

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. Methods in Apologetics

Basically there are only three answers to the questions, How do you know that there is a God, and if there is, What sort of being is he? The first answer is experience. There are two sorts of experience, and the religious tone of their conclusions is considerably different. The first type of experience is ordinary sensation: we see a black, round stone rolling down an inclined plane. The second type is often called “religious experience.” This ranges from feelings about morality, Rudolph Otto’s *Idea of the Holy*, to mystic visions and trances. The second answer to the question is the dictates of the Church, the infallibility of Councils, and since 1870 the infallibility of the Pope. The third answer is Biblical revelation.

The next chapter, under the title GOD, will analyze the argument for God’s existence based on sensory experience. Logically it fits in better there, for the emphasis will be on the being of God and the validity of the argument, rather than on the nature of the method; and this chapter has to do with method. Mysticism, which may be described as all method and no results, will find a place later in this chapter. Similarly Romanism, because its methods and results intertwine, is to be considered here. But because the aim of this volume is to expound the Christian system positively, using objections and contrary theories only for the sake of contrast, the method of Biblical revelation is the first topic of study.

### 2. The Method of Revelation

If God is the sort of God that Christians believe him to be, if, that is, God is the sort of God who has planned redemption from eternity, it is *prima facie* unlikely that any man could discover the facts without a revelation. This revelation might come through the Pope, or it might come through the Bible; but it is not likely to be discovered in sensation or mystic trances. But if we can learn of the Atonement only through a revelation, it is also clear that we can learn what the revelation is only through the revelation itself. That is to say, revelation is self-authenticating. To unbelievers this sounds like a circular argument, and they accuse Christians of committing a logical fallacy at this point. Yet a witness in a jury trial swears that he will tell the truth. He

witnesses to his own truthfulness, not only to the truth of the evidence he will present, but first of all to the truth of his oath. Is this circular? Someone will say, his testimony as to the facts can be tested by other evidence and so his oath can be tested also. This avoids the circle. But it is sometimes impossible to test the truth of the witness's assertions. The jury may believe him, or it may disbelieve him; but there is no evidence for or against his testimony. This is often the case with a witness in court. It is always the case with God. The Pharisees saw Jesus nailed to the cross, but there was no visible evidence that he died for sin. The disciples themselves, instead of deducing the doctrine of the Atonement, concluded that his claim to be Messiah was false. The truth had to be revealed.

The prophets and the apostles were the recipients of a direct revelation. We today have their writings. Under oath, so to speak:

Rom. 1:9 For God is my witness ...

Rom. 9:1 I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie

Gal. 1:20 What I write to you, look, before God, I am not lying.

I Tim. 2:7 I speak the truth, I do not lie.

They swear to tell the truth, not the whole truth, for not all truth was revealed to them, but the truth nonetheless, and nothing but the truth. The Bible claims to be true. Is this circular? If so, how is it not circular when the Logical Positivists assert that a sentence is meaningless unless it is verifiable by sensory experience? Can sensation prove its truthfulness by appealing to sensation? The philosophical issues here will be discussed at slightly greater length in the next chapter. What this chapter must do is to determine what precisely the Bible claims as it takes the witness stand. Does it really tell the truth and nothing but the truth?

### 3. The Biblical Claim

Nearly everybody who reads this book knows, and when he comes to the subject of the Scriptures, will think of—

II Tim. 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired of God, and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for improvement, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, completely equipped for every good work.

But even seminary graduates, when they take their ordination examinations, will forget almost all the rest of what the Bible says about itself. The Bible says a great deal more than most people realize when they read it quickly. Here then begins our first lesson in theology: What does the Bible say about itself and how much does this one verse tell us?

The very first word of this verse, the word *All*, introduces the doctrine of “plenary inspiration.” Just as the word *theology* is a technical term, so too the student must learn some other technical terms. Atonement is a technical term; so is regeneration; and Trinity. There are many others, not so well known: incommunicable attributes, federal headship, justification, immediate imputation, the millennium. An important part of the learning process is the understanding of the terminology. Serious technical terminology is not a hindrance, it is rather a great help in any subject. If the term *federal headship* could not be used, it would be necessary to write a paragraph every time we wanted to speak of Adam’s relationship to his posterity. If the word *Trinity* should be deleted from our vocabulary, it would be necessary to repeat the entire Nicene Creed whenever we wanted to talk of the Godhead.

Now, the term *plenary inspiration* means that the Bible is inspired from beginning to end: *all* of it is inspired. And while other verses will be quoted on this point, the word *all* in II Tim. 3:16 is an indisputable assertion of plenary inspiration.

However, one must ask, What is it that is inspired? Many theological books, in their discussion of revelation, begin with the inspiration of the prophets and apostles. Now, there is a sense in which these holy men were inspired. Even King Saul was inspired and prophesied on one occasion, but who knows what he said, and who could believe everything else he said? Were his fulminations against David true? No doubt Paul himself in some of his daily conversations made mistakes. But the verse under analysis says nothing at all about the apostles’ being inspired. Let the student be warned and note carefully that the verse says that the Scriptures are inspired. The subject is not the writers, but the words written. The term *Scripture*, as an ordinary word in the Greek language, means something written. As a technical term in the Bible it means the divine writings, the Hebrew canon in the first instance, and we shall see whether or not it refers to the New Testament as well.

Note that the verse does not distinguish between what the writers thought and their perhaps inadequate written expression of their thought. Some early liberals, the modernists of pre-World War I, adopted such a distinction because it permitted them to alter the sense of the text so as to conform to what they thought God ought to have said, but didn't. This method allows of no control. Each person can for himself, to suit his own preferences, select whatever he wishes the apostles had said; and since the appeal is to the unknown thought and is not restricted by the actual wording of the text, one man's alteration is as good as any other's.

However, for all II Timothy says, the apostles may have thought nothing. In fact, sometimes the writers did not think, or, more accurately, they did not understand what they wrote.

Dan. 12:8, 9   And I heard, but I did not understand ... And he said, Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end.

I Peter 1:10, 11       Concerning which salvation the prophets enquired and searched, who prophesied about the grace [that came] to you, searching into what or what sort of time the Spirit in them meant ...

For this reason one must disagree with a contemporary theologian, popularly known as a conservative and evangelical, who wrote, "We contend for the inerrancy of the meaning which the inspired writers intended to convey in their original manuscripts." First, the verses above show that sometimes the writers themselves had no meaning to convey. Second, the subject before us is not the inspiration of the writers, but, to repeat it for emphasis, the inspiration of what was written.

A Christian must insist that it was the words written on the parchment that god inspired. The doctrine therefore is not only that of plenary inspiration, but also that of verbal inspiration. Plenary refers to *all* the words; verbal refers to all the *words*.

So far the first two words of II Timothy 3:16 have been discussed: "All Scripture." Both the adjective and the noun have been emphasized. It is necessary now to go on to the third (in Greek) word of this verse: "inspired of God." Of course the idea of inspiration had to occur in

the foregoing discussion; but it was not there satisfactorily defined. Here we must ask, What is inspiration? *Inspiration* is really a poor word to express in English what Paul wrote in Greek. The English phrase “given by inspiration of God” is one word, *theopneustos*. On its meaning nothing better can be quoted than B.B. Warfield’s tremendous paragraph.

“The Greek term has, however, nothing to say of *inspiring* or of *inspiration*: it speaks only of a ‘spiring’ or ‘spiration.’ What it says of Scripture is, not that it is ‘breathed into by God’ or is the product of the Divine ‘inbreathing’ into its human authors, but that it is breathed out by God, ‘God-breathed,’ the product of the creative breath of God.... No term, however, could have been chosen which would have more emphatically asserted the Divine production of Scripture than that which is here employed. The ‘breath of God’ is in Scripture just the symbol of His almighty power, the bearer of His creative word. ‘By the word of Jehovah’ we read in the significant parallel of Psa 33:6. ‘were the heavens made and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.’ ... God’s breath is the irresistible outflow of His power. When Paul declares, then, that ‘every Scripture’ or ‘all scripture’ is the product of the Divine breath, ‘is God-breathed,’ he asserts with as much energy as he could employ that Scripture is the product of a specifically Divine operation.”<sup>1</sup>

That the words God breathed out were true words and not false or erroneous may easily be supposed; for God would not lie, would He? This result of the divine activity, however, and its purposes, will be discussed in the analysis of other Scripture passages.

#### 4. Another Text

Although II Timothy 3:16 is the best known, and for some people the only one remembered, the other texts on the nature of Scripture are extremely numerous and in many cases more compelling and informative. There are so many in fact that not very many will be given; and it is hard to decide in what order to quote them. It may not be the most logical procedure, but there is some pedagogical value in selecting the next most commonly known verse on the subject.

II Peter 1:20, 21

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture comes through individual initiative; for prophecy never was

brought by human volition, but borne by the Holy Spirit  
men spoke from God.

Peter, facing imminent death (v. 14) wants his addressees to know that the gospel is not a myth (v. 16). The English word *fable* (KJ, ARV) or *tales* (NAS), is the Greek word *myth*. This has some point in connection with Rudolf Bultmann's theory that the Bible is entirely mythology and needs to be demythologized. Peter insists that he had not devised clever stories, but that he reports historical events which he himself had witnessed, in particular the Transfiguration (v. 17). The Transfiguration, however, was momentary, and Christians have "the more durable (or, permanent) word of prophecy." It is a misinterpretation to say the "more certain" word of prophecy, for surely the Old Testament is not more certainly true than God's own declaration in the cloud. But the Old Testament was written and therefore permanent. God's voice was momentary – although it was later written in the Gospels. At any rate, the reason we know we have the more permanent revelation, or better, the reason we know the Old Testament is a revelation, is first of all that no written prophecy ever came by human initiative. Knowing this *first*, emphasizes the importance of what follows. If there are other reasons, they are secondary; but *first* we know that no "prophecy of Scripture," i.e. the prophecy written on the manuscript, came into existence by human initiative. The last two words in Greek are *idias epiluseōs*, which KJ and RV translate as "private interpretation," while the NAS says, "a matter of one's own interpretation." This translation, however, does not fit the context. To say that Scripture is not a matter of one's own interpretation is not a reason why the Old Testament is a revelation. More particularly the next verse, which says that prophecy did not come by the will of man, is not a reason against private interpretation. However, the denial that Scripture was written as a result of human volition and the assertion that it was initiated by the Holy Ghost is most certainly a reason for translating the phrase in question as "no written prophecy is of human initiative." *Epiluseōs* can mean release or solution, as well as interpretation. The verb has two main sets of meanings: (1) loose, untie, set free, release; and (2) solve, explain, confute. The second set of meanings is poor for this verse. We should therefore choose the first. The prophecy was therefore released by God, not man. Isaiah did not get out of bed one morning and say, I have decided to write some prophecies today. On the contrary, god picked Isaiah out of bed and carried him along; and so

supported, Isaiah spoke words from God. Nothing can be clearer than v. 21, "For prophecy was never brought by human volition, but holy men, brought along by the Holy Ghost, spoke from God."

Emphasis has been laid on the fact that the words written in Scripture are the words of God. Since this is so clear, it may be acknowledged without reluctance that the prophets and apostles were also inspired, especially the Old Testament prophets. Not all their conversations were inspired, but what they first spoke and then wrote down by God's command was. Many verses referring to them support the previous conclusions, and since they hardly need any explanation, just a few will be quoted.

### 5. Additional Verses

Num. 23:5     And Jehovah put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak and thus shalt thou speak.

Deut. 18:18    I will raise them up a prophet ... like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth.

II Sam. 23:2   The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and his word was upon my tongue.

Jer. 1:9       Then Jehovah put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. (cf. 9:12, 13:15, 30:4, 50:1).

Ezek. 3:4       And he said unto me, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak my words unto them. (cf. 3:1, 11).

In addition to these pointed expressions there are more verses that can be quoted, which say, Thus saith the Lord, The word of the Lord came unto me, or phrases to the same effect.

From the New Testament three verses will now be quoted because they are very clear as to what the Bible claims to be.

Acts 1:16      Brethren, it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spake before by the mouth of David.

Acts 3:18-21   But the things which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the

prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled. ...  
Jesus, whom the heaven must receive until the times of the  
restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his  
holy prophets that have been from of old.

Acts 4:25 O Lord ... who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father  
David thy servant, didst say, Why did the Gentiles rage ...

These verses in Acts are unambiguous. One need not draw inferences or go to any length in interpreting them – though inference and interpretation are always legitimate – they say explicitly that God spoke through the mouths of the Old Testament prophets. The words which issued from David's mouth, and which he wrote in the second Psalm, were God's words.

Some devout theologian of an earlier century, who had a touch of the poetic about him, used a flute as a picturesque illustration. David and Moses were like a flute, and God blew notes (words) through them. Unbelievers have objected both to this illustration and to the doctrine of verbal inspiration on the general ground that they conflict with the inviolability of human personality and with the obvious differences in literary style in Moses, David, and Isaiah. Now, it is always unwise to take illustrations too seriously and to press them beyond their function of literary embellishment. Nevertheless, this illustration is not too bad; and so far as the doctrine of verbal inspiration is concerned the following rejoinder is sufficient for the critics' objection.

First, human personality is not inviolable as these critics think.

Ex. 4:11, 15 Who made man's mouth? Or who made him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I the Lord? ... I even I will be with your mouth and his [Aaron's] mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do.

The doctrine of God and of the creation of man, in which God's role is that of a potter making a clay pot to suit his own choice – doctrines that must be discussed in later chapters – show that every man's personality is controlled by God. Man did not make himself, nor does he control himself. Second, neither the illustration nor the literal truth conflicts with the obvious stylistic differences between Moses and David. If a musician blows B flat on a flute, the note is B flat; if he blows B flat on an oboe or trumpet, the note is still B flat, but the tonal quality is

different. Similarly God can speak truth through Moses and also through David – does not God always speak the truth? – but the literary style conforms to the instrument used. And why not? It is God who made the instrument to suit his purposes. If God wants a man who has had experience with sheep, he not only calls such a man, he first created and trained David and Amos as such. When God needed someone with executive ability, he saved the life of little Moses, raised him in Pharaoh’s court, and eventually Moses used the literary style God wanted and administered the affairs of a new nation.

## 6. New Versus Old Testament

Through these instruments, musical or otherwise, God breathes out the notes of truth. Before the matter of truth is further emphasized, there is another matter that should not be left dangling. Most of the discussion so far has referred to the Old Testament. Even the main two verses from the New Testament have to do with the Old. When Paul says, “All Scripture,” does he not mean the Jewish canon? Similarly does not Peter have the Old Testament in mind when he says, “No written prophecy *ever* came by human initiative”?

Yet the unbelievers show themselves awkward if they press this as an objection against the inspiration of the New Testament. The regular liberal position is that the New is an improvement over the Old. The Old, they say, describes a God of wrath; the New gives us a God of love. The morality of Abraham and David left something to be desired. The Sermon on the Mount expressed the highest moral principles that had ever yet been heard. But if so, would it not follow that the New Testament is more inspired than the Old? Certainly not less. Of course the liberal deny that either Testament is inspired in the Biblical sense of plenary and verbal inspiration. But they have no ground for asserting that the New Testament claims are inferior to the Old. If some liberal wryly reply, It is one of the improvements of the New Testament that it does not make the outrageous claims the Old Testament does, the Christian meets him with a substantive examination of what precisely the New testament claims.

One of the best books on inspiration is *Theopneustia* by Louis Gaussen (1790-1863), a Swiss theologian who was censured, suspended, and deposed by his unbelieving colleagues. B.B. Warfield may be better in several respects, but no student learns very much about inspiration

unless he reads one of these two authors. In honor of the Swiss reformed author there follow here some passages from his section entitled, *All the Scriptures of the New Testament are Prophetic*.

“The whole tenor of Scripture places the writers of the New Testament in the same rank with the prophets of the Old.... In the lifetime of the apostles the book of the New Testament was already almost entirely formed, in order to make one whole together with the Old. It was twenty or thirty years after the day of Pentecost that St. Peter felt gratified in referring to ALL THE EPISTLES OF PAUL, his beloved brother, and spoke of them as sacred writings which, even so early as his time, formed part of the Holy Letters (*hierōn grammatōn*), and behoved to be classed with THE OTHER SCRIPTURES (*hōs kai tas loipas graphas*). He assigns to them the same rank, and declares that unlearned men can wrest them but to their own destruction. Mark this important passage: ‘Our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given to him hath written unto you; as also IN ALL HIS EPISTLES, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the OTHER SCRIPTURES, unto their own destruction.’ (II Peter 3:13, 16.)

“The apostle, at the second verse of the same chapter, had already placed himself, along with the other apostles, on the same rank, and assumed the same authority, as the sacred writers of the Old Testament, when he said, ‘That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken BEFORE by the holy PROPHETS, and of the commandment OF US the APOSTLES of the Lord and Savior.’”

Instead of further quotations from Gaussen, whom every student should read for himself, there now follow some verses which Gaussen uses to show that the New Testament is not merely on a level with the Old, but superior to it, not that it is truer or more inspired, but that it completes and fulfills the Old.

Matt. 28:19-20	Go ye therefore and teach all nations ... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.
Acts 1:8	But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses ...
John 20:21	As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

II Cor. 5:20            We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Luke 10:16            He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.

These are only five of the some forty verses Gaussen uses to show that the New Testament is as much the word of God as is the Old. And as the Old says that God put his words into the mouths of the prophets, we can say no less about the words of the apostles.

### 7. The Claim to Truth

Now that Gaussen has shown both Testaments to be equally inspired, it is time to return to the question of truth. One of course can argue: the Scriptures are the words of God, God always tells the truth, therefore the Scriptures are inerrant. Such an argument could well be put in the next chapter on the nature of God. But since the nature of God is discovered only in Scripture and not in religious experience, a good methodology requires the truth of the Scriptures to be put first. Therefore instead of deducing the truth of God's words from the character of God, the explicit claims of Scripture will be quoted. There are many such verses, and it is not obvious how many should be quoted and how extensively they should be explained. They vary in weight and application to the subject at hand. Some are definite and universal assertions; others are less basic and apply to just one book or one speech, though they are useful as supporting evidence. As a sample, and to get them out of the way first, here are a few less definite verses. Since John, both in the Gospel and in his epistles, emphasizes truth, this list comes entirely from John.

John 1:14            And the Word was made flesh ... full of grace and truth.

John 1:17            Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

John 4:23            The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

John 8:31            If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.

John 8:40            Now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God.

- John 14:6 I am the way, the truth, and the life.
- John 14:17 Even the Spirit of Truth.
- John 16:7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth.
- John 17:19 And for their sakes, I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.
- John 18:37 To this end was I born ... that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

The second verse on this list can stand a little explanation and will lead on to verses that apply more strictly to the inerrancy of all Scripture. John 1:17 says, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” From this someone might conclude that Moses said nothing of grace and that nothing he said was the truth. But the last nine verses of chapter five say:

Search the Scriptures, for you think you have eternal life in them; and they are they which testify of me.... I come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me.... How can you believe? ... For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe my words?

This is a most important passage, first for stating the Bible’s claim about itself, and second, for showing Christ’s view of the Old Testament. The Pharisees professed to believe the Scriptures. They misinterpreted them, but since they claimed to revere Moses, Christ appeals to him. Christ does so because Moses testified of him. Though the Pharisees recognized some prophecies as Messianic, they had missed many others, and applied none at all to Jesus. But as he showed later to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Old Testament is full of Christ. Here the student would do well to make a list of all the New Testament passages that interpret specific verses in the Old. These verses accuse the Pharisees to the Father; for had they believed Moses, they would have believed Jesus. Here Jesus identifies Moses as the author of the Pentateuch. There is no hint that those five books are a compilation of the Babylonian era. Moses wrote them: “he wrote of me.” If a person does not believe Moses’ *writings*, how can he believe Christ’s *words*? The hardly disguised presupposition is that both Moses and Jesus spoke the truth.

There are other verses also that assert the inerrancy of all Scripture. Here are two: one from Matthew that calls for no comment, and one from John again, to which a comment will be added.

Matt. 5:18     Until heaven and earth pass away, neither a single iota nor a single serif shall pass away from the Law until everything be fulfilled.

John 10:35    The Scripture cannot be broken.

The comment on this verse is motivated by the fact that many Christians have a high regard for the Psalms, but not so much for II Chronicles or the prophecies of Nahum and Zephaniah. For this reason there may be a latent thought that perhaps the Psalms are indeed inspired but maybe not the others, or not so much. Christ's argument, however, does not depend on the excellence of the Psalms. It is the other way around. Christ deduces the authority of the Psalms from that of the other books, the whole Old Testament. It is not that Psalm 82 is superior to Job or Lamentations. The psalm tells the truth because the Law in its entirety cannot be broken. The Psalm is a part of the Jewish canon: "It is written in your Law." Note that the term *Law* does not refer only to the Pentateuch, but to the Psalms as well, to the whole Old Testament. The whole is inviolate: it cannot be broken at any point.

A final verse from John's Gospel is:

John 17:17    Sanctify them by the truth. Thy word is truth.

There can hardly be a simpler or clearer verse than this to show that the words God breathed on to the manuscript are true. Although only a fraction of the passages Gausson used have been quoted here, these, with this last one, are a sufficient basis for the doctrine of plenary and verbal inspiration. God's word is truth.

### 8. Is the Claim True?

Unbelievers, however, will quickly say that even if these verses are so understood, they only express the claim the Bible makes. They do not prove the claim.

In reply many contemporary Christians point with pride to the astounding archaeological discoveries of this century which support the historical accuracy of various Bible passages. Indeed, these corroborations of the Biblical account are often amazing. One of the most crushing

defeats administered to the liberals had to do with the Hittite nation. The defeat occurred some seventy five years ago now, so that it is no longer fresh news for the front page of a newspaper; but it was so tremendous that it must never be forgotten. In the nineteenth century there was no evidence that a Hittite nation ever existed, except for the statements in the Bible. And the Bible pictures them as a nation existing from Genesis to Nehemiah – a period of fifteen hundred years. Now, is it not strange that a nation, if it endured so long, should have left no record, no monuments, no trace of itself – except in the Bible? Well, the Bible, say the critics, is an historical novel, and a bad one too, for the authors really knew nothing of the earlier ages and simply imagined what they needed for their story. Since no evidence corroborates the Bible, it follows by rigorous logic (does it not?) that the Hittites never existed. Today an ambitious student can go to the Oriental Institute in Chicago, learn the Hittite language, and translate the books that were in the Hittite libraries.

More recently, on a smaller scale by far, yet considerably embarrassing for dedicated liberals, was a discovery made in 1962. The critics had argued that Moses could not have written Exodus because the book mentions a seven stemmed lamp; and seven stemmed lamps were not invented until the late Persian Empire. The Bible, you see, is an historical novel, written without a knowledge of the times it is supposed to describe. But now there is on display a seven stemmed lamp that dates from five hundred years before Abraham, a thousand years before Moses wrote the book of Exodus. Speaking of Moses, Christ was right, and the critics were wrong.

However, though archaeology is an intriguing subject, and though a Christian worker ought to know a large number of these gratifying results, archaeology, so far as the inerrancy of the Bible is concerned, is seriously defective. In the first place, if archaeology could show that the history of the Bible were correct in a hundred instances, this would not prove it to be always correct. J.B. Bury's *History of Greece*, not to mention Grote's multivolume work, may be accurate most of the time; yet it is possible, and likely, and even certain, that they are mistaken on some points. In the second place, archaeology at best can corroborate only historical assertions. The doctrinal material, which makes the Bible a religious and a Christian book, cannot be deduced from an observation of broken pottery and rusty weapons.

In fact, there simply is no possibility of demonstrating the Bible's infallibility.

## 9. Axioms

Students are supposed to study geometry in High School. In doing geometry the student should learn what a demonstration is, and when it is legitimate to put Q.E.D. after an argument. If the course is better than usual, the student learns that the theorems are demonstrated on the basis of axioms. But the axioms are never demonstrated. Every argument, every system of thought, whether the subject is geometry, botany, or sociology, must begin somewhere; but because the beginning is the beginning, it cannot have been preceded by a demonstration.

Take for example the philosophy of Aristotle and John Locke. Both of these men assumed that all knowledge is based on sensory experience. But can sensory experience demonstrate that the sole source of knowledge is sensory experience? Logical Positivism, a more modern and more advanced form of empiricism, asserts that any sentence (particularly metaphysical and theological sentences) is nonsense, that is, has no meaning, if it is not verifiable by sensation. But has sensation, even the most intricate laboratory experimentation, ever verified the truth of this basic assumption? It is simply impossible for sensation to verify the principle that meaning depends on sensation. So it is with all basic assumptions. Because they are basic and first, they can never be verified or demonstrated.

Yet every system of philosophy depends on a basic assumption, or it would never get started. Therefore the unbeliever cannot object on principle to a Christian who chooses a basic assumption. It is at least as legitimate for the Christian to choose the Bible as his basic assumption as for the empiricist to choose experience.

This procedure, which may seem strange to some Christians who never studied geometry, and outrageous to unbelievers who hold tenaciously to their own faith but deny Christians the right to theirs, was well outlined in the Westminster Confession of Faith. This document, in which the most learned theologians of the seventeenth century more accurately summarized the main teachings of the Bible than anyone before or since, speaks as follows.

“The authority of the Holy Scriptures, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or Church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof; and therefore, is to be received, because it is the word of God.

“We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverend esteem of the Holy Scripture, and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all parts ...; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts” (I, 4, 5).

Is it not most wrongheaded to base the truth of the Bible, all the doctrines of grace, and our hope of heaven, on the work of Miss Kenyon and Dr. Albright?

#### 10. The Pope

At this point someone might remark, perhaps a Roman Catholic, if indeed the remark fits in with their theology, that so far as a self-authenticating source of revelation is concerned, the Pope is logically as good as the Bible. The Pope can swear to his own truthfulness; his encyclicals make their claims to infallibility; and they provide the content necessary to a recognizable religion. To know God, revelation is indubitably needed; but why should not the revelation come through his Holiness, Pope Julius?

This is a case, however, where the witness on the stand must face external evidence. History does not incline one to take the Popes as holy men of God borne along by the Holy Ghost. Furthermore, there is an embarrassing logical difficulty. If the Popes claimed self-authentication and nothing more, their position would be better. But they also claim that the Bible is infallible. This causes an insuperable logical difficulty when it becomes clear that their encyclicals contradict what the Bible teaches. Some of this contradiction will be brought to light in the next few pages, and for the rest further studies in theology will be sufficient. We shall therefore immediately contrast what the Bible says about itself with what the Pope says.

The Biblical position maintains not only that the Scripture is the truth, as has now been made clear, but also that there is no other source of truth. Romanism and at least some Anglicans (Lutherans also with reference to some details of worship) hold that tradition somehow completes the Scriptures. The Council of Trent, whose decrees remain till today the main statement of Roman religion, in its fourth session, stated:

“The gospel ... of our Lord Jesus Christ ... first promulgated with his own mouth ... [the Synod of Trent] seeing clearly that this truth and discipline are contained in the written books and the unwritten tradition ... which have come down to us ... receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament ... as also the said traditions ... If anyone receives not ... and knowingly and deliberately contemn the traditions aforesaid, let him be anathema.”

This statement puts unwritten tradition on a level with the words of Scripture. In practice, however, the Pope is superior to both, for he claims to interpret both infallibly. Before the Pope was declared infallible, the theory was that the Councils were infallible. No doubt they remain so. In any case, Romanism does not depend on the Scripture alone, but rather on the living voice of the church. Thus on the authority of the church the immaculate conception of Mary and her assumption into heaven are made binding dogmas.

Later some attention will be paid to such dogmas, at least to the Romish view of the Atonement and Justification. The claim that the Apostles transferred their full powers to the Popes as their successors, including some powers the Apostles themselves never claimed to have, is a matter of interest and importance. But not to get lost in other issues, the point here taken up is the Scripture as the sole source of truth. This point is expressed clearly in Deuteronomy.

- Deut. 4:2      You shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall you subtract from it.
- Deut. 5:32     You shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.
- Deut. 12:32    What thing soever I command you, that shall you observe to do; you shall not add thereto nor diminish from it.
- Deut. 17:11, 20 and Deut. 28:14 say the same thing.
- Isa. 1:12      When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand?

The verses from Deuteronomy are as explicit as words can be. They say that in worshipping God, his servants are not to add ceremonies to what is commanded, nor are they to omit anything that God has commanded them. The context in Isaiah gives some details. Although these Israelites were desecrating the sacrifices and prayers by engaging in them while they were polluted in gross sins, the verse quoted shows that God requires certain things, and it further implies that if God does not require a certain service, it is not to be performed. We are to do what God has required. But if we make the sign of the cross, genuflect, observe lent and Good Friday, or anything else that God has not commanded, he will denounce us by saying, Who has required this nonsense from you?

The verse with which this study of inspiration began also implies the same thing.

II Tim. 3:16, 17      All Scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable for doctrine ... that the man of God may be able to meet all demands (*artios*), completely equipped for every good work.

If, now, the Scripture equips us completely for every good work, and if the Scripture does not command us to pray to Mary or to walk on our knees across the plaza in Guadalupe to the cathedral or such like things, we may be assured that God detests our doing them. John Gill, a learned Baptist theologian of the eighteenth century, wrote several pages on this subject in his *Body of Divinity*. Here is a small excerpt that overlaps the present point.

“*Seventhly*, This may be argued from the sufficiency of them to answer the ends and purposes for which they are written: as *for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness* (II Tim. 3:16). They are sufficiently profitable and useful *for doctrine*. There is no spiritual truth, nor evangelical doctrine, but what they contain. They are called the *Scriptures of truth*, not only because they come from the God of truth, and whatsoever is in them is truth, but they contain *all truth*, which the Spirit of God, the dictator of them, guides into, and that by means of them (see Dan. 10:21, John 16:13). Every doctrine is to be confirmed and established by them ... Every doctrine proposed by men, to the assent of others, is not immediately to be credited; but is to be tried and proved, and judged of by the holy Scriptures, which are to be searched, as they were by the Bereans, to see whether those things be so or no.”

Some other deviations from the Bible are these: The Bible prohibits the use of graven images in worship, not only in the second commandment but also by implication in Acts 19. The Bible teaches justification by faith alone, and does not condone flagellation. Marriage is not regarded as a sacrament; the Bible permits divorce; which the Roman church forbids, only to open an escape hatch in annulments. In this century we see a new development. Like the decadent Protestants who deny the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the Romanists, in a new translation of the Bible, *The New American Bible* (with a *Nihil Obstat* and *Imprimatur*), advocate the documentary of JEDP theory. Its introduction to the Pentateuch says, “The grandeur of this historic sweep is the result of a careful and complex joining of several historical traditions or sources. These are primarily four: the so-called Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly, and Deuteronomic strands that run through the Pentateuch. ... Each of these individual traditions incorporates much older material. The Yahwist was himself a collector and adaptor. ... This is not to deny the role of Moses in the development of the Pentateuch. It is true we do not conceive him to be the author of the books in the modern sense...” Nor in Christ’s sense, either; for “Moses ... wrote of me.” Christ said they were Moses’ writings. But in this documentary theory, while Moses may have had a “role ... in the development of the Pentateuch,” he is not supposed to have written much or even written at all.

The denigration of Scripture is also found in the notes of this version. On Gen. 6:1-4 it says, “This is apparently a fragment of an old legend that had borrowed much from ancient mythology.” The account of the flood in the following chapters is called “an intricate patchwork.” And all this is asserted even though there is no extant manuscript of any of these alleged source documents, nor any mention of such in the ancient literature. The Old Testament mentions the book of Jasher; and Herodotus mentions Thales, whose works have all vanished; but there is no evidence for a Yahwist or Elohist or a redactor to make the patchwork.

The notes on the New Testament are not so radical; but John’s Gospel is also pictured as a patchwork of several authors, and the authenticity of the prison epistles, II Peter, and Revelation is at least called into question. However, if the Pope is infallible, he can establish doctrine on his own authority, and the infallibility of the Bible will not be missed.

This idea is clearly expressed in a pamphlet designed for distribution among the laity. *The Bible Today* by Frederick L. Moriarty, S.J. (Liguorian Pamphlets and Books, by the Redemptorist Fathers, with the Imprimatur of Joseph Cardinal Ritter, Fifth Printing, June 1872) says this:

“However, on hearing that some sections of the Old Testament are now considered by scholars to be parables or dramatic poems, instead of strict history, some Catholics may feel uneasy and ask: ‘What does this do to the New Testament? How far is this true history? We have heard doubts expressed about the story of the Magi and the real appearance of an angel to Mary at the annunciation.’

“This is a good question and we will try to settle it as best we can, But we must always remember that no Catholic need be fearful or disquieted by the new advances in Scripture study. God has left His Church on earth as the guardian and authentic interpreter of the Scriptures. He has promised her the unfailing guidance of the Holy Spirit until the end of time. The Church will never let us be led astray in matters that concern our salvation.”

### 11. Perspicuity

In opposition to this degrading the Bible to second place, subject to the authentic interpretation of Rome, there is another point in Reformation theology that needs emphasis. This is often called the perspicuity of Scripture. The Roman church has long opposed the translation of the Bible into the common languages, though its ability to do so has been curtailed in this century, and has condemned Bible Societies for distributing the Scriptures among the laity. But the Reformers argued that the Scriptures were addresses to “*all* that be in Rome;” that is, to the members of the congregations. Paul addressed the Corinthian letters:

I Cor. 1:2      Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified by Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with *all* who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ *in every place*.

II Cor. 1:1      To the church of God which is in Corinth, with *all* the saints that are in all Achaia.

The Scriptures were definitely not restricted to an authoritative hierarchy, for the Bereans were more noble than some others because they searched the Scripture to see whether what Paul himself had preached was true. The next words are, “Therefore many of them believed.” Their searching the Scripture convinced them.

It should not need to be said that there are some things in Paul’s epistles hard to be understood. Nor need it be denied that the servants of Satan wrest the Scripture to their own destruction. And it is agreed that a reading of knowledge of Greek and Hebrew is most helpful. But note well, the epistles were addressed to people who had less than a good high school education. Some of them could not read or write, and had to have their friends read Paul’s letters to them. More studious people are under obligation to explain the Scripture to those less educated; but the latter are under obligation to search and study and see whether or not the explanations are correct. Again, we refer to the initial verse of II Tim. 3:16-17. All Scripture is profitable for the man of God, any man of God, and we must read it because we all can understand some of it.

## 12. The Method of Experience

The questions with which this chapter started were: How do we know there is a God; and if there is, what sort of a being is he? One answer was Biblical revelation; the second answer was the Pope or Councils. The third answer listed at the start was experience. But under this heading there are two groups of people, or perhaps three groups, for the first can be subdivided. The first of the two subdivisions is represented best by the major philosopher, Thomas Aquinas. He used the basic thought of Aristotle to construct an argument that began with the simplest sensation and by unimpeachable and demonstrative reasoning came to the conclusion that God exists. This cosmological argument will be discussed in the next chapter. The second subdivision of the first group differs from the first, not in any basic appeal to experience, but in widening the concept of experience, with the result that these thinkers are not so sure that they have really demonstrated God’s existence with the logical necessity that Aquinas claims.

For example, in *Experience and God* John E. Smith forcibly repudiates the restriction of “experience” to sensory perception. His reason is that purely sensory empiricism leads to

subjective idealism. After the time of Aquinas the British empiricists, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, showed that if knowledge is based on “experience” alone, there can be no knowledge other than images in the individual mind. Smith therefore wishes to extend experience to include something other than sensation and perception. Experience, he says, is encounter; it is objective, not subjective; it is a critical product of the intersection between reality and a self-conscious being. Experience does not reside uniquely in the person who has it. Indeed, experience is not mental at all (p. 36); it has a social character. “The experience of being a self distinct from a world of events and other selves is itself an event, and one that is usually accompanied by a shock” (p. 32).

The present writer cannot recall any such shock. He seems always to have realized that he was not the little boy who lived next door. Perhaps before this is called unusual, a poll should be taken. The present writer also remembers being hit by a baseball bat at an early age, as the batter slung the bat and ran for first. The game was no doubt a social situation, but the hurt and bruise were private and individual. So, too, when the law required vaccination against smallpox, the doctor vaccinated this little boy; he did not vaccinate the social situation.

There are further difficulties. Even if “experience” is broadened beyond sensation, and is called *encounter*, there is no guarantee that it escapes the subjective idealism of the former. The term *encounter* may seem to escape subjectivism because it connotes an encounter with Reality. But does not *perception* also connote a perception of Reality? What information does an encounter with a tree give us that a perception does not? What is there about the term *encounter* that prevents its being analyzed into subjective states of mind? What does the word mean? Professor Smith leaves a gap between his “experience” and any object, whether it be a tree or God. He provides no continuity between his undefined experience and his assertion of the reality of a religious object. Neither the being of a God nor the obligation of any moral norms can be derived from the encounter.

Instead of justifying real objects and norms, the author asserts, reiterates, and begs the question. For example, “To ignore the religious dimensions of experience in favor of a wholly dogmatic approach to God through revelation is an error” (p. 64). But why an error? Could not dogmatic revelation itself be the religious dimension of experience? Then he continues, “The

attempt to present God as a being who breaks into the world and human life entirely *ab extra* through sheer self-disclosure must always fail to convey to the would-be believer a proper understanding of his belief.” Just what the words “entirely *ab extra*” are intended to mean is difficult to say. But why *must* the sheer disclosure of a verbal revelation *always* fail to convey a *proper* understanding? This one sentence begs the question three times over. To support the “always” the author has not taken the poll previously suggested. Nor has he shown how he can justify his notion of what is “proper.” And would Abraham agree with the “must”? If the author believes Abraham to have been deceived or without proper understanding, something more is needed than the sheer statement, “This is an error.”

To do Professor Smith justice, one must report that he acknowledges a gap between his start and his conclusions. It is impossible, he agrees, to derive any positive religion from the “religious dimension of experience.” This leaves unsupported, not so much his denial that Christianity is final and exhaustive (p. 74), as his assertion that Buddhism and Hinduism contain true revelations from God. One would like to see a step by step account of how experience justifies this or that truth in Hinduism. If the alleged truth is definite, even the author admits the gap; but if the “truth” is vague enough to be found in some form in all three religions, then “God” is the common characteristic of Jehovah, Shiva, and Nirvana; and this is nothing at all.

There is a third type of empirical religion. The first two, the first more than the second, acknowledge that something can be known about God. This third view claims that God cannot be known. This is the view of mysticism. Mysticism is an English word with a wide variety of meanings. In its purest or most extreme form it is a religion of trances. Certain people claim to have been temporarily absorbed into the divine being. Time, space, and sensation disappeared; so did knowledge; and they were one with God. On the other end of the scale are people who may be merely playing hunches. These persons might have been philosophical, if their first and second hunches had been logically developed into a system. But their education or lack of it prevents them from being systematic, and there is a general disinclination to speak very accurately or logically. Between these two extremes there are all shades and degrees. In the nineteenth century Soren Kierkegaard insisted that to be a Christian it was necessary to believe both of two contradictory propositions. It was necessary to abandon reason. Knowledge was

useless and impossible, unless it be the knowledge that an eternal being could not possibly become incarnate and yet did. The content of belief made no difference. Belief in Jehovah and belief in Shiva are equally profitable, provided only that one believe with passion, infinite passion.

This is no place to give a history of mysticism. It is sufficiently characterized as denying the possibility of knowledge, or at least knowledge of God, and in general holding intellect in low esteem. One ancient example was Dionysius the Areopagite. This author was not the disciple that Paul gained in Athens. It was a man who used that name in the fifth century and included in his writings some sections from Proclus the Neoplatonist. He opens his work of *Mystic Theology* with this prayer:

“Triad supernal, both super-God and super-good, Guardian of the Theosophy of Christian man, direct us aright to the super-unknown and super-brilliant and highest summit of the mystic Oracles, where the simple and absolute and changeless mysteries of theology lie hidden within the super-luminous gloom of the silence, revealing hidden things, which in its deepest darkness shines above the most super-brilliant, and in the altogether impalpable and invisible, fills to overflowing the eyeless minds with glories of surpassing beauty.”

A mild form of mysticism, purportedly Biblical, is defended by R.W. Dale in his *Christian Doctrine*, chapter one. He describes a man who, after strolling a mile or two on a glorious Sunday afternoon, lay down on a grassy bank. As he looked at the meadows and orchards and the cloudless sky behind them, he saw the very glory of God. We know God, he concludes, not by deliberate search, not by inferring God’s existence from the observation of the universe, but by “immediate perception” (p. 15). “His everlasting power and divinity ... are not reached by logical deduction: they are *seen*, they are *perceived*, by the organs of the mind; how, we cannot tell ... it is a direct perception” (pp. 16, 18, 19). “God’s existence is made certain to us -- not by reasoning -- but by experience. God is perceived and known by the organs of the mind just as the material world is perceived and known by the organs of sense” (p. 22).

Such ecstatic utterances assume that perception is *immediate*. Hegel is not the only one who denied this possibility, and R.W. Dale should defend the assertion that probably most psychologists deny. Note too that our senses are notoriously deceptive; and if so the comparison

Dale depends on is faulty. Further, no doubt the eyes and ears are organs of sense. What are the organs of the mind? A number of philosophers have said that the mind has no organs. Dale's language is not so extreme as that of Dionysius, but it is equally empty.

Since the last third of the twentieth century has witnessed a notable upsurge of mysticism, both in the so-called Pentecostal charismatic movement and also in the influx of Zen Buddhism and other oriental trends, the student may wish to consider a few additional points. For one thing the absorption of the individual into the primal Being is essentially a pantheistic construction. John Scotus Eriugena tried to avoid the accusation by saying that although iron in the fire glowed with the fire, it still remained iron. But others lose or explicitly deny continued individual existence.

For another thing mysticism regularly minimizes doctrinal truth. This is the case, not merely with Zen, but even with Pentecostalism. The Pentecostals were overjoyed when the Romanists at the University of Notre Dame spoke in tongues. They welcomed them as brothers and were oblivious to Mariolatry and justification by works. It is natural that when subjective experience is made supreme, historical events, like the death of Christ, and intellectual doctrines like Justification are obscured.

This of course is why Pentecostalism, which was once evangelical, can now accept Romanism, and perhaps Zen also. It is the experience that is important, not the theory. No doubt Pentecostals vary as to what lengths they should go, but the principle of mysticism unites all who have the experience. Therefore mysticism must be intolerant of evangelical Christianity because the latter restricts the way of salvation to Christ's name alone.

On this point some words from Professor William E. Hocking are appropriate. In his *Living Religions and a World Faith*, he commences by saying, "In its nature religion is universal and one." In the later volume, *The Coming World Civilization*, Professor Hocking repeats his vigorous assertions of unity. In effect he says that the Christian faith and *a fortiori* the Buddhist doctrine do not offer themselves as hypotheses competing with other hypotheses. Each one says, This is a Way to Peace; and such an affirmation does not exclude other ways. In a sense there is an Only Way, but it is not the Only Way of a Particular religion. The essence of the precepts and doctrines that mystics in all religions have discerned is the same. The agreements are not even

mere similarities; they are identities. Thus the Only Way is not the Way that marks off one religion from another, but “it is the Way *already present in all*. . . . The several universal religions *are already fused together, so to speak, at the top*” (p. 149; ital. his).

### 13. Knowledge is Essential

In opposition to mysticism it will be sufficient to show how the Bible is profitable and profitable by the knowledge it gives us. To be sure, this could hardly be absent from what has already been discussed, for the parts of theology all fit together to form a system. No verse is intellectually or logically unrelated to the rest. Now, the initial verse or two verses in subsection three state the purpose, or at least the main purpose of Scripture. It is that the man of God should be completely equipped for every good work. Another verse, already quoted, says that Christians are sanctified by the truth (John 17:17, 19).

Several verses, which Christians seem never to think of, place great emphasis on knowledge.

II Peter 1:2, 3 Grace and peace be multiplied into you by knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord, in proportion as his divine power has granted us, by the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and virtue, all things that tend to life and piety.

This sentence, not completely quoted here, is complicated in construction; it must be read twice; and if read slowly, one will see that all of God’s gifts that tend to life and piety come by means of knowledge. As John Trapp wrote in his Commentary, “There is not a new notion or further enlargement of saving knowledge, but it brings some grace and peace with it. All the grace that a man hath, it passeth through the understanding; and the difference of stature in Christianity grows from the different degrees of knowledge.” Peter’s stress on knowledge, which can only be had by studying the Bible, continues on to his conclusion in 3:17-18.

Peter’s emphasis on knowledge, which presupposes the perspicuity of Scripture, is not unique in the New Testament. Paul stresses the idea by using it five times in two lines.

Eph. 1:17, 18 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you [a, or, the] spirit of *wisdom* and *revelation* in the

*knowledge* of him, the eyes of your heart [i.e. mind] being *enlightened* in order that you may *know* what is the hope of his calling ...

Further stress on wisdom, knowledge, and revelation for the purpose of edification and sanctification occurs throughout I Corinthians. There is the extended argument of chapters two and three. Then also in the chapter on tongues Paul prefers to speak five intelligible words than ten thousand in a foreign language because the aim of speaking in a church service is the edification of the congregation; and the congregation cannot be edified without an intellectual grasp of what is said.

So far the evidence that knowledge is essential to a godly life, and for this purpose God gave us his revelation, has been taken from the New Testament only. The Old Testament is hardly less explicit.

Psalm 119      Blessed are the undefiled ... who walk in the law of the Lord ...  
                    Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently ...  
                    Wherewithall shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed  
                    thereto according to thy word ... Thy word have I hid in my heart  
                    that I might not sin against thee.

Is it really necessary to quote all one hundred seventy six verses of this Psalm, plus another hundred seventy six from other Old Testament passages to justify the position that the Scriptures are perspicuous in order that the servants of God be edified, sanctified, and prepared for that eternal kingdom in which dwelleth righteousness?

Unfortunately in this age knowledge and scholarship are frequently disparaged by self-styled religious people. The “heart” is superior, far superior, to the “head.” Confusion of mind is confounded with spirituality. Emotions are alive, but logic and theology is cold and dead. But this is not what the Bible says, as one may see in the two verses that follow the next paragraph.

Liberal ecumenism sometimes, Pentecostalism usually, and Romanism always contrast the Reformation position on the Bible as the sole source of knowledge with “the living voice of the church.” The Pentecostalists want nothing to do with “dead orthodoxy.” The liberals

misinterpret the verse, the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life, as if the letter of the Bible was one thing, usually wrong, and the spirit of the Bible was another, often right. Of course the verse means that the Law imposes the death penalty on sin, and the Spirit, not the spirit of the law, but the Holy Spirit, regenerates and gives life. As for the living voice of the church, let us indeed insist that there is a living voice, but it is not what Romanism or Pentecostalism thinks it is. The living voice of God is the Bible itself.

Acts 7:38      Moses ... who was in the church in the wilderness ... received living oracles to pass on to you.

John 6:63, 68    It is the Spirit who gives life ... the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ... Simon Peter answered him ... You have the words of eternal life.

#### 14. A Neo-Calvinistic View

Recently some professedly Reformed scholars, mainly with a Christian Reformed background, and taking their cue from Professor Herman Dooyeweerd of the Free University of Amsterdam, have organized the Toronto based American Association for Christian Scholarship. Their view of the Bible derives from their more general concept of the Word of God. That the Bible and the Word of God are not synonymous terms may be granted by the most orthodox of theologians. God spoke to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the prophets. This speaking is not the written word, even if all that was spoken -- and this is doubtful -- was later written in the Bible. Then too the most orthodox of theologians admit that Jesus, the Word of God, was not literally the ink symbols written on a piece of papyrus or vellum. Furthermore, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God, as identified in I Cor. 1:24, as well as the creative Word in Prov. 3:19-20, are not the Hebrew characters on a page. Hence one may legitimately say that the Bible is the Word of God, even though the Word of God is not the Bible.

But other ideas, not so legitimate are also found in the writings of the Toronto group. There is a disconcerting tendency to refer to the Bible as a physical object consisting of paper with ink spots on it. There is a tendency to concentrate on words, printed or spoken, rather than the thought and message of which the ink spots are merely symbols. Thus Hendrik Hart (*Can the*

*Bible be an Idol*, pp. 9-10) can say, “These writings are not that Word, they reveal it.... We may call the Bible *in an analogical sense* the Word of God. But when we lose the analogy, the pointing beyond itself for its original meaning, the revelational witness out of sight; when we identify the two meanings, then we shall never come to Christ, as he himself said (John 5:39, 46). The Word of God is God, it was in the beginning, creator, wisdom, truth ... We cannot say all of this about the Bible ... The Word of God is not a book at all.”

One must note the confusion, the mixture of truth and error, the ambiguity in this quotation. If “these writings” are regarded as a book in the paper and ink sense, they are indeed “not that Word.” But if the term *Bible* is used to designate the meaning of these writings, the message, the intellectual content symbolized in ink spots, it is indeed that Word. These writings do not merely reveal that Word. They are not that Word in some undefined “analogical” sense. They do not point to some original meaning behind the meaning of the words, something “out of sight.” No, these writings *are*, or more pedantically, if you wish, this message is itself the very Word of God. Hart may say that in this way we shall never come to Christ; but the verses he cites do not support him, and other verses continue to refute him.

John 5:39 does not disparage searching the Scriptures. Even if the first verb is declarative, “you search,” Hart’s implication cannot validly be drawn, for the last phrase is, “they are they which testify of me.” If the verb is imperative, as is more likely, still less does Hart’s implication follow. Furthermore, Jesus does not say or imply that the Pharisees were wrong in thinking that eternal life was to found in the Scriptures. The other verse Hart cites explicitly states that if the Pharisees had understood and believed the Scriptures they searched, they would have believed Christ. Unbelief of Moses’ writings, even on parchment as they were, precludes belief in Christ’s words, spoken in the air.

In addition to these two verses that Hart quotes and misunderstands, John (8:32) also said, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Once again John (17:17) says, “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.” Such verses as these assert that the message of the Bible is true. It is not some “analogy” of the truth outside itself to which it points. It is itself the truth that sanctifies.

The Bible then is the truth and wisdom of God, the mind of Christ, the Scriptures that cannot be broken. Orthodoxy easily admits that the Bible does not reveal all the mind of Christ. The Wisdom of God contains secret things (Deut. 29:29) that God has not revealed and may never reveal. But when James Olthuis (*The Word of God and Hermeneutics*, p. 5) says, “It is not that the Scriptures are one part of the Word of God and that there are other parts,” he seems to deny the distinction in Deuteronomy. At any rate, this distinction plays no role in the AACs theory. But the Biblical teaching concerning the Bible on this point seems to be satisfied by maintaining that the propositions that make up the Bible are only some of the propositions in the divine system of truth. Thus the Bible is indeed a part of the Word of God and there are other parts.

Furthermore, although these people allow that the Bible is in some sense the inscripturated Word (cf. Hart, *The Challenge of our Age*, p. 119), their antipathy toward propositions would seem to make inscripturation impossible. What else can possibly be inscripturated except propositions? Of course, questions and commands can be written down. These are not propositions. But does the Bible consist only of questions and commands? I Samuel 25:42 says, “Abigail ... went after the messengers of David and became his wife.” This is a proposition, a declarative sentence, a piece of information. Can anyone explain how this could possibly be an inscripturation of something non-propositional, non-cognitive, meaningless? Perhaps the answer is that Hart (ibid. p. 118) inscripturates unintelligible nonsense when he writes, “The Word of God, God’s revelation, has been inscripturated without *becoming* a Scripture.”

If the above is not quite enough to show how far the Toronto theologians are from the Calvinistic position, perhaps this concluding point will suffice to exhibit the Neo-orthodox nature of their thought. In *Understanding the Scriptures* (pp. 9-10, and 2) Arnold De Graaff writes, “To treat the Scriptures as if it did contain such general theological statements and propositional truths, therefore would be to distort the very nature and purpose of the Word of God. The Bible wants to proclaim, not explain! It is only in his actions that God’s being and his attributes are revealed” (pp. 9, 10).

De Graaff’s statements are so obviously false that further comment is unnecessary.

## 15. The Proof-Text Method

To conclude this chapter two more subdivisions seem helpful. The first is a defense of the so-called proof-text method, and second, although external objections are to be kept to a minimum throughout this volume, a refutation of the theory that human language is so imperfect that not even God can tell us the truth.

It is hard to discover any honest reason for opposing the proof text method. The well-worn-out joke -- Judas went out and hanged himself; Go thou and do likewise; and what thou doest, do quickly -- can hardly be taken seriously enough, even by a liberal, to justify the objection. Of course it is possible to quote verses and by a disregard of their context apply them improperly. Nor need one deny that some theologians have made mistakes, even blunders, in quoting and drawing implications. The liberals can easily point to many such examples. No method guarantees itself against all misuse. Physicists in the laboratory, with the best of intentions, have gone astray. And surely the liberals, who used their so-called scientific method and concluded that the Hittites never existed are in no position to cast the first stone.

Secular scholars do not disdain the proof text method. Examine the old issues of the *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, the *New Scholasticism*, or the *Philosophical Review* and read some articles on Plato and Aristotle. The more scholarly such articles are, the more obviously they depend on citing texts. The excellent French educational system prominently featured the *explication du texte*. How else could one grasp Aristotle's views on any matter? Or beyond articles, take books. *Das Problem der Materie* by Clemens Baeumker, an example of the highest scholarship, is studded with footnotes citing the texts that support his assertions. Then the liberals sneer, Judas went out and hanged himself.

For a first lesson in theology, however, the student must learn to use the text properly. Some students have memorized verses here and there and have forgotten, if they ever knew, what the contexts are. It is not surprising if they misapply them. The present volume quotes a great deal. The author hopes he has not violated his own precept, but the student is encouraged to see if he has. This examination also include the question whether the author has quoted enough verses. Back a page or two, where Gaussen was mentioned, five verses were quoted from his

forty on a given point. Enough verses should be quoted to make whatever point is under consideration; but the student will find it useful to make extensive lists of verses on each point for convenient reference during his later ministry. Granted, the proof text method is not fool proof, but it would take more than fools to bring dishonor on the method itself.

## 16. Language

Now, the final point for discussion in this chapter has to do with theories of language. This will be somewhat technical and a bit difficult. If a young student gets bogged down, let him skip to chapter two. However, even though this textbook is supposed to be a summary of Biblical teaching, and even though theories of language do not seem to allow for substantiation by proof-texts, yet recent developments necessitate this subject. Nor is the Bible altogether silent on the nature of language. Earlier critics have attacked some historical detail in the Bible; or maybe they have tried to show that the Biblical text does not teach verbal infallibility. But more recent critics, instead of attacking this or that point, have argued that the nature of human language prevents any meaningful discussion of religious topics. Thus it is not a point or two, but the whole Bible that is discarded.

The history is briefly as follows. Early this century Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein, greatly exercised over the frequent confusions and ambiguities in metaphysical discussions, proposed the invention of an artificial language that would avoid all the difficulties of ordinary English. After World War I the Vienna Circle initiated Logical Positivism with its sensory verification principle, making nonsense of theology and metaphysics. This view quickly spread to America -- partly because several of its exponents fled here to escape Hitler. In England A. J. Ayer wrote his *Language, Truth, and Logic* in 1936. These men were thorough-going secularists. Later some philosophers of religion modified the extreme secular Positivism so as to provide some legitimate sphere for religion.

But what is not so well known is a catena of early nineteenth century theologians who anticipated, in substantial respects, the late twentieth century theories of language. Perhaps the most influential of these was Horace Bushnell (1802-1876). Conservative theologians took note of and argued against his Moral Influence theory of the Atonement, and to a lesser extent his

view of the Trinity; but with perhaps the exception of Charles Hodge they paid little or no attention to his language theory, on which those views of the Atonement and the Trinity were based.

In 1975 Bushnell's theory of language was brilliantly resurrected by a younger scholar, very competent, even if too enamoured of his nineteenth century forerunner: Donald A. Crosby, *Horace Bushnell's Theory of Language*.

Prior to Bushnell Calvinistic and Lutheran theologians pretty much restricted their remarks on language to the assertion that God gave language to Adam at creation. Bushnell countered, though evidence seems impossible to obtain, that God gave to Adam, not *words*, but an *instinct* for language. Genesis, however, records conversations between God and Adam, and hence any alleged instinct must have produced a large vocabulary in a very short time.

Bushnell, having rejected Genesis as literal truth, taught that language began by the attaching of sounds to physical objects. It was at first a language of nouns. All words, he held, originate in physical images. In time -- an impossibility often seems possible if diluted by a lengthy time -- intellectual terms came into use. Thus physical objects furnish the ground, the only ground, for symbolic and metaphorical words of intellectual discourse. But since words cannot properly represent even physical shapes, for in fact they name only our subjective sensations, the inexactitude of physical language is greatly increased when words are used for intellectual concepts. There is no way to eradicate this distortion. Since logic is grounded in grammar, and since grammar comes from relations in nature, language can apply to truth only in an analogical sense. Understanding requires "poetic insight;" we come closer to the truth only when it is offered "paradoxically." Poetry is better than prose; the poet's contradictions are all facets of the complex truth; poetry furnishes images; inconsistency is a positive good; and the truth resides in feeling.

At this point a preliminary remark comes to mind. If one can assert that varied and inconsistent images approximate the truth, one would have to know the truth in order to judge the approximation. A passenger cannot know that the plane from New York is getting nearer to Los Angeles, unless he first knows where Los Angeles is located.

Disregarding such logical considerations, Bushnell thought it silly to debate whether faith precedes repentance, or other theological niceties, because these details ignore the many faceted whole. The Gospel of John, for example, is the greatest of the four, since it contains the greatest number of contradictions. In his *God and Christ* (p. 96) Bushnell wrote, “The principle difficulty we have with language now is, that it will not put into the theoretic understanding what the imagination only can receive, and will not open to the head what the heart only can interpret.” Theology or at least true religion is a matter of metaphors and images -- not logical definitions. In fact the Unitarians are as bad as the Trinitarians because they both use logic. Really, the Unitarians are worse because they use logic better. But faith is feeling, not thinking; it is imaginative and poetical, not literal and prosaic. “The grand test of orthodoxy is in what the heart receives, not in what the head thinks” (*Christ in Theology*, p. 77).

In several places Bushnell contrasts the head and the heart. This contrast is based on his own aesthetic and emotional experience. It has no basis in the Bible. On the contrary, it is distinctly anti-biblical. The Bible does indeed contrast the lips and the heart: that is, hypocrisy versus sincerity. But in the Bible it is the heart that thinks. Thinking is the function of the heart. Dozens of verses can be and later will be cited. To contrast heart with head is to reject the Biblical teaching on the creation of man in God’s image; and we shall see how it affects the task of evangelism, for these philosophical theories, remote as they first appear to be, impinge on all matters of faith and practice.

One of Bushnell’s admirers, George H. Hastings, puts the matter nicely in metaphorical terms: “It is much to be regretted that, to the mass of readers, the Bible is all prose ... a homoeopathic medicine box ...” (*Lyrical Poetry of the Bible*, in the *Biblical Repository*, 1847, p. 323). Because of such views Bushnell insisted that preaching should be oratorical, designed to produce an emotional effect, not to teach truth, the notions so frigidly and distortedly aggregated in our doctrinal compends. Instead of dull, prosy dogmatism, supercilious authority, and merely traditional answers to traditional questions, the preacher should be eloquent and express his personal involvement with rich imagery. And according to reports this is how Bushnell actually preached. He was extraordinarily effective in undermining Biblical truth.

To all this a Bible-believer may make several replies. First, while admitting that the Psalms are poetry, and that many books contain figures of speech and metaphors, such as the difficult visions in Revelation, the believer must insist that without literal language the body of the Bible, to use some metaphors of our own, however cosmetic it might appear, would have neither skeleton nor muscles. That Moses delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery is literal history. Or consider a chance paragraph in the New Testament viz., Mark 6:1-6: "And he went out from thence and came into his own country ... and when the sabbath was come he began to teach in the synagogue ... And they were offended at him ... And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages teaching." All this is literal language; there is not even a parable in the paragraph. Above all, what about the book Bushnell calls the most contradictory of all? John 19 reads, in part, "The soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put it on his head ... They crucified him and two other with him ... When Jesus therefore received the vinegar, he said, It is finished." Straightforward, literal, intelligible propositions, sentences, pieces of information. Without such the Bible's poetry would be a sham. Equally indispensable is the literal language of the Ten Commandments. A command is not an historical sentence, it is not true or false as propositions are; but it is not poetry either; and unless the commands, Thou shalt not steal *et al* are literal and intelligible, the Christian is left without moral norms. Bushnell in his dependence on existential experience and personal preferences is hard put to it to justify any objective type of morality.

These criticisms presuppose that Christianity requires literal historical information and clear-cut moral principles. This necessitates a language that is capable and adequate to express such meanings. If the Scripture says, "men leaving the natural use of the woman burned in their lust toward one another" it is not to be taken as a symbolic justification of the ordination of such men and women to the ministry. Not only history and ethics, but doctrines also -- the Deity of Christ, the perseverance of the saints, and so on -- must be put in understandable language, for there is a great difference between the idea of earning heaven by one's own merits and receiving salvation on the basis of Christ's merit, or between Unitarianism and Trinitarianism.

The theological student, however, if satisfied by this appeal to the Bible, should not ignore more general, philosophical objections to Bushnell's theory of language. Here are some brief samples, and more will come later.

A linguist or at least a mathematician may well point out that the concept of the square root of minus one, or the concept of the general conic, has no sensory content and cannot be produced from sensation. One of Bushnell's acerbic critics, David Lord, taunted, "The difficulty with him is not at all . . . that there are no words that are adequate to convey the thoughts with which his mind teems; but instead, that he has not the thoughts which it is the office of the words he uses to convey." No doubt this approximates the truth; but it may be more witty than accurate. One can say simply that his presuppositions against logical Calvinism led him to erroneous analyses of language.

Clearly the basic objection to Bushnell's theory of language is its implicit denial of all distinction between truth and error. Unitarianism and Trinitarianism become the same thing. For him doctrine is the metaphorical formulation of subjective experience. To escape complete subjectivity Bushnell sometimes appeals to church history or to (western) society. Social experience, however, cannot supply the needed objectivity, for to use it the individual must first judge one society more acceptable than another. The Chinese, the Bantus, the Hindus, and the hippies do not share Bushnell's preference for nineteenth century Americanism. Society therefore can furnish no objective defense against personal proclivities. Bushnell had a certain leverage against his nineteenth century critics because they too operated on a philosophic empiricism. Empiricism results in total skepticism, even if Locke, Edwards, and Hodge did not recognize it. Yet the whole early nineteenth century controversy took place within empirical limits.' A more thorough-going and fundamental refutation of Bushnell, his unitarian trinity, and his moral influence theory of the atonement, can be made on the basis of a non-empirical realism. Such was Plato's theory of Ideas, which Philo and Augustine altered for the better. Later chapters will discuss its relation to immediate imputation, the intermediate state, and other doctrines.

The twentieth century's most prominent theory of language, as the beginning of the present sub-section noted, is that of Logical Positivism. It is more consistently empirical than

Bushnell and leaves no more room for his emotional religion than for theological Calvinism. Briefly the Logical Positivists hold that language is an evolutionary development from animal cries, and that more complicated organisms found it useful for their immediate needs. With this empirical origin language cannot be properly extended to non-empirical metaphysics, philosophy, or religion. A sentence is meaningful only if it can be tested by sensory perception. Since religion purports to express the trans-phenomenal or transcendental, the language is meaningless.

A quotation from Leonard Bloomfield, *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* (Vol. I, p. 227) will serve as an example of Logical Positivism.

“Language creates and exemplifies a twofold value of some human actions. In its *biophysical* aspect language consists of sound-producing movements and of the resultant sound waves and of the vibration of the hearer’s ear. The *biosocial* aspect of language consists in the fact that the persons in a community have been trained to produce these sounds ... They have been trained to utter conventional sounds as a secondary response to situations and to respond to these slight sounds in a kind of trigger effect.” On page 233 he continues, “Language bridges the gap between the individual nervous systems ... The movements of speech [lip movements of young children] are replaced by internal movements ... This inner speech accounts for the main body of vaguely bounded systems of actions that in everyday parlance goes by the name of ‘thinking’” (p. 235).

This quotation contains three parts. First is a description of the purely physical production of noises, but not really noises, only vibrations in the ear drums. Can such physical motions be identified with sensations or perceptions; or, if not identified as the Logical Positivists wish, can they so much as produce a mental event? The second part of the quotation leaps to a society that has trained people to make conventional sounds. How a society could be organized and how several people could give a sound a conventional meaning, merely on the basis of physical motions, are questions behaviorism cannot answer. Physics and chemistry produce no basis for making a motion refer to something else. Reference is strictly mental. Bloomfield depends on a “trigger effect.” Thus conventional references are produced the way a spring snaps. The third part of the quotation is equally impossible. If conventional signs are merely trigger effects, their

snappings may indeed “bridge the gap between individual nervous systems,” just as an electric shock can stimulate the gastrocnemius muscle of a dead frog; but the frog never succeeds in understanding the philosophic beliefs of the electricity.

Difficulties inherent in Logical Positivism have forced extensive alterations in the theory. Then, too, other authors have broached other theories of language. Wilbur Marshall Urban was not a defender of Calvinism; but neither was he a behaviorist. His exceedingly interesting volume, *Language and Reality*, proposes a different theory of language that allows for a type of religion and revelation. Since his engrossing book is about seven hundred pages long, it is obvious that what follows is utterly inadequate; but some slight view of a non-behavioristic theory can be had.

Against behaviorism Urban notes that Darwinian naturalism makes language merely an instrument of adaption and control, and therefore incapable of application to whatever is non-physical (p. 31). This includes both mathematics and religion. The great flaw in naturalism, which holds that language is “natural” rather than divine, and has evolved from grunts and screeches, is its inability to account for meaning (p. 67). Stick a pin in a dog and it yelps; but how on an evolutionary view can a yelp become a symbol for something else, as the sound d-o-g is a symbol for the animal stuck? Mere animal noises do not *symbolize*, *indicate*, or *represent* objects (p. 75). When behaviorism depends on the causal theory of meaning, that is, on the theory that the meaning of both the thing and the word are identical to our mode of reacting, it does away with representation and correspondence. A sound does not become a word until detached from the causal context, and this detaching cannot be a function of the physical environment (p. 129).

Urban is to be admired. He attempts to give a positive theory of language in addition to his critical arguments against Logical Positivism. But it may be questioned whether or not his positive procedure is as good as his negative.

Urban lays great stress on the fact that language is meaningful. This is the quality by which he refutes Darwinism and behaviorism. To this end he builds a masterful argument over many pages (185-225). By the concept of meaning he also tries to build a positive theory. Some sounds, he says, though not with great plausibility, are self-authenticating. The words *ache* and

*buzz* sound like their meaning. Then he seems to skip from a few such words to a metaphorical extension of them. The word *kid* (though who would say it sounded like a goat?) means a young goat, but by metaphor it is transferred to a human child; and from this Urban concludes that metaphor is the primary law of speech construction (p. 112 ff.). In conformity with this he instances the primitive word *ouatou*, which means stream. Then *ouatou-ou-cu* comes to mean ocean. This, he says, is intrinsic expressiveness. It is more than indication; it is representation. The symbol is imitative and conjures up the thing itself.

But how many readers, when they first came to the letters *ouatou* above, conjured up the idea of a stream? Do an experiment on some friends. Tell them you have learned a new word in a primitive language and ask them to guess its meaning. Will twenty-five percent guess *stream*? Probably less than five percent, or less than one percent, would guess correctly. Could it not be the Navajo word for *agave*?

At any rate Urban would have language grow by metaphor, and metaphor is closely connected with mythology (p. 176). Although no evidence is given that metaphor is more closely connected with mythology than it is with love poems, the point is interesting for the Christian student because recent liberal theology usually takes revelation to be mythological.

In his efforts to avoid behaviorism, and further to do justice to non-sensory objects of knowledge, purposes that strain both metaphor and mythology, Urban launches into a long metaphysical section, the consistency of which is not apparent. He holds that language develops from the perceptual stage, through the metaphorical, and on to the symbolic. In the symbolic stage we discover logic; and logic leads to a metaphysic of categories (p. 305). If this metaphoric is false, as positivism insists, logic cannot show that it is false; only another metaphoric could; but since positivism repudiates all metaphysics, its theory of language fails to disprove the opposing theory. Further, logic is normative. Psychology may tell how we actually think; logic tells us how we ought to think. And presumably Urban wants to show that positivism has no place for universal norms.

After a long discussion of poetry and physics Urban comes to consider religion. Religion and poetry, he says, are almost identical. The language is emotive and dramatic; and he refers to the Psalms and John 17 as examples. But whereas poetry is not seriously “evocative,” religion is

evocative, invocative, and has the quality of the holy. Therefore religion has a personal God, and this is dramatic (pp. 573, 574). But for this very reason religious language is also mythological; that is, it seeks a non-scientific intelligibility which dramatic language alone cannot express. Therefore religious language communicates something other language cannot. All religions speak a common language and are immediately friends. The words of all religions have a common reference.

All symbolism is distortion; but religious symbols are distortions of intuitable [sensory] realities for the purpose of expressing what is infinite and transphenomenal. Urban uses the example of the many arms and legs of a Hindu idol; and he should have added that the idol and the cross signify the same thing. The passage is thoroughly idolatrous (pp. 582 ff.). Such myths, he says, represent the noumenal world, but they never are literal pictures of that world. "The essence of the religious symbol ... is that it both is and is not the truth about the object symbolized" (p. 585). The Lord's Supper, for example, expresses ideas too great for ordinary language; but when we ask the meaning of the symbols, the reply is given in words. Therefore the language of religion must be theology, and rather obviously Urban considers this inadequate, a distortion, and not prosaically true.

The Genesis account of Adam and Eve, for example, is not true literally. Like a fable it represents the separation of man from God, and this is a phenomenon of religious life. But if one separate the "belief-content" from the mythical language, there is no religion left. Myth is indispensable to religion because (1) myth is the only source of religious symbolism, and (2) myth is a unique way of apprehending reality (pp. 590-593). What religion tells us implicitly is of more importance than what it says explicitly. Religion is the belief in the conservation of values. The ideas of a Creator and a final judgment mean that values have cosmic significance. Therefore science and mathematics can never contradict religion because they do not speak the same language (pp. 619-624).

To all this a Christian can reply that the explicit meaning of Almighty God's creating the universe by the word of his power is of far greater importance than a vague belief in the conservation of some undefined values. The literal resurrection of Christ from the dead may conflict with science or scientism, but so much the worse for scientism. The prose statement of

justification by faith in Romans 3:24-26 outweighs all mythological poetry. Urban will reply: you have lost all religion and we do not speak the same language. We answer: Correct, we do not speak the same language and neither do we accept your unintelligible religion.

At the beginning of this sub-section on language the student was warned to skip it if he found it difficult. But any student who did not take this good advice, and has read to this point, should by now try to realize that the subject matter is not foreign to the most important doctrines of Christianity. It is fundamental, for if language is inherently incompetent to express theological truth accurately, then no doctrine can be accepted. The whole is poetry, myth, or nonsense. Wittgenstein held that language is an ill-fitting mold of thought. Bergson and Whitehead say that language distorts reality because the purpose of language is practical. Urban we have just completed; and Brunner insists that not only language, but thought itself cannot grasp God.

Another example, though not so intricate, of the relation of religion and language, is found in Frederick Sontag's *How Philosophy Shapes Theology*. After ending chapter two with the remark that the philosophies of Spinoza, Hume, and Kant are all "verbal patterns of crucially defined terms," Sontag begins chapter three with the additional remark that "it is possible to lead a religious life without discussing it or verbalizing very much about it." Although these statements are literally true, as in the case of a mute moron, they seem to invite misunderstanding. First, many contemporary books on religion, or even on philosophy as a whole, reduce the subject matter to "verbalizing," with the result that the test of acceptability, not to say truth, is simply grammatical. If the language used is "ordinary" English, then the speaker cannot be criticized. So far as the avowed "ordinary language" philosophers are concerned, there seems to be no question beyond the determination of whether or not the speaker conforms to some relatively wide linguistic usage. The *thought* behind the words has evaporated. In the second place, no one will deny that a religious life can go on "without discussing it or verbalizing very much about it." In addition to the deaf and dumb, the whirling dervishes are good examples. Even some devout Christians, uneducated and born unintelligent, may fail to verbalize and even to think very much. But one must doubt that it is possible to lead a Christian life without some thinking. Sontag's use of "religious life," and not Sontag's only, depends on classifying all professed "religions" in one category. This results in confusion. Such philosophers

may claim that all religions believe in some sort of God, and thus find a unitary, all inclusive religion. But the term *God* is an excellent and fatal example of verbalizing without thought. Spinoza constantly speaks of God -- *Deus sive natura* -- and means the universe; Moslems have a fairly definite concept of Allah, quite distinct from Spinoza's concept; and Christians mean the Trinity. If Buddhism is a religion, as it is usually supposed to be in "ordinary" language, then it is false to say that all religions believe in some sort of God. Perhaps, however, all religions believe in some sort of "heaven." Again, this is verbalization without thought. Nirvana, the Islamic heaven, and the Christian heaven, not to mention Spinoza's *species aeternitatis*, have no common intellectual content. Hence a discussion of "religious life" must be vitiated from the beginning by radical ambiguities. Clarity of thought, not similarity of words, can be achieved only by explicit discussions of the Koran's view of life, or the Bible's, or Spinoza's. The ambiguity of classifying them all together allows Sontag to say, "if this is true, then religion as a way of life can be quite independent of philosophy" (p. 46). But the Christian way of life cannot at all be independent of thought. From the ambiguously true statement quoted, Sontag draws the unambiguously false statement that "in order to understand either religion or philosophy, the independence of the religious life must be realized." It should not be necessary to add, but to avoid unintelligent criticism let it be said, that Christianity does not regard the inarticulate and unintelligent devotion of a disadvantaged child as the ideal Christian life. Athanasius, Luther, and Calvin seem to be better imitators of Paul.

I Cor. 11:1    Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ.

A final and last example of theories of language and their application to religion will be *Words and the WORD* by Kenneth Hamilton (Eerdmans, 1971). Although the theory is basically the same, Hamilton differs from Urban in two points: he is a theologian and not a secular philosopher, and he carries his theory beyond the stage of mythological language in his attempt to explain religious language. Like Urban he rejects Logical Positivism, for it turns theology into nonsense; and he also judges idealism as inadequate because in extending language to cover transphenomenal reality it loses the world of sense where history takes time and space.

Although the author rejects idealism, he retains a somewhat similar view of mythical language. On page 86, where he has left off his descriptions of other views and is totally engaged

in explaining his own, he says, “Nevertheless, as we have seen, all language grows out of mythic thinking and still bears the marks of its origin.” This is a surprising statement for two reasons. First, the words, “as we have seen” are surprising because the reader has nowhere seen it. Hamilton has provided no reason. In the second place, it is equally implausible to assert, without evidence, that all language still bears the marks of its mythological origin. True enough, Hamilton admits that scientific thought “tries as much as possible to escape from the subjectivities of language by using the sign-language of mathematics” (p. 87). But it is not enough to brush mathematics aside with such a brief admission. What is needed is evidence that the words *two* and *three* bear the marks of their mythic origin. What are these marks? They should be specified. For that matter Hamilton makes no effort to show that even the word *cat* has a mythological origin and still bears discernible traces of the same.

Chapter two, where Hamilton apparently tries to justify his mythical view, is replete with ungrounded assertions. Examples are: (1) “Myth then is not in the first instance a fiction imposed on one’s already given world ...” -- I should think it is; (2) “each life reenacts in part the history of the human race” -- sufficiently vague to be true in some sense or other, but does Hamilton mean ‘ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny,’ or that each boy sometimes suffers a Napoleonic complex; (3) “The close relationship between the mythic and the religious consciousness is very visible *here* [italics mine],” i.e. in the fact that children’s “personal excursions into myth making result in their being accused of being deliberate liars!” -- where is there *here* any relationship between the religious consciousness and myth; (4) similarly to a previous thought, “Being something [like a cat] has been given a name, it remains unknown ... Naming it causes it to ‘be’ in the sense that it now enters into human consciousness as an entity existing in its own right ...” -- was this true of the planet Neptune after it was discovered and before it was named, or the continent now named America?

Here then are four instances in which Hamilton has given no reasons for asserting that “all language grows out of mythic thinking and still bears the marks of its origin.”

Although mythology is the basis of Hamilton’s theory of language and inspiration, one must not suppose that he is a simple “mythologist.” He is far from endorsing Bultmann’s program of demythologization. To arrive at Biblical language, two steps away from mythology

must be taken. The first is to dilute, or refine, myth into poetry. This advance, he says, gives us a God who really exists, as opposed to mythological gods who do not.

In any case, poetry cannot give us any literal truth about God. It still retains too much myth. Of course, the retention is not all bad. Myth, says the author, is not merely superstition (p. 63). “The true religion is born in the midst of the many false religions.” From which one may conclude that mythology had to work toward a concept of Jehovah before Adam could have had this idea. No evidence for the quoted statement is given. It apparently depends on the evolutionary principle that monotheism is a late development.

Even so, the influence of the old mythological language continues, either in poetry or in Hamilton’s second step. ‘The Scriptures did not fall down from heaven ...’ (p. 63). Well, of course, not even the tables of stone on which God wrote the Ten Commandments fell down from heaven. Moses used a pen to write them. Therefore what the author expressly says is literally true. But does he not mean to suggest that the verbal message of the Scriptures did not come from heaven? “The Word of God comes to us as the words of men, men rooted in their times and speaking the language of their country.” Again, true literally, apart from its context. The Scriptures come *to us* in the twentieth century translated into English. They did not fall down from heaven to us in our life time. But what about revelations to Adam, Abraham, and even to Moses before he wrote them down? Could not God have used Hebrew? Must God have used language formed by mythology? Is God incapable of revealing the literal truth? Hamilton clearly holds that human language is incapable of expressing literal truth about God. His last sentence in chapter two would have been unnecessary and impossible if he had thought that Scriptural language was literal. The last sentence is: “How human language, formed on patterns that have grown out of myth can convey to us the truth of God’s own revelation: this is the subject of my next two lectures” (p. 63)

Before summarizing chapters three and four, one can well pause to consider the phrase *human language*. When Paul in human Greek says that God justifies believers, did he speak the literal truth or some other, unknowable kind of truth, that is not truth at all? A phrase similar to “human language” occurs frequently in other authors. They contrast “human logic” with “divine logic.” But do they dare make explicit what this phrase means? Human logic says, If all men are

mortal, and if Socrates is a man, then Socrates is mortal. But if divine logic is different, then all men can be mortal and Socrates can be a man, yet Socrates will not be mortal. Or, again, if human mathematics says that two plus two is four, and if divine truth differs from ours, then for God two and two are five or ten or anything but four. The point here is that human logic and divine logic are identical. Human logic is a part of the divine image in man. It is God's trademark stamped upon us. Only by rejecting the Biblical doctrine of God's image can one contrast human language with divine language and divine logic with human.

Finally, if human language cannot be literally true, any assertion "language is not literal" cannot be literally true. The position is self-refuting; and one can have little hope of explaining how "language formed on mythical patterns" can convey God's truth.

At this point Hamilton begins to take his second step away from myth. He goes from myth to poetry to parable. "Christian faith ... gladly admits that better knowledge of the objective world has made religions founded upon the literal acceptance of myth untenable" (p. 67).<sup>2</sup> Yet he will have man, by reason of symbolic language, remain a "myth-making creature." Then, he continues, Christian faith gives "no privileged instruction about 'what the case is' in the created world," e.g. that David was King of Israel, "nevertheless [it] gives him essential knowledge about the world as divinely created. It also gives him assurance of the human meaning of his existence. It mediates this meaning beyond the reaches of his own consciousness ..."

But if faith or revelation cannot tell us about David, how can it tell us about the divine creation of the world? Surely the latter is harder to discover. Then too, how can faith "mediate" any meaning beyond consciousness? Is not faith an element of consciousness?

But let us get on with the second step away from mythic language, to parabolic language that supposedly reveals divine truth better than plain literal statement can. Why and how does Hamilton arrive at parable? The how is not at all clear. No theory is worked out to show that language, assumed to originate in myth, must by the laws of evolution become poetry, and then by those same laws become parabolic. Hamilton's *why* is clearer than his *how*. The reason is that he does not want to get so far away from mythology as to arrive at literal truth. He wants to prepare the ground by rejecting plenary and verbal Inspiration. "'Dictation' theories of revelation

sometimes seem to assume that God communicates His Word through vocables,<sup>3</sup> so that understanding the exact sense of an aggregate of propositions is to receive the Word of God. This is surely to bind the divine Word to the measure of human words ...”

This type of argument is essentially similar to the Pentecostalist charge that those who repudiate speaking in tongues ‘bind the divine Spirit to the measure of their human theology.’ This is irrelevance. It is not a question of the Spirit's omnipotence. It is a question of what the Spirit will do. If God has restricted the working of miracles to the age of the prophets and the apostles, it does not limit his power to say that there are no miracles today. Similarly, when we say that God spoke Hebrew to Abraham and Greek to Paul, we do not bind God at all; we simply resort what he did. It is rather Hamilton who binds God by denying him the ability to speak literal language to his creatures.

This impoverished view of the Bible seems to lead Hamilton to expect revelations outside the Scripture. The remainder of his sentence half quoted above is:

“for it is to say that we already have the words that can state all that God can possibly want us to know.” “Can possibly” is the language of propaganda. The question does not concern what God can possibly do: it is a question of what God has actually done. The Reformation view is that the Scriptures give us all the information about salvation that God wants us to know. As II Peter 1:3 says, God’s “divine power has [already] given us everything pertaining to life and piety.” And the well-known II Timothy 3:16-17 says that Scripture furnishes a man *completely* for *every* good work. Nothing else is needed. For this reason Hamilton’s word “state” is also a propaganda device. It was never the Reformation view that the Bible states, explicitly, all that God wants us to know. But as the Westminster Confession says, “The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture,” i.e. by human logic that is logical because it is first divine logic.

Therefore, what Hamilton objects to seems to be Biblical divine truth, viz., “faith in God consists essentially in the believing reception of ...” not perhaps of “each and every scriptural statement,” for this would require a prodigious memory, but at least of the basic theology “as objectively true” (p. 75).

It is quite clear that Hamilton does not accept the Bible as the Word of God. “The fact that words are in the Bible ... does not mean that our reading of them necessarily must yield authoritative statements that we can proceed forthwith to identify with the Word of God.” Well, of course, not *necessarily*, for some people some of the time do not understand the words they read; so that “our reading” the words, if we are such people, does not necessarily yield correct propositions. The *phraseology* here is again propaganda, for the important question is not whether some people misread the Bible, but whether the words and sentences of the Bible are authoritative statements because they are true because they are the words of God. It is obviously poor thinking to attack a theory of the inspiration and truth of the Scriptures on the ground that some people do not understand the words. Must one take a textbook on calculus as mythological, poetic, or parabolic and not literally true, because some high school students cannot understand it? It is by such invalid reasoning that Hamilton rejects the Scripture as revelation. He says, “Were this the case [identifying the words of the Bible with the word of God] then the Bible, rather than being that inspired record ... would be the written law of God.”

Now there is a sense in which the Bible is an inspired record. It inerrantly records God’s revelation to Abraham and the wars of David King of Israel. But in addition to being a record of divine revelations, it is itself the complete revelation. As the opening section of the Westminster Confession (determinative of the evangelical position) says, “it pleased the Lord ... to commit the same [earlier revelations] wholly unto writing ... those former ways of God’s revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.” Thus in contrast with Hamilton’s denial, the Bible is indeed the written law of God.

It must be emphasized that Hamilton has rejected the historical position of Protestantism, and in doing so has misunderstood what that position is. He speaks of “a lapse into legalism among those followers of Calvin who had gone beyond Calvin’s robust practical grasp of Christian faith to erect, *as he did not* [italics mine], theories of verbally inerrant inspiration.”

Now, besides the pejorative use of the words *lapse* and *legalism* in contrast with *robust*, one must note the historical reference in the words “as he did not.”

Calvin’s position, which is somewhat different from what Hamilton would have us believe, is set forth at length by Kenneth Kantzer in the E.T.S. publication, *Inspiration and*

*Interpretation* (edited by John F. Walvoord, Eerdmans, 1957) chapter four, *Calvin and the Holy Scriptures*. Here Kantzer quotes Calvin's *Institutes*, "God ... was pleased to commit and consign his word to writing ... he commanded also the prophecies to be committed to writing, and to be held part of his word. To these at the same time were added historical details, which are also the composition of prophets but dictated by the Holy Spirit" (p. 137).

In fact, as Kantzer points out, Calvin frequently asserted that God "dictated" the text. True enough, Calvin did not use the verb as it applies in a modern business office. But its frequency should warn everyone against attributing to Calvin a view that God dictates errors. Kantzer refers to Calvin's calling the prophets "clerks" and "penmen," "sure and authentic amanuenses of the Holy Spirit; and therefore their writings are to be considered as the oracles of God." He also calls them "organs and instruments." He refers to Scripture as the "sure and infallible record," "the unerring standard" --here is inerrancy, -- "the pure Word of God" and "the infallible rule of his holy truth." Quoting no less than thirteen other passages, Kantzer remarks, "The merest glance at Calvin's commentaries will demonstrate how seriously the reformer applied his rigid doctrine of verbal inerrancy to his exegesis of Scripture" (p. 142).

May I also add a quotation from the *Institutes* I, vii, 1: "Believers ... are satisfied of its divine origin, as if they heard *the very words* pronounced by God himself."

In spite of the fact that Hamilton wants to escape myth through poetry to parable, he continues to say, "The language of Scripture ... would have been incomprehensible otherwise ..." i.e. unless mythic patterns had been used. Ananias would not have understood the directions to Straight St, had it not been mythological in form. "Sumerian, Babylonian, Phoenician, and Egyptian myths [were] taken up into the biblical accounts of creation" and "Gnostic myths [are] present in the N.T. descriptions of Christ<sup>4</sup> ... The biblical language employs the imagery of myth, while transforming its content.<sup>5</sup> Creation myths in which the gods wrested apart earth and heaven out of the body of the monster Chaos account for some of the phrasing of the biblical account of creation" (p. 89).

Clearly, however much Hamilton may want to go beyond myth, he does not seem to get very far away, for on the next page he says, "Lacking the mythic pattern [of Gnosticism] that originally

produced the necessary terminology, we should not be able to speak of Christ's death and resurrection" (p. 90).

Is this not complete nonsense? Am I dependent on Gnostic or other myths when I speak of Roman soldiers laying Jesus on a cross and pounding nails into his hands and feet? Certainly I understood this in childhood long before I ever heard of Gnosticism. Nor am I at all sure that Matthew knew anything about Gnosticism. If anyone now replies that Matthew and I did not need to have known Gnosticism because we use language already formed, let him explain to us how mythology formed the words: nails, soldiers, cross, spear, and death. Similarly what mythology is needed for Peter to see that the tomb was empty and later to see Jesus in Galilee and talk with him? Is it not therefore complete nonsense to say that we could not talk about Christ's death unless mythology had given us these words?

One hardly escapes the impression that the author does not treat his opponents fairly. He says, "Yet because revelation is given in human words, it cannot be more precise than language allows. [How true! A perfect tautology. But is God, who' produced language, unable to use it with perfect precision?] The belief that the Bible consists of statements of *literal truth* [italics his], therefore, is ill-conceived. [The *therefore* is a logical fallacy.] The notion of literal truth is quite correct if we oppose literal to the mythical ... In this sense we must say that God *literally* created the world .... It is quite another matter, though, if we insist that all the statements of Scripture are literally true ..." (p. 91). This sort of argument is hardly fair to the Reformation view because no one from the time of Moses to the present ever said that all statements are strictly literal. Did Luther; Quenstedt, Gaussen, or Warfield ever say so? Of course there are figures of speech, metaphors, anthropomorphisms, and, the like. But these would be meaningless if there were no literal statements to give them meaning. For example, II Chronicles 16:9, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth," is ludicrously ridiculous if taken literally: little eyeballs rolling over the dusty ground. But unless the statement, God is omniscient, is literal, the figure has nothing to refer to. Surely Hamilton did not publish his book to remind us that the Bible contains some figures of speech. And yet his argument here depends on the alleged fact that someone said "all the statements of Scripture are literally true."

Consider the footnote on this page: “‘Literal’ is not synonymous with ‘historical.’ Inspiration does not imply that what is inspired must be understood literally, and even less that everything must be viewed as having actually happened ... To put it bluntly, to accept everything reported in the Bible as having actually happened, one must tamper with the text.” These words, which Hamilton with approval quotes from H. M. Kuitert are unclear. The language is typical of liberals who want to appear conservative to orthodox people, while they undermine the truth of the Scripture. When Kuitert says “everything reported,” does he refer to metaphors, to statements made by Satan, or does “everything reported” refer to everything reported as having actually occurred? The first two possibilities are puerile. The third is a repudiation of Evangelical religion. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the latter is the meaning intended. For example, II Peter claims that it was written by Peter. About such a claim Hamilton writes, “For a long time now, every author has been considered to have a proprietary right over his works. But the biblical books came out of a milieu in which such a concept was unknown, and where there was no issue of truth or falsehood involved in using a revered name in connection with writings by other hands.” This statement is not true even of pagan scholarship, for the Alexandrian philosophers carefully distinguished between thirty-six genuine Platonic dialogues and ten spurious. See also E. M. B. Green, *Second Peter Reconsidered* (Tyndale Press, 1960), where he writes to the effect that forgeries were not cordially received as the critics maintain, but that the sub-apostolics distinguished themselves and even Apollos from the apostles, and deposed the author of *Paul and Thekla* for his imposture. Another instance was Serapion, who banned the *Gospel of Peter* from his church because by careful investigation he had discovered it was a forgery.

After his remarks on the authorship of spurious writings, Hamilton comes quickly to his solution to the problem of how language with its mythical inheritance can express divine truth. It is done by parable. The book of Jonah, he says, does not report actual occurrences. Its literary form shows that it is a parable. [There never was a Jonah. I guess there was no Ninevah, either.] Everyone acknowledges that Christ taught in parables.<sup>6</sup> Not everything in the Bible, Hamilton acknowledges, is a parable; the apocalyptic visions are not. But “if we are to look for a ‘key’



plainly, and speakest no proverb.

This concludes the chapter on the Scriptural doctrine of Scripture. As for these theories of language, their self-refuting quality is enough to discredit them. Even if they were not self-refuting, their futility in the practice of any intelligible religion makes them worthless. But for the establishment of a positive theory of language it is necessary to consider the nature of God as a rational being, the nature of man as a created being, the nature of the revelational message as an intelligible communication; and these matters are properly considered in their places in the following chapters.

1        *Revelation and Inspiration*, p. 79. Oxford Univ. Press, 1927.

2        By *objective world* here Hamilton seems to mean *sensory world*, as if the world of meaning or intelligibility were subjective. Yet on p. 68 he speaks of the Word Himself – surely not a sensory object – as objective. It is hard to say precisely what his argument is on these two pages.

3        For instance, God directed Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, or, God directed Ananias to go to the house of Judas on Straight St. and ask for a man named Saul of Tarsus. Or are not these passages, with their specific directions, the word of God?

4        For a definitive refutation see *The Origin of Paul's Religion*, J. Gresham Machen.

5        Does it? How? With what result?

6        A common criterion for distinguishing a parable of Christ from something he reports as having happened is the absence in the first and the presence in the second of names: a man that was a householder went out early to hire laborers, or a certain king made a marriage feast for his son, versus, the blood of Abel ... of Zachariah, son of Barachiah, whom ye slew, or other references to OT events.