I say that in the natural-rational world truth and reality are two in this, that we know that things as they actually are are not what they really should be. This speaks of the brokenness mentioned above. It refers to the character of contradiction. This in revelation in the Biblical sense is eliminated while on the human level it remains even though we know of Him in whom it has been overcome.

Revealed truth is personal encounter. Here the monologue of my thought becomes the dialogue of revelation and prayer. The deity who is "thought" disappears and in his place there comes the God who calls me to Himself. It is in this encounter that the "I" becomes the real "I". In our humanistic thinking we often assume that we are persons in and of ourselves. This however is not so. We are persons in and so far as the "other" makes us persons. This is clearly brought out in Martin Buber's thought. (1) The reciprocal element must not be neglected. Nor must we stress a false human freedom and think we can be persons or even be apart from our dependence upon the Creator and receiving from Him that which truly constitutes us as persons. Here let us remember that personality as Fichte saw it is a dynamic category. We cannot think of it then except in terms of interplay and only when the relationship is continued does it function. We must not think of it as having been posited and then permitted to function and continue apart from its source -- man is not self-sufficient even if he is lord of the land.

This truth cannot therefore be appropriated in one act of objective perception of truth. In order to gain this truth, not only must we make room for it, but we must "die" in order that we

(1) Martin Buber - "I - Thou".
tr. by R. G. Smith Edinburgh
T.&T. Clark 1937

may be raised by Christ to a new way of life. We cannot "possess" this truth as we can possess other truths, but we must be in this truth, we must live in this truth, we must do it. We cannot treat this truth as the rest of our range of knowledge and experience, merely adding another layer to our already rich and varied life. No, it demands to become the basic premise upon which our life is to be re-constituted. Nothing short of this will it be satisfied with, for God is a jealous God. Either we live our life as from Him as He intended or we do not. There is no bargaining, no co-operative plan. Either we believe or we do not and if we answer anything else than the affirmative to Him, we already deny Him.

So revelation is not merely concerned with the communication of some knowledge which is important for life but with life itself. It is the proclamation of the unexpected. Not that we were unable to expect it but rather that we did not dare expect it because it is the very opposite of that which could be expected along any rational line whatever. When a criminal breaks the law he expects to be punished. He knows that. It is his sense of justice which cries out for it. And so too with man who has defied God -- by the law he knows he deserves just treatment but no more. Never from the premise of human thinking or living can we expect forgiveness. Mercy is always a gift which can never be demanded. When it is demanded or even expected, it can no longer be termed a gift. And those who truly receive a gift are those who realize that they do not deserve it.

Revelation has the character of a sudden event. It is the incursion into the natural sphere of happenings from another dimension. In the Bible this sudden happening is understood in an absolute

sense, as the unique, as that which can never be repeated. This aspect of the non-repeatability of revelation will be taken up in the chapter dealing with Christ.

Faith is the act in which the revelation of God is received and in which this is realized in man. It is an act of knowledge; it is the awareness of God who reveals Himself. This act of perception is both an act of recognition and an act of obedience, self-surrender. Neither precedes the other; knowledge does not precede obedience, nor does obedience precede knowledge. But it is not only the surrender of the self-confident "I"; it is also the venture of trust in Another. Only God's unconditional, generous love can conquer our distrustful, anxious self-centered hearts. Only the love of God which awakens our trustful love in return can master our self-love. It is the work of grace which changes the sinful, independent self into a self that depends utterly on God.

Yet even after having claimed revelation as the point of departure and the anchor of our understanding, we must clear away some obvious questions that then arise. Which school of Biblical research has the determining influence? It is to this question that we now turn in considering the work Rudolph Bultmann, the Kerygmatic school, and its critics have done.

Chapter IV

The Problem of Biblical Research

That the question of research and methods employed in this function should continue to be problematic is to say the least very vexing. Partly because youth wishes to attain as quickly as possible

and partly because it is a technical subsidiary question second in importance to an ultimate solution. It is like the young farmer who, when harvesting starts, finds it so difficult to have to take time out to repair the machines when they break down or replace the obsolete, inefficient models with the most effective. So too, in Biblical research we must continue to spend some time on the tools themselves in order that we can do justice to the wheat that is ripe, waiting to be harvested. Nor can we ever be satisfied that any method used will suffice provided we are earnest in our research. As if the sincerity of a farmer attempting to harvest in modern acreage justifies his using a sickle when others are using self-propelled combines. Furthermore we must realize that even though other disciplines of study are adequate in their own fields, that does not validate them for us. A modern farming mill used to clean wheat needs a different set of sieves for cleaning oats. It is also wrong to take the attitude that any method has some good in it so each man must choose the one that he likes best. It may be true that every woodsman develops a liking for a particular axe but even so he has to keep it sharp, to keep changing the cutting edge in order to do a good piece of work. One axe kept sharp is worth all others that have become dull. So too, the method of research must retain a keen cutting edge, sharpened by differing methods within its own field and being diligent about criticisms from outside its actual field.

Adolph Harnack who is so often considered as father of Liberal Theology stands at the door of that kind of New Testament research which culminated in the Jesus of History movement of which T. R. Glover (1) is one of the chief exponents. This kind of research

(1) T. R. Glover - "Jesus of History"
New York. Association Press. 1919.

attempted to approach and study Jesus as any other figure of history and thereby glean the essentials of His uniqueness and the source of His influence and importance to Christianity. This liberal interpretation supposed that it could solve the problem of the mythological elements in the New Testament by elimination. This is rather curious. That a school which stressed the scientific attitude to such a degree would be unscientific enough to ignore part of the problem. But now it has become evident with the recent rise of the "kerygmatic" emphasis in the interpretation of the New Testament makes this procedure impossible. The message itself gives evidence that the mythological elements are inseparable from it. Thus we cannot honestly eliminate them but must reinterpret them. This has become especially important in areas where the kerygmatic school has a tendency to be uncritical. Rudolph Bultmann has raised this issue and tries to accommodate therein the outlook of modern men in our own situation. He makes it very definite as the central problem when he states it as the issue of the New Testament's world-picture which being mythological in character with a three-story world; the earth a theatre of activity of supernatural beings under the power of Satan; the courses of history running to an imminent world-catastrophe and thus the course of salvation, the coming of the pre-existent Son from heaven, and the other basic issues involved correspond to this mythological world-picture.

No doubt such conceptions as are mentioned above and which can easily be traced to the Jewish apocalyptic and to the gnostic redemption-myth pose a great problem for men today. They are in fact both unbelievable and unmeaningful. Scientific interests and technological mastery have indisposed Christ completely to certain aspects

of the anthropology and psychology implicit in the New Testament conceptions. The idea of demonic or spiritual control, together with the allied sacramental conceptions is dispelled by view of autonomous unity. In the New Testament, sin causes death, whether the interpretation is direct or indirect; sin being the sting of death. Today death is a natural process, therefore man is neither directly nor indirectly held responsible for it. When modern man tries to interpret the Christ's death in terms of substitutionary atonement and the resurrection of Jesus, through which by means of the sacraments this power is made available to men, the same kind of problem arises. "Such a miraculous event in nature as the reanimation of a dead body -- quite apart from its incredibility -- he cannot grasp as a relevant method of divine action." This comes out also in the understanding of the Virgin Birth. To modern man it is the greater miracle, if he would use the term, that God should do this divine action in the usual way. In fact it makes His concern and coming even more convincing, whereas the more unnatural happening of the miraculous conception was proof to his older brother that God was at work here.

Nor can we solve the problem by elimination and selection as Karl Barth does, (1) Bultmann insists, in disposing of the cosmic eschatology of the end-time in I Corinthians by translating it into a non-eschatological substitute. Bultmann insists on setting the mythological element aside in a thorough-going way and tries to establish a point of view from which the whole can be reinterpreted. He justifies this procedure by showing that the very nature of the myth is such that we are pointed behind it. Its role is not to give a world-picture

(1) Karl Barth - "Doctrine of the Word of God"
tr. by G. T. Thonson. Edinburgh. T. & T. Clark 1936

actually, but to illuminate man's situation and understanding of himself. The function of the myth is not so much cosmological as anthropological. Furthermore within the New Testament itself there are numerous contradictions and plurality of mythological representations which invite the kind of effort Bultmann sets forth. This very problem has been dealt with earlier as we pointed out above. Allegory has been used to alleviate the problem of obsolete conceptions. This does not really solve the problem. It merely tries to evade it. Harnack falsifies the early Christian message when he makes a distinction between the shell and the kernel. And as we mentioned above, the history of religion school deprives the Christian message of its kerygmatic character even if it treats the subject matter with full seriousness and recognizes the significance of Entweltlichung in religious piety and rite. Thus Bultmann concludes that an existential interpretation of the myth is necessary to safeguard the basic sense of human existence expressed in it and carry over the kerygmatic message without loss. But what is here proposed is a life in faith, not only as a condition but as an imperative. By this the Spirit in the believer is not a possession or natural power and thereby its mythical character is dispelled.

Here lies the crux of the whole argument. Can the saving action of God in Christ be presented apart from mythological terms? Modern existential philosophy such as represented by Heidegger explains man's predicament in similar categories to that of the Christian faith. It sees, indeed, that man is fallen, but for it the fall has not reached the very centre of man's existence, nor does it recognize that man cannot be master of his situation. Also there is a difference

in the meaning of man being guilty of self-sufficiency. "Self-sufficiency must be seen as ingratitude to be 'guilty'", insists Bultmann. Thus he retains the Christ-event as the releasing factor from the mould which the philosopher postulates. He acknowledges that a residue of mythology is necessary for re-stating the gospel. "It is, however, clear in the first place that the Christ-event is not myth in the same sense as the cult-myths of the Greek or Hellenistic deities." The essential difference being the Christ-event being rooted in an historical man. "Historical and mythical are here uniquely combined." For Bultmann the mythological here is not constitutive, but "serves only to give expression to the significance of the historical figure Jesus and his story." This interpretation is maintained in regard to the Cross. "To believe in the Cross rightly understood is not to put faith in a cosmic mythical transaction of the past, but to share that Cross as one's own. The fact that the Cross is represented as having an eschatological significance means that it is not an event of the past to which one looks back but something which is always actualized for faith, i. e., in the sacraments and in our 'putting to death the works of the flesh.' Thus the central salvation-event is not mythological but historical, based in the actual crucifixion of Jesus, but made present continually in the believer." (1)

Bultmann treats the resurrection as an eschatological event showing its significance that "in Christ all are made alive; the believer is raised with him, is alive to God in Christ Jesus." But the knowledge of this and the witness to this saving event is not an

(1) A. N. Wilder - "Mythology and the New Testament"
J.B.L., Vol. LXIX, Pt. 2, June 1950 (p.117)

is not a question," says Schniewind, "of the self-emptying of the mystic nor of Goethe's 'Stirb und Wende', but our ego which asserts itself against God falls under God's judgment, his sentence of death. Yet God proclaims us free. Christ intervenes for us and is our new ego. He is our freedom from curse and accusation." (i)

Bultmann insists that he sustains the same understanding even though his emphasis is on the human situation as such.

Schniewind criticizes Bultmann in his setting aside of mythological elements in the cross and thereby doing injustice to the message. Bultmann tries to show that the actual story is couched in myth but that these are obsolete being borrowed from Jewish apocalyptic as well as from gnostic redemption-myth. But the real charge issues in the fact that even though Bultmann insists on the "historical" (geschichtlich) significance of the cross, he does not mean the historical once-for-allness (einmaligkeit). Bultmann refers to "geschichtlich" on man's existential level ("Geschichtlichkeit als Gestalt menschliches Lebensvollzuges"). He refers to the cross not as an event in the past but for faith as ever renewed present. He thereby eliminates the "history of God with Man". Schniewind insists on four points. "(1) the crucified is not an 'X' but Jesus; (2) Bultmann neglects the Synoptic in favor of Paul and John; (3) he sets the epistle-half of the New Testament over against gospel portion; (4) the New Testament always says Jesus Christ -- i. e. includes the memory of the historical figure in the Kerygma. Thus our modern historical-critical study is not something discontinuous and alien, but a proper sophistication of that historical-temporal

(1) *ibid* (p. 5)

relation to Jesus Christ which the church has always possessed." (1)

Bultmann safeguards against historical scepticism in connection with research but takes the eschatological event out of its mythological setting. In doing this the question must be raised as to whether or not he is being fair to the event itself.

The same kind of criticism is put forth in regard to the resurrection-event. Bultmann insists on the once-for-allness of this along with the whole Christ-event. Now that we are linked with Christ in the new Adam and in his body the church we must grasp the resurrection directly as revelation and not on the basis of visions or proofs. In his presentation, Bultmann depreciates memory as an invalid, or non-consequential aspect of our life which connects itself with his depreciation of any scientific-historical validation of the gospel.

It is however Bultmann's view of history which causes greatest concern. For him it is something that is past and over, the influence of which fades with the event itself. Over against this he sets the existential, the here and now which he translates into eschatological terms by giving it the emphasis of eternity, calling it the "eternal now". It is this eternal now which affords the encounter to which I have to respond. Also must we never forget that in spite of our insistence upon its once-for-allness character of the Christ-event, its cruciality lies in part in the fact that it is God's act in Christ "for me". This is Bultmann's main contribution in his over-emphasis on the existential.

(1) *ibid* (p.6)

"In his retrospective conclusion Schniewind establishes certain results. The issue of mythology does not go to the root of the present problem of the Christian message if it be conceived in radically personal and theonomous terms. From this point of view the difficulty of the Biblical terminology merely reflects the limitations of our human language and conceptions. We should not caricature these conceptions. The Bible itself often dissolves its own space and time concepts and characteristic myth. Such elements are not to be viewed as mere pictures. The invisible is not set forth in them. We are safeguarded from error in their use if they are constantly construed in terms of the Christian reality they convey. The point is often made in reply to Bultmann that modern man tends today again to the use of myth, and that it becomes the more, therefore, an indispensable expression for religious thought. But this opens the door, as he well sees, to great dangers except as the Kerygma is kept in its central place. On the other hand, Bultmann exaggerates the importance of the scientific mentality of the men of our time. The basic question is still that of God as modern nihilism shows. This means that the necessity of what the unbeliever calls myth cannot be avoided, but must even be insisted on as an aspect of the scandal.

Gotz Harbsmeier makes some criticism of the above discussion and briefly we shall note his points before we conclude. As a pastor and wounded veteran he supports Bultmann in his contention that much of the gospel message is alien to the men of today. "It is not Bultmann", he insists, "who says that these things are done with

(erledigt) but men, generally -- in the Wehrmacht, in France, in Belgium, in Russia." He defends Bultmann in his central task of returning to that naked man on the cross, that scandalous incident in which Christ was deserted and left along by all; it is this event which mythology attempts in its own way to portray. That the pre-scientific world-view of the Bible has become obsolete is very evident but that we should at the same time disregard myth as a vehicle for the expression of the depth-dimension of life is hardly to be permitted. (1)

Lohmeyer in the same book contends that some of these obsolete elements are needed to express adequately the alpha and the omega of the faith. (ii)

He criticizes Bultmann for trying to translate the New Testament message in terms of modern philosophy. This, he maintains, is permissible for the sake of polemic and apologetic but we must retain the Kerygma as the basis of interpretation and not the object of criticism.

H. Thieliicke, as coming from outside the field of New Testament scholarship, has some worthy comments. He maintains that the normative aspect of the message is lost when re-stated in Heidegger's categories. "The revelation dissolves into philosophy. Thieliicke deplores the fact that all is referred to the Selbstverstandnis of the individual before or after salvation, rather than to the object of faith, and sees a disturbing analogy here to the Selbstbewusstsein of Schliermacher." (iii)

(1) A.N.Wilder - "Mythology and the New Testament"
J.B.L. Vol. LXIX Pt. 2, June 1950 (p. 120)

(ii) *ibid* (p. 121)

(iii) *ibid* (p. 121)

His main thesis is that the fundamental problem of myth is not history but of the theory of knowledge and language. Although he supports the case of myth and he realizes that New Testament myth is outdated yet he shows that modern myths are unable to express the message adequately for they exclude transcendence. As a solution for the problem of myth he points towards Cullmann's work (i) which proposes that we should regard it as a Wetttbild but for a Weltanschauung "for the ground of reality behind the form and for that integrating and total view of experience which myth alone can convey." (ii) Bultmann sees myth as obsolete pre-scientific fiction while here it is seen as the inevitable and continually valid language of faith. We shall now turn to Cullmann's own work to see what he does with the problem involved.

"Heilsgeschichte"

As over against the Kerygmatic school of New Testament interpretation which is most emphatically presented by R. Bultmann, there stands the "salvation history" of which O. Cullmann is a chief exponent. The big problem of Cullmann is similar to the thesis of this paper, - "time".

"Only the numbering forward and backward from the birth of Christ regards the Christ-event as the temporal and mid-point of the entire historical process. (iii) So much we take for granted our ways of doing things that the actual meaning of what we do and and significance of why we do it in that or this particular manner is lost. But the manner of dating, the Christian system of reckoning

- (i) O. Cullmann - "Christ and Time" tr. F. V. Filson
Philadelphia The Westminster Press. 1948
- (ii) A. N. Wilder - "Mythology and the New Testament" (p. 121)
- (iii) O. Cullmann - "Christ and Time" (p. 18)

time and history which starts with the event of Christ as year one and qualifies all years before as "Before Christ" and all years after his death with "After the Death of Christ" is not just a tradition but presupposes fundamental assertions of New Testament theology concerning time and history.

But what do we mean when we say that Christ is the centre? It must be clearly understood from the start that it was not just the weighty historical changes which Christianity brought about which is meant here, but: "It asserts rather that from this mid-point all history is to be understood and judged; it asserts that this fact, given the number one, is the final meaning and the criterion of all history before and after it, and that in both directions the content represented by the unlimited series of numbers is to be placed in relation and explained by that which is meant by the number one." (1) This states the principle to be followed in interpretation and writing of history but which it must be noted is not the modern historian's principle of writing history; as a matter of fact it is part of the offense of the Gospel. The big difference would issue in this, that "Biblical History" is not the sum of separate stories which culminate in Christ and he therefore can be understood and explained by them. It does not set every historical occurrence in direct historical connection with the work of Jesus. That is to say, there is little interest of general history as such but only for those events as related to the work of Jesus. "Jesus Christ is first of all the mid-point and meaning for this thus delimited history; compared with general history, it forms a line which, though not shorter, is

(1) *ibid*, (pp. 18, 19, 20)

yet infinitely smaller." (i) The bold assertion, however, is that on the basis of the slender Christ-line of the Biblical history it is entitled to render a final judgment even on the facts of general history and on the contemporary course of events at any period. "The work of Christ is primarily the mid-point of a special happening or process which extends the full length of the time line; this process, in the sense that early Christianity gives to it, is to be designated as the Christ-process. In a secondary way, however, this process for the Christian is also the measuring standard for general, so-called 'secular' history, which when seen in this light ceases to be secular to him." (ii) This in some measure touches upon the sense of hiddenness and mystery involved in the understanding of revelation in the previous chapters. Furthermore this understanding issues in one of the distinctive features of the Christian faith - its rootedness in history. Cullmann here, though, by taking issue with Reinhold Niebuhr brings things into sharp focus. Against him in his monumental work (iii) he writes, "The Christian absolute norm is itself also history and is not, as is a philosophical norm, a transcendent datum that lies beyond all history." (iv) Both Cullmann and Niebuhr have a point. Cullmann is right in stressing the ordinariness of God's activity in His redemptive act; in the nearness of God, but Niebuhr is right in insisting that it is God's redemptive activity, done in His way, place.

(i) *ibid* (p.20)

(ii) *ibid* (p.21)

Also P. Tillich - "Interpretation of History" (p.250)
New York, Charles Scribner's Sons 1936

(iii) R. Niebuhr - "Nature and Destiny of Man"
New York, Charles Scribner's Sons 1942

(iv) O. Cullmann - "Christ and Time" (p.21)

and time, which embodies a category alien to natural man's usual pursuits and desires. Both the transcendence of God and his imminent action must be upheld in order to do justice to all that happens. The norm consists not only in one historical happening (fact) but in a temporally connected historical series of a special kind, namely "Biblical history". Yet even though the norm belongs to the field of the historian, and thus making it difficult for him to recognize it as an absolute norm, not unless his basic premise is constituted on this borderline it is meaningless to try to impress him with such an understanding until the basic premise of his understanding is shifted. It is quite understandable in this age when "everything is relative" why modern historians refrain from making a seemingly-relative historical happening into an absolute criterion. No wonder Nathaniel said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" We imply the same kind of thinking when we continue to think in terms of the Holy Land and relegate Christ there rather than seeing his continued activity (presence) in the midst of our ordinary, humdrum and day-to-day existence. "E. Troeltsch (see especially *Der Historismus und seine Probleme*, 1922) seeks to 'overcome' all such dogmatic treatment of history in theology, on the ground that this treatment is irreconcilable with the relativity of all history. He, on the contrary, seeks to find the norm in an undogmatic consideration of the whole of history. In reality, however, he has derived the norm from an area that lies beyond all history, that is, from a philosophy of value." (1) Such a procedure renders the central historical action of Jesus of Nazareth as a philosophical evaluation and is thus not

(1) *ibid* (p.22, footnote)

recognized as absolute divine revelation to men. Without this faith, Biblical or any other kind of history is meaningless and with this faith no other norm can exist outside of this Biblical history which is then history of revelation and redemption. In truth for the individual this is an either/or proposition. Either Christ is Lord of all of life, if at all, or we do not know Him as He came upon earth. *Here the close connection between Christian revelation and history comes to light, and here in the final analysis lies the 'offence' of the Primitive Christian view of time and history, not only for the historian, but for all 'modern' thinking, including theological thinking; the offence is that God reveals Himself in a special way and effects 'salvation' in a final way within a narrowly limited but continuing process." (i) For the individual as Kierkegaard puts it - we are offended to be confronted with the proposition that our eternal happiness is not only conditioned but finally determined by our relation to a specific historical person. And yet always maintaining that the decisive conclusion about this person is his differentness from what is usually termed as historical.

Thus from this understanding we can imply that Christian theology equals "Biblical history; on a straight line of an ordinary process in time God here reveals himself, and from that line he controls not only the whole of history, but also that which happens in nature." (ii) This means above all that there can be no speculation about God that ignores time and history. What must be guarded against

(i) *ibid* (p.23)

(ii) *ibid* (p.23)

however is the fallacy of conceiving God within time and history as some of our modern philosophers tend to do. (i) For when this happens he becomes a finite God, in other words an idol, even if a very astute one. It also means that we thereby know God whose very nature it is to reveal Himself and that this revelation is "His Word", is an action. "... all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." (ii) There is offence in the acknowledgment that once, and only once, this revelation became so unique it can be designated. "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled." (iii) "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene." (iv) The revelation became history in all its fullness, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." (v) Creation and redemption appear as a single process in which Christ and revelation are active. "If the historical work of Jesus of Nazareth is regarded as the full expression of divine revelatory action, the necessity inevitably results of combining all remaining divine revelatory action with it on one unified Christ-line to present a 'Biblical history' -- the person of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate One, is identical with the

(i) Whitehead - "Process and Reality"
New York MacMillan Co. 1936

(ii) John 1:3

(iv) Luke 3:1

(iii) Luke 2:1

(v) John 1:14

divine Logos, the revealing Word." (John 1:14ff) "But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working still, and I am working." (i)

Inseparably then is bound together God as Creator and Son as Redeemer "One God the Father, from whom are all things and we unto him and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through him." (ii) The earlier creeds tried to make this separation and thereby gave rise to polytheism. But where the above understanding is maintained, "Christ is known as the mediator of the entire process, the cosmic as well as the historical." (iii) Here we must stress the element of the mediator and that for the individual and his salvation; no other understanding can replace Jesus, the Christ. But by the above we can also refer to God's revelatory action in the Old Testament as it is referred to in the New Testament. Hebrews is connected with the Psalms.

"And,

'Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning and the heavens and the work of thy hands.' (iv)

'They may perish, but thou wilt endure;
All of them may wear out like a garment;
Thou mayest change them like clothing and they will change;
But thou art always the same
And thy years have no end.' (v)

Never can we give up this revelational history. Through love is given its deeper meaning, I Cor. 8:11 "The brother for whom Christ died." It means love even our enemies because Christ died for them.

Nor can we any longer play off ethics against theology; life against doctrine; theory against practise.

(i) John 5:17

(iv) Hebrews 1:10

(ii) I Cor. 8:6

(v) Psalm 102:26

(iii) O. Cullmann - "Christ and Time" (p.25)

Cullmann here speaks out against R. Bultmann, emphasizing that this history is not a "myth" of which the New Testament can be unclothed. Rather he insists that the present for redemptive history is bound up with the future.

"The total view of redemptive history does not belong to those necessarily outmoded framework elements, the primitive 'world view' it is not central Salvation is bound to a continuous time process which embraces past, present and future. Revelation and salvation take place along the course of an ascending time line. Here the strictly straight-line conception in the New Testament must be defined as over against the Greek cyclical conception and over against all metaphysics in which salvation is always available in the 'beyond', and we must show how according to the Primitive Christian view revelation-salvation actually 'occur' in a connected manner during the continuous time process. it is characteristic of this estimate of time as the scene of redemptive history that all points of this redemptive line are related to the one historical fact at the mid-point, a fact which precisely in its unrepeatable character, which marks all historical events, is decisive for salvation. This fact is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ." (i)

When considering the significance of the New Testament terminology for time we realize that it does not start with a contrast of the Here and the Beyond but speaks of time in the categories of formerly, now and then. In Hebrews 11:1 where we are given the classical definition we see such reference - "assurance of things

(i) O. Cullmann - "Christ and Time" (pp. 32, 33)

hoped for," - future; "conviction of things not seen" - the time process. The New Testament gives all revelation an essential anchorage in time. This is not a survival of Judaism but what was intimated in Judaism is here completely carried out. In the New Testament, "kairos" means "a point of time" and "aion" an "age", an extended duration. The kairos is a fixed content; the age is a defined or undefined extent of time. Kairos is man's decisive moment. It is God's time. As man sees it, it is arbitrary, "selection" by "sovereign divine power". None of the New Testament expressions for time has its object time as an abstraction. Revelation 10:6 - "there will be no more chronos" -- this does not mean an era of timelessness but in the analogy of Habbakuk 2:3 and Hebrews 10:37, "For a little while, and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry," we can agree with Gullmann in rendering it, as it is in the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament, "There will be no more delay."

Each individual item of the redemptive line has its fixed place in time. Paul notes the time of the coming of the law. "This is what I mean: the law, which came four hundred and thirty years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void," (i) but even so he shows that it was not there at one time, "...yet law entered in along the way." (ii) Christ, however, who is the divine revelatory Word himself, the mediator of all divine action, is so fully and closely connected with endless divine time that the author of Hebrews writes, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and into the ages." (iii)

(i) Galatians 3:17

(ii) Romans 5:20

(iii) Hebrews 13:8

While the Revelation of John says the same, "the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (i)

"It is the great merit of W.G.Kummel to have shown that the temporal tension between present and future exists for Jesus even in the Synoptic Gospels, insofar as the future is there regarded as already fulfilled in his person, and yet is still awaited. Hence the tense relation between this and the coming age, time between the resurrection and the return of Christ not mere 'escape from embarrassment' in disillusion because of delay of Parousia. It rests on faith in the divine Lordship over time." (ii)

Or further still along the same understanding as Cullmann writes again, "The Lordship of God over time, as it becomes manifest on the one hand in predestination and pre-existence and on the other hand in the Christ-event, signifies nothing else but that he, the Eternal One, is in control of the entire time line in its endless extension. It means therefore that in the action of Christ the entire line is influenced in a decisive manner, and that in the central event of Christ the Incarnate One, an event that constitutes the mid-point of that line, not only is all that goes before fulfilled but also all that is future is decided." (iii)

Issue must be taken with Cullmann in his neat position where he writes, "Thus faith in the Christ-event already permits the disciple of Christ to 'taste the powers of the future world' and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of

(i) Revelation 1:17, 2:8, 22:13

(ii) Cullmann, p. 72

(iii) *ibid.*, p. 72

the age to come. (i) He experiences in this way the Lordship of God over time. This, to be sure, does not mean that the development of the redemptive process in time has become unimportant in its time quality for him who believes." (ii) I find it difficult to speak of faith apart from the "I - Thou" relationship. When it is retained within this understanding it is hard to make any abstract concept a part in the relation of faith even though it be the Christ-line. He is right, however, in maintaining that the believer does not merely share the gifts in the future but also in the present, but makes the necessary qualification, which is often missed by enthusiasts -- that the present sharing is provisional. The Holy Spirit also permits the believer to survey what takes place in the entire redemptive line. "... we do not mean that the believer by his knowledge is master of all the time schedule of the redemptive process. This idea is everywhere expressly rejected in the New Testament, and this knowledge is in a particularly emphatic way preserved for God alone, who in His omnipotence determines the *kairoi*." (iii) "... it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority." (iv) Even the knowledge of the incarnate Christ finds here its limits. 'But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.' (v). "(vi) To the Church now is made available this knowledge through the work of the Holy Spirit. "They inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory." (vii)

- (1) Hebrews 6:5 (iv) Acts 1:7
(ii) O. Cullmann (p. 75, footnote p. 76) (v) Mark 13:32
(iii) *ibid* (p. 76) (vi) O. Cullmann (p. 77)
(vii) I Peter 1:11

To summarize the development thus far, we note: (1) God is lord of time; (2) God mediates to believers in Christ the revelation of the decisive occurrence in Christ yet He will not permit them to overleap this knowledge or act. But He does permit them to "taste of the powers of the future world." (i) "... and so even now to experience as something working in themselves that which happens in the future but is now by God's act anticipated; he permits them, on the other hand, to grasp the redemptive process in its large stages and in its entire direction, and above all to recognize that through Jesus Christ, his cross and his resurrection, something decisive happened with reference to the division of time, although time, even redemptive time, still proceeds in its normal calendar course." (ii)

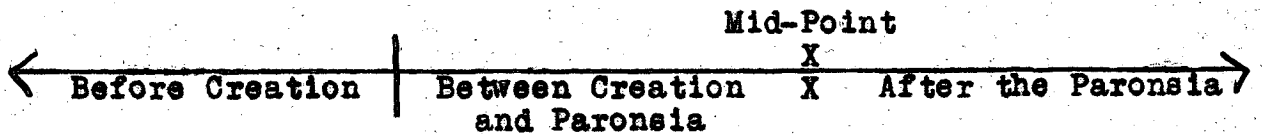
To continue Dr. Cullmann's magnificent analysis, he points out that the Biblical time-line is divided into three sections: time before the Creation; time from Creation to the Parousia; time after the Parousia. "... now the mid-point, since Easter, no longer lies in the future the mid-point of the process has already been reached." (iii) This is of significant importance and by graph is shown the difference it makes for Christianity as compared with Judaism.

(i) Hebrews 6:5

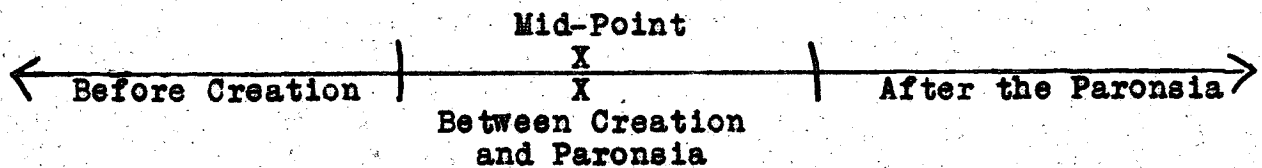
(ii) Cullmann, (pp. 79-80)

(iii) *ibid* (p. 81)

JUDAISM



CHRISTIANITY



In Judaism the threefold and twofold division coincide; in Christianity they cut across one another. This means that for the Gospels and the New Testament the mid-point no longer lies in the future as it does in Judaism even to this day but rather that it lies in the past or even in the present for Jesus and the apostles. The centre has been reached but the end is still to come. It is like a closely-fought ball game, when at about the sixth inning one side gets a home run with loaded bases. The game's victory is in their favor even though the full nine innings must still be played. The illustration that Cullmann uses of the decisive battle in a war ensuing victory in the future even though several months or even years of conflict will ensue. This is the Christian conviction concerning the resurrection and not the eschatological expectation. The hope of the future by this however is even more unshakable because the decisive battle has already

taken place. This is what is meant by that New Testament phrase, "the kingdom has come near." The understanding of nearness here is not so chronological as the implicit assertion that since the coming of Christ we already stand in a new period of time and that therefore the end has drawn nearer. Even though the Parousia has been delayed, this does not shake the belief that the centre, the fixed point of orientation, lies not in the future but in the past. Herein we recognize God's lordship over time for in this interpreting mid-point of time is gathered up all that takes place "... according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. "(i) Yet even so, the entire process in its earlier and later stages must unfold in time.

To conclude: the New Testament division of time, with Christ as the mid-point can only be believed. Either we do and are then governed by its disciplines or we do not and the whole spectacle of life is without meaning. To this fact in the last analysis refers the revelation of the "mystery" of the divine redemptive plan, concerning which it is said that it is "now" revealed, "which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." (ii) "the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints." (iii)

It is not correct to say that in Christ, "(timeless) eternity invades time"; "conquers time". We must rather say that

(i) Ephesians 1:9, 10

(ii) Ephesians 3:5

(iii) Colossians 1:26

in Christ time has reached its mid-point and that at the same time the moment has thereby come in which this is preached to men, so that with the establishment of the new division of time they are able to believe in it and in this faith to understand time "in a Christian way", that is, by taking Christ as the centre.

The extensiveness of the Christ-line right back beyond the time of creation means that much of its explication is only conveyed through myth and history. This same redemptive line unites history and myth. It puts Adam on the same plane as Jesus; but we ask how. Myth is understood here as conveying the temporal even though it itself is not temporal. Gullmann is opposed to Bultmann in his act of stripping the New Testament of myth, leaving therewith a mere psychologism. The occurrence of the first Adam is followed by the second Adam, "The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual." (1) Yet Bultmann concedes that the historical events concerning Jesus of Nazareth with the non-historical account of the primal beginning and of the eschatological end is so close that the difference between history and myth is unimportant. We ask, "How can this be?" Gullmann answers with a view of prophecy which embraces myth and history. Creation and the new creation (the eschatological process) is not timeless mythology but spoken of only in connection with the historical process of the redemptive line. The whole thing is prophecy. The beginning and the end is explained in myth;

(1) I Corinthians 15:45-6.

the middle which is explained in history is the basis faith and is concluded as revealed prophecy concerning history. Therefore this mid-point is itself prophetically interpreted history. And even though it is true that after the actual event of Christ the end still waits, it is also true that it already waits. But by looking forward we must not lose sight of the story behind us. We must retain the close connection between creation and the historical process.

To draw the argument thus far, we quote, "... New Testament faith extends the historical incarnation even beyond the time of the actual preparation into the primal history, and in the other direction extends it past the time of the development in the Church into the history 'of the last things', because even for these parts the historical event in Jesus is the orienting mid-point.

"History and myth are thoroughly and essentially bound together, on the one side by the common denominator of prophecy and on the other by the common denominator of development in time." (1)

Redemption history was not learned by the first Christians in the chronological sequence of its kairoi. As though it developed step by step. Before Creation, Creation, history of Israel, incarnation of Christ, the history of the Church and finally eschatological history. Nor was it learned by beginning at the end and working back. The mid-point is also the starting point and from there they went backwards and forwards. This is the constitutive procedure of real revelation. It is the same Christ at differing and successive stages of time in the redemptive history. It must

(1) Cullmann (p. 106)

be granted that Jesus was conscious of fulfilling a divine mission, Christ as the Mediator of men is likewise the Mediator of the entire creation; this corresponds to the role that man plays in the creation. But to speak of Christ as Mediator presupposes sin. In the function the Mediator thus operates the principle of representation. There is the election of a minority for the redemption of the whole. In the early stages the history of one people becomes determinative for the salvation of all men. When these people fail, another step of progressive reduction is instituted and therefore a "remnant" is chosen. The remnant fails and so it is compressed and reduced until the redemptive plan is fulfilled in one man. Thus we see the redemptive history as a progressive reduction until we reach Christ. In brief it is the following: mankind - people of Israel - remnant of Israel - the One, Christ. Up to this time the many tended to become the one; the process pointed to Jesus Christ, who as the Christ of Israel becomes the redeemer of mankind and indeed of the creation. But when this mid-point is reached a change takes place. The principle of election and representation still functions but now from the One, in progressive advance, to the many. The many now represent the one. The activity of God's redemptive work develops from this point to the redeemed humanity in the Kingdom of God and to the redeemed creation of the new heaven and the new earth. The development from the many to the One is the work of the Old Covenant. The development from the One to the many is the New Covenant.

Yet even if the Christ-deed is attached to the redemptive

(1) Galatians 3:6 - 4:7

line, this mid-point is unique like no other "kairos". "On the one side, this unique and 'once for all' quality attaches to every point of the redemptive history; on the other side, the redemptive happening at the mid-point is unique and 'once for all' in a special way." (1) But what do we mean when we ascribe uniqueness to the Christ-deed? In keeping with our understanding of "history and prophecy" of above we see that its interrelatedness means two things. First, that the event of Jesus Christ happened once as a historical happening and also that what happened then is decisively unique for the salvation of all men and at all times. It is a great offence that the historically unique events of the years one to thirty have in relation to salvation the meaning 'once for all'. This includes both time and location. We belittle the offence when we place the happening in the Holy Land. The work effected here is our own salvation and that of all men and indeed of the entire creation. Jesus is so ordinary. No wonder Nathaniel asks, "What good thing can come out of Nazareth?" It is easier for Judaism at this point because the mid-point is still in the future, in the eschatological future; thus it is only the object of prophecy and not at the same time of historical confirmation. But in the faith of the New Testament it is the "once for all" character of the letter to the Hebrews; the "foolishness" of the cross that Paul speaks of; the "Word became flesh" for John. Here we must guard against docetism in the narrow sense which says the Christ possessed a human body only in appearance. We cannot discuss Jesus apart from his work.

(1) Cullmann (p. 121)

This is un-Biblical. Nor can we in the selection of materials exclude his death nor say that Christ first entered Jesus at baptism and left him at the crucifixion. We must use the New Testament as it is to derive the criterion that it sets up as the marks of uniqueness. Once the mid-point has been established, we must ask the question, "What is the relation of the past to it?" The past, present and future of redemptive history are unique redemptive occurrences but only so when related to the mid-point. "The recognition that the entire redemptive history of the Old Testament tends towards the goal of the incarnation is the understanding that should now be possible in Christ." (i) The Old Testament is recognized as unique only when related to Christ and this relationship can only be understood in a strict time sense, between preparation and fulfilment. This does not mean the incarnation of Jesus in the Old Testament. "How can such a temporal development, which is nothing but preparation, continue to have meaning for the actual salvation of the believer in Christ, after the thing prepared has in the meantime been realized in time?" (ii) Cullmann answers his own question, "The Christ-event at the mid-point, that is to say, is on its part illuminated by the Old Testament preparation, after this preparation has first received its light from that very mid-point." (iii)

But just as we have to see what relevance the Christ-event has to the past stages of redemptive history, so we also have to turn the other way and ask what is the relation of the Christ-event to the future stages of redemptive history? It is not a question of

(i) Cullmann (p. 135)

(ii) *ibid* (p. 136)

(iii) *ibid* (p. 137)

the future and salvation but a question of the decisive event and the completion of our salvation. Even so, the future retains its eschatological quality but now the "end" depends on what has already taken place and also as having meaning itself and bringing something new. The new aspect it brings is that the Holy Spirit lays hold of the entire world of the flesh, of matter. Therefore the eschatological setting includes the earth. At the present time, the Holy Spirit only penetrates temporarily. The fulfilling awaits the resurrection. This means that there is a tension between "this age" and the "coming age". It is already the time of the end, yet not the end. The present period of the Church is the time between the decisive battle, which happened in Jesus Christ, and the "Victory Day". This is the silent presupposition of the New Testament; if not, it remains a book of the seven seals. Throughout it is a dialectic and a dualism. Not a dialectic between this world and the Beyond, nor time and eternity, but of present and future. "Christ reigns as Lord." This means that Christ the Crucified and Risen One comes to us. The redemptive history continues: Christ sits at the right hand of God, now, today. From the viewpoint of redemptive history, every passing minute when viewed from the centre brings us nearer the end and is also in and of itself important in the Church. It remains the spatial lordship of Christ which constitutes His body upon earth. The history of the Church bears evidence of His pervading power. Much has happened in and through the Church and yet the flesh, the great opponent of the Spirit, has held sway. Sin continues to wreak havoc in the lives of its members even if it has

already been defeated. In principle, sin has been defeated but in actual life it still has the upper hand. The task assigned to the Church is missionary preaching which is also a sign of the end. "The missionary proclamation of the Church, its preaching of the Gospel, gives to the period between Christ's resurrection and Parousia its meaning for redemptive history; and it has this meaning through its connection with Christ's present Lordship." (i)

"The early Church was conscious of its everyday carrying forth the redemptive history; of itself as the instrument of divine redemptive activity; it was taking part in a process that is as much a redemptive process as was that which took place before the incarnation and as will be the final period which is still to come." (ii)

Yet we do not know the Church without its Bible. There would really be no Church without the Bible! It is as Luther has put it, the "crib" wherein Christ lies. Consequently "... the Scripture itself must, so to speak, be regarded as also belonging to the centre." (iii)

In one sense the Christ-line of redemption is very inclusive. It is bound up with the principle of representation yet it is only one line of activity. It is that of which it is said from beginning to end, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." (iv) Everything from God and to God, and everything through Christ, through the Word, through Him. Thus we see both universalism and concentration. "... with the utmost extreme concentration

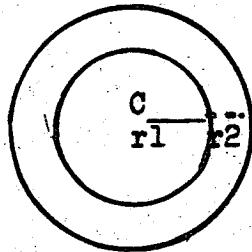
(i) Gullmann (p. 157)

(iii) ibid (p. 171)

(ii) ibid (p. 167)

(iv) Revelation 21:6

and with the widest universalism, which includes not only all secular human happenings but also the entire natural process in one and the same view." (1) So Christ is constituted Lord of all things and also of the redemptive process. He works in the Church and through the Church in the world.



C = Christ
r1 = Church
r2 = World
r1 & r2 = Reign of Christ

As the above diagram indicates, Christ is the centre of the Church. He is its "corner stone", the head. The organizing principle He uses to unite all believers through love. But through this Body over which He holds direct Lordship, He functions in a redemptive capacity in the whole world, thereby laying claim to all areas of human life, first as Lord and then as Saviour. He must be Lord before he can be Saviour. Thus we see that Christ is also Lord of the State. This the State may reject and rebel against. Nevertheless it does so to the detriment not only of its own ability to fulfil its function but even to its very destruction when its daemonic rebellion carries it beyond endurance. Christ rules over all things in heaven and on earth, thus we cannot assume an attitude of asceticism, of world denial. But also at the same time because He rules we have no right to become of the world and thereby deny his Lordship over our own life. What then is the relationship of the individual to redemptive history?

(1) Cullmann (p. 179)

In the New Testament the individual is enhanced. He is here upraised in a way that Judaism never did for it considered man more as a member of the people. The entire redemptive history stands behind the individual, yet it has him as its goal. By this alone Christ and his redeeming activity lays a personal claim on every man and through this claim determines his life. The individual is rooted in this redemptive line which unfolds in time. "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."

(1).

The faith of Primitive Christianity in the redemptive process presupposes a consciousness of sin and guilt. The Old Testament with its great emphasis on the Law stresses heavily this fact of responsibility for the enslaved condition in which man finds himself. Only on this basis can the entire redemptive history be related to the individual and he intelligibly understood in relation to the momentous work wrought in Christ. Personal, individual faith is the connecting link. This means that the entire happening takes place for me, that Christ died on the cross for me, that for me also this central event represents the mid-point. And through this I know of my own election. By this the sinner is related in two ways to the past. First he sees that the whole process is for him, the sinner, in quite a personal way. Also he sees himself as one fore-

(1) Colossians 3:1-4

ordained to this faith and thereby to redemption. He is chosen from the beginning to become an active fellow-bearer of the redemptive process and thus he belongs in the past phase of redemptive history, for it is his own past. In short, this is what the New Testament speaks of as "dying with" and "rising with" Christ. "... as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything." (1)

Paul, who was noted as one of the great apostles, claimed to be that by the fact that his consciousness of his call was founded in redemptive history. "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord." (ii)

Through this the ancient law no longer remains as law; as something abstract, but becomes a commandment to be fulfilled. And by it no area of human existence is excluded from judgment for now the sinner is judged and not just his acts.

The principle by which this faith is applied in and to the world is that of love. The love of God which the sinner receives and which he then manifests his rebirth by giving that love to the brother. Not a love of humanity in the abstract but a love of individual human beings as human beings. A love which anticipates the resurrection of the believer. Already we know of one

(1) II Corinthians 6:9

(ii) I Corinthians 9:1-2

resurrected body - Christ's. Therefore the Holy Spirit has entered into the flesh and on that day he will take possession of both the dead and the living. The possession of the resurrection power of the Spirit is decisive not only for us who are living, but particularly for the dead. In Christ this possession cannot be lost.

For Cullmann the dead also live in a tension between the present in which the eternal life has been made manifest and the future when it shall be fulfilled. He believes in a spiritual body both in principle and in material.

Thus we have reached the end of the road that is travelled by the representative of the "salvation history" interpretation of the New Testament and the faith it manifests. Valuable as this approach and useful, yet it along with the "Kerygmatic" method has its decided limitations. It does however begin in the right place; with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, but has a tendency to abstract in stressing so heavily the historical continuum of God's redemptive work.

As for the approach presented by Bultmann, there are also a few difficulties that must be noted. The existential philosophy in which the work is presented is alien to our method of formulation. In it the New Testament dialectic of present and future is absolved. By this much of the tenseness and expectancy and urgency of the Gospel is transferred into a predominating personalism. Whereas the salvation history tends to centre its import in a social phenomenon, this school goes to the other extreme in almost eliminating the social category of the Gospel entirely. Bultmann by his loss of the

myth has lost part of the Gospel. As A. N. Wilder puts it, "It is our view that mythopoetic language is an essential vehicle of Biblical truth and message. It does not grow obsolete. It is to be continually interpreted but not interpreted away. The eschatology of the New Testament should be understood not as obsolete myth but as mythopoetic presentation of destiny, of that social and ultimate hope which runs through the entire Bible." (1)

But what then do we mean when we say mythopoetic? Another term that is used by some writers is story-theology. Myth in the New Testament (Biblical) sense means story. A story that is my story and so it is confessional. The Gospel that we have heard and which we tell is the relating of an event, an activity that has its origin in God and finds its object of intention in bringing man back to God. First and foremost it is a confession of what God has done and continues to do; but this work conceived not in the abstract sense but in terms of my own life. That is to say, unless and until the story of God's dealing with man becomes God's dealing with me, it remains alien to the central concept of the Bible and the Christian Church. The message is best told through myth because it has to be transferred from the personal level, the existential, to that of the abstract or semi-abstract such as the historical. It must also be able to include in its reckoning Creation, Nature itself. What is proposed in the term mythopoetic is a concept of understanding and expression which will do justice to the dialectical, paradoxical, precarious existence in which human life is lived. It must consider the tension between past, present and future; individual

(1) A. N. Wilder - Unpublished papers (p.13)

and social; this world and the Beyond. It must be wide enough to include the dual relationship in which man finds himself; that between God and himself and that between man and his world which in the extreme splits into two facets. It must include the relationship of the "I - Thou" and the relation of the "I - it". And somehow or other it must always be remembered that these two relationships just like the differing categories of time in which man lives are not as singular and divided and set apart as they might seem. It is quite true that man exists at the intersection of two lines $\begin{array}{c} \text{God} \\ \text{---} \\ \text{man} \end{array}$ world, but to completely separate them with such sharp distinctions as a 90° angle would picture it, is as much idolatry as identifying the two. It is expressed in another understanding in considering the relationship between faith and love. It is a misunderstanding to identify the two as much as it is false to separate them. But it might be charged that this attempt is like a tight-rope feat, and so it is. Constantly we must be on our guard when making the supreme confession that it is a genuine confession and not a semi-confession or a false description which is passable because it is couched in conventional terms but is not, nor ever was, our very own confession. Not that we can ever abstract ourselves from our people or heritage and have a relationship with God en vacuo; nor on the other hand confuse our relationship with men and the world as being our relationship with God. Not that they can ever be separated, neither must they be identified.

With this setting we shall now turn to the confessions of the Christian Church and apply our basic categories of time to serve as a way of explicating the theology of the Christian Church.

Conclusion

With the understanding that we have expressed above, we can readily see why the Church down through the centuries has remained a confessional church. It remained a church that retained its confessing nature. It remained a personal church. One of the primary confessions, and the only one we shall deal with here, is the confession of belief in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The trinitarian understanding of God has retained the belief in God who is the Creator. But not only is God the creator, He is also the redeemer and the sustainer, or sanctifier of that creative-redemptive act. Just as we cannot separate the different categories of time and feel complete, so much less can we separate these three categories of God's work and think we have done justice. Nor could we identify the three concepts of time. Much less can we identify these three activities of God. And yet it is the one God who acts in all these capacities. He is the judge who condemns our sin but also the saviour from sin as well as the spirit by whose grace we are enabled to grow.

But just as the existential category of time is the greatest point of contact, so too is the Christ the point at which we confront God as in no other case. The great issue is always as it has been - what of this Christ? Herein lies the crux of the whole matter for through him we deal with God. And though men may reject him and continue to crucify him yet he persists to disturb the human soul requesting lordship. What it fully means to know Jesus as lord of

life is not the undertaking of this paper but he must be our lord before he can be our saviour. And above all he must be lord of all of life, if at all.

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