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Sincerely,

Prof. H. Hanko, Editor

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THE CHRIST OF HISTORY

--Prof. H. Hanko--

In close connection with the recent discussions of the doctrine of Scripture in Reformed circles has come a growing emphasis on what is called the kerygma. So insistent has become the clamor for emphasis on the kerygma that gradually a kind of "kerygma theology" is being formulated.

What is meant by this emphasis? In general, those who promote this idea speak of Scripture as being "kerygmatic" rather than a book containing "propositional revelation."¹ The point is that the two are mutually exclusive. Scripture is not intended, it is said, to convey objective revelation, to bring to the attention of its readers certain objective truths concerning God. It is rather written to bring man face to face with God, so that man is forced by Scripture into decision. Scripture is intended to bring about an encounter between man and God--an encounter which, hopefully, will result in a favorable decision by man by which he comes into possession of God. But the result can also be unfavorable, by which man becomes God's enemy.

A. H. De Graaff is a good example of this. He writes:

Summarizing our findings thus far we can say that it is not the purpose of the Bible to inform us about the nature of God's being or his attributes. 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 to explain! It is only in his actions that God's being and his attributes are revealed to us.²

And again:

The Bible is not to be read as a collection of propositional statements about God and man that we can memorize and master. Neither does it contain

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- 1) We are not overly fond of the term "propositional revelation." It fails to make a proper distinction between revelation and inspiration.
 - 2) Understanding The Scriptures, A. De Graaff & C. Seerveld, The Assoc. for the Advancement of Chr. Scholarship, Toronto, 1968, pp. 9,10

general truths that we could possibly consider apart from their meaning for our own lives, nor does it contain moral applications that tell us how to live the good life,--virtues that we share with the humanist.³

Hendrik Hart says approximately the same thing:

We can also point to the increasingly popular designation of Scripture as propositional revelation, a designation which culminates in seeing truth as propositional and in conceiving of the Word of God as so many sentences, whereby each sentence becomes a truth and each proposition a self-contained revelation.⁴

What we have to avoid at all cost, if biblical living is to be meaningful living, is on the one hand to undermine the full authority of the Bible and on the other hand to reduce the Word of God to a set of truths, a collection of infallible propositions. For both stand in the way of God's Word-revelation in the Scriptures.⁵

There are many points of doctrine in this position, not the least of which is the question of the historicity of the Scriptural records and especially the historicity of the gospel records. And from this point of view, the question is not a new one.

When rationalism had captured the imagination of theologians on the continent of Europe, form criticism became an almost universally accepted method of interpreting Scripture. The form critics insisted essentially that the gospel narratives were not God-inspired documents but rather rose out of the circumstances of the early church. The church was faced with the problem of communicating the gospel to the Jews in Palestine first of all, and later to the Greeks scattered abroad throughout the Roman Empire.

3) Ibid., p. 21.

4) The Challenge of our Age, Hendrik Hart, Assoc. for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship, Toronto, 1968, p. 118.

5) Ibid., p. 119.

The leaders in that early Christian community knew what Jesus Himself would have done and said under the circumstances in which they found themselves and in the midst of the problems they faced. So they not merely spoke in Jesus' name, but they also proceeded to affirm that Jesus had actually said and done what they knew He would have said and done. This is the way in which the gospel narratives were formulated. The narratives do not propose actual historical fact; they merely give us what their authors thought Jesus would have said and done under the circumstances of communicating the gospel to the heathen. And, when they used Old Testament references, they were merely attempting to find documentation for a theology they themselves had previously formulated. Hence, the gospels are "kerygma."

This view is based on certain presuppositions. For one thing, the form critics were assuming that the early church knew very little of what Jesus had actually said and done. What had transpired in the years of Jesus' life and especially in the three and a half years of His public ministry had all but been forgotten. Only a few stories and traditions remained. What the early church did have was a general idea of the importance of Jesus' life (in distinction from actual historical records) which placed the church under an obligation to formulate a theology which it thought would be consistent with Christ's life--a theology which would serve to communicate the importance of Christ to the surrounding world. But this theology was their own invention. And when they actually affirmed that their theology had been spoken and lived by Christ, they were projecting back into Christ's life words and deeds which had not actually taken place. This was not a deliberate deception; it was, in the opinion of the authors, the most effective way to communicate their beliefs.

The result is that the New Testament Scriptures give to us more information concerning the early church than concerning Jesus. The gospels are not to be accepted as historical in the sense that they record historically verifiable data. They are to be accepted only as "kerygma." The early church was interested in bringing the message of Jesus to the surrounding community; and

their absorption with the kerygma was so complete that their interest in the historical Jesus was minimal or non-existent. The gospels are case material for a spiritual and psychological study of the early church. They are not the historical record of Jesus Christ.

2
Secondly, the presupposition of the form critics was a fundamental scepticism. With a basically sceptical approach to the Scriptures, they automatically ruled out the miraculous. Influenced by their rationalism, they assumed, a priori, that miracles are impossible. This excluded from consideration the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection and ascension of Christ--not to mention the many miracles which He had performed during the years of His public ministry.

Thus the kerygma of the early church is the only thing that counts.

In connection with this view of Scripture arose what became known as Gemeindetheologie. Those who spoke of a Gemeindetheologie emphasized the fact that the tradition which was carried over from the times of Jesus into the early church was shaped and fashioned according to the "life-situation" in which the church found itself. This life-situation was the determining factor in the formation of a theology of Jesus Christ which the church formulated and made use of in its preaching. This theology of Jesus had no basis in historical fact. It was determined objectively by the situation of the church in her efforts to communicate to her own age. It was the shaping of a kernel of tradition which had come down to her from the years of Jesus' life.

While essentially no different from the form critics, this school of thought emphasized more strongly that the kerygma which the early church fashioned and of which we have a record in the gospels was a kerygma formed in the particular life-situation of that day. The theology of the church was a theology of the ones who confessed Jesus--nothing more.

H. M. Kuitert adopts this view basically in his book, Do You Understand What You Read? He writes:

Now the people with whom God went about in covenant company lived a long time ago; the people

who responded to His presence with praise and prayer, confession and deeds, lived in a particular bit of time. God came to be spoken of and spoken to, not in the language of some super-time (for no man knows such a language), but in a particular language of a particular time. This is not an accidental by-product. God gives Himself as companion to particular and very real people, people who must speak about and to God in the very particular and real language that is their own. The time-bound Bible is not a regrettable concession; it is the only kind of Bible men could have. It is necessarily bound to time; and this fact is a mark of its authenticity as a revelation of the covenant-partner God.⁶

Karl Barth was determined in his own masterful way and with prodigious energy to put liberal theology in the grave once and for all. He insisted that the gospels contained objectively verifiable truths and that especially the incarnation, atonement, resurrection and ascension of Christ had to be maintained as part of history. To quote K. S. Kantzer:

God, so he (Barth) argues, really acted in human history to reveal Himself by becoming incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. As the God-man, Jesus Christ died vicariously for men on the cross, on the third day rose from the dead, leaving an empty tomb as a sign of His resurrection, and appeared to His disciples as His crowning triumph over death in securing the salvation of men. These "mighty acts" of God must be taken seriously; and Barth interprets them as God's acts within the sphere of ordinary human events.⁷

6) Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970; p. 29. Kuitert, in this paragraph and on following pages, is defending the proposition that Scripture is the church saying things about God.

7) Jesus of Nazareth: Saviour and Lord, Carl F. H. Henry, ed., Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966, p. 247.

Yet, even as Kantzer hastens to point out, Barth did not succeed in defeating the forces of liberalism. On the contrary, he gave impetus to them. He insisted, out of fear of submitting the Christian faith to the mercies of the secular historian, that the Jesus of history can never serve as the foundation of the faith of the Christian. The Christian, therefore, has nothing to do with the Jesus Who is a product of historical study (Historie); he has only to do with the Jesus of true history (Geschichte). This Jesus becomes known to us not through the Gospel records, but through the immediate and personal encounter of God with man in which God tells man of the reconciliation accomplished on the cross. This is also a Jesus of the kerygma rather than the Christ of history. As Kantzer says:

Again and again Barth tells us that he is not interested in the Jesus of history in the sense of going behind the New Testament documents in order to discover what the man was actually like who moved up and down the land of Palestine. In one sense the Jesus of history is the Jesus of the New Testament just as He is there portrayed--the virgin-born, miracle-working, vicariously-dying and resurrected incarnation of God. In another sense the Jesus of history is a monstrosity that never existed. For in going behind the New Testament records and building a Jesus that can be substantiated only by historical documents (according to the usual criterion of what makes documents historical), we are led irresistibly to a Jesus Who never really lived --a quite different Jesus from the real Jesus of the New Testament.⁸

It is not very easy to see how those who within Reformed circles speak so eloquently of the kerygma disassociate themselves from Barthian theology.

However that may be, Bultmann, once a close associate of

8) Ibid., p. 248

Barth, carried the matter to its logical conclusion. It was plain to him that while perhaps the kerygma made historical studies unnecessary, as Barth averred, these historical studies were impossible to begin with. He insisted that the preoccupation of the Bible writers with theology was so intense that they virtually were useless as historians. The gospels are not therefore historical records; they are theology only, and theology based upon the preaching of the apostles. The gospels are not safe records of actual historical events. They are only excerpts taken from apostolic theology, a theology formulated to bring the Christ of faith to the people of their time. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to know anything concerning Jesus as an historical person from the gospel records.

But, Bultmann is sure, this is not really necessary either. He makes a sharp distinction between "the Jesus of history" and "the Christ of faith." The former is, from the information given to us in Scripture, unknowable. All we can ascertain with any degree of certainty, is that there once existed a person called Jesus. But this lack is not to be deplored. We need know only the Christ of faith. And this Christ of faith is the Christ of theology, a theology formulated by the apostles; a theology of the kerygma.

But the trouble is, according to Bultmann, that the apostles were also bad theologians. This was not really their fault, however. It resulted from the fact that there were, in apostolic days, erroneous conceptions of the universe. Their conception of the universe was a conception in which there was an earth, a heaven and a hell. It was a universe in which God intervened in a miraculous way performing wonders which have no scientific explanation. But such a conception of a three-tiered universe into which God periodically entered has been disproved by modern science. And this conception of the universe, so very false, entered so completely into their theology that it makes their theology almost useless to us in our modern age. Our modern age requires an entirely new theology, one compatible with modern scientific discoveries and one which can meet the needs of Twentieth Century

man.⁹

Further, if the Christ of faith were dependent upon the Jesus of history, we are placed at the mercy of historians. This is a common complaint of liberal higher critics of Scripture which has been repeated countless times since the high-tide of Bultmannianism. Our faith, so it is argued, is dependent upon historical research if we must base our faith upon the Jesus of history. Our faith in Christ, if dependent upon the actual historicity of Jesus, rests upon the investigations of historical scientists. They must constantly bolster our faith with their studies. They must be ever at hand to lend support with their literary studies of available documents and with their archeological studies of the holy lands. But the possibility is very great that their research will turn up evidence which completely undermines our faith, and the believer is left hanging in the air.¹⁰ And so Bultmann concludes that the Christian faith demands no historical foundation other than the "thatness" of Jesus' existence.

It is evident from all this that the liberal theologian considers faith to be nothing else but an acceptance of the Christ of the kerygma. That is, faith is not directed to the historical Jesus Who is the reality behind the gospel narratives (and whom it is impossible to know), but is faith in the Christ of preaching. Faith is not in a person, but in an announcement. The liberal critics of Scripture are insistent on the point that it makes no difference to faith and to our relationship to God what kind of events occurred in history. Our response to the kerygma is the only thing that is important. Our response to the personal encounter with God in Christ is the thing that counts. And this response is in the nature of a particular kind of life which we live

9) With this Kuitert is in basic agreement. Science, he argues, has reached a point in development where it is trustworthy. The Bible must therefore be interpreted in the light of science, op. cit., p. 95.

10) In connection with these arguments of Bultmann it is important to notice first of all that they contain the seeds of the Sitz im leben idea which has become common in Reformed circles. Cf. the Journal, Vol. I, No.2. Secondly, these arguments deal with a matter of history which it is our particular concern to discuss in this and in a succeeding article.

in this present world.¹¹

There has risen, in response to Bultmann, a new school of thought which is not quite so eager to discard all parts of the historicity of the gospel narratives. These are alarmed at the easy way in which students of Bultmann have tossed out all of the history of Jesus. They want to save some parts of it. And so this school of thought, which embraces men such as Oscar Cullmann and C. H. Dodd, have attempted to hold to the objectivity of historical facts while making the interpretation of them subjective. They have maintained that the history recorded for us in the gospel narratives is substantially correct--although we must leave room for the Sitz im Leben Jesu and the Sitz im Leben des Verfassers which is really part of the Sitz im Leben der Alter Kirche. Cullmann
Dodd

This school of thought is generally known as the Heilsgeschichte School. But while it wants to retain a certain objectivity of historical facts, it makes the interpretation of these facts subjective. The interpretation of them is not part of revelation. This has its source in the church. And this interpretation of the historical facts which originates in the early church is the real kerygma. Thus, it is possible (and, indeed, likely) that the early church erred in its interpretation. It is the responsibility of the church throughout the ages to give the proper and correct interpretation.

Students of this school of thinking have very serious problems. They cannot arrive at any kind of agreement concerning what is really history and what is mere interpretation. For example, is the bodily resurrection of Christ an actual historical fact--something which took place in history? Or is the matter rather that what the gospels speak of as a bodily resurrection is only interpretation of something else in the life of Christ? Is the resurrection perhaps only a certain kind of interpretation of the

11) It is easy to see how the "social gospel" is rooted in such liberalism. It is not our purpose here to enter this question, but it is evident that "response" to the kerygma finally means social involvement, and faith is reduced to an attempt to solve social problems in this present world without any conception of theology as it is traditionally maintained by the church. Kuitert emphatically makes this point. The Bible, in speaking to us in the Twentieth Century, speaks concerning our present social problems, op. cit., pp. 107-111.

work of Jesus on earth? Is it possible that the early church interpreted Christ's life in such a way that, although Christ did not actually and bodily arise from the dead, His life was a kind of victory over the forces of evil? And that the resurrection narrative is the early church's way of interpreting the real meaning of His life? No one can be sure. There is only a difference of degree between the outright denial of history by Bultmann and the relative denial of history found in the Heilsgeschichte School.

All of these views, it can readily be seen, involve a certain kind of philosophy of history. It is not our intention to enter into a detailed discussion of this extremely involved subject at this point.¹² It is sufficient for our purposes to point out that underlying the reasoning of such men as Bultmann is a view of history which makes historical investigation really impossible. Historical investigation is impossible for several reasons. We are, in such investigation, dependent upon others who wrote such history. But these others who recorded history are completely unreliable. They are unreliable, not so much because they deliberately distorted history, but because a man cannot possibly be a reliable recorder of historical events. There are various reasons for this. The two most important are: 1) the recorder himself, to be a reliable recorder of history, must be completely objective. This he can never be. He will, as he views events, always interpret these events according to his own conceptions and ideas. He will interpret events according to his own conceptions of the world, of nature, of the historical development of things. He will interpret events in the light of his own theological presuppositions. Thus his interpretation will not be unbiased and will be, in most instances, wrong. 2) While he approaches events as a recorder of them, he cannot possibly know all that transpires to bring about a certain event. He is an observer of only a very small fragment

12) For a discussion of this subject, cf. J.W. Montgomery's article, "Toward A Christian Philosophy of History," C. H. Henry, op. cit., pp. 227-240.

of what is actually going on. He cannot know all the events which led up to this event and were influential in determining the particular character of the event. He cannot see the event as it stands related to the whole moving and rushing stream of history. He cannot even see the one event which he is observing in all its parts. And the result is that he gains a partial and incomplete idea of the event--a serious lack which will inevitably result in a misconception of what actually transpired. And so he is completely unreliable and his record cannot be trusted.

The ironical part of it is that most liberal critics of Scripture are very quickly led to apply these problems to the historical records of Scripture. But they fail utterly to see that consistency demands that they apply the same standards to any historical event, whether recorded in Scripture or in some other book on history. They are quite eager to deny the historicity of events contained in Scripture for which there is abundant literary (and even archeological) evidence, while they readily accept the evidence for events in the area of secular history which are only very poorly supported by any kind of evidence. This, more than anything else, is evidence of their unbelief.

When conservative scholars of Scripture enter into the fray and write many and lengthy scholarly articles to refute the arguments of their liberal opponents, they are very easily hurt by the accusation that they are not scholarly. It seems sometimes as if no single accusation hurts quite so much. And so they bend over backwards to avoid this charge and to write in such a way that the sneering challenge of unscholarliness can never be hurled against them.

All of this is well and good. We are all for scholarship. But one wonders sometimes if the fear which many conservatives have of hearing this accusation made against them has not vitiated, at some serious and critical points, their answer. What is the point? Fear of being put, out of hand, in the camp of fundamentalists (who are, by definition, unscholarly idolators in that they

worship the Scriptures as a book) has led them to answer the liberal critics on the grounds of liberal argumentation.

Such, for example, is the case with Leon Morris in his book, Studies in the Fourth Gospel.¹³ In what is in many respects an excellent work, the author nevertheless attempts to refute the charges of liberal scholars that John's Gospel does not record history but theology on the rational grounds of the liberals themselves. His arguments, although found throughout the book, are concentrated more or less in an important chapter entitled, "History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel." His arguments may be summed up as follows.

1) In answer to the charge that no reliable account of historical events is to be expected from an observer and that it is impossible to distinguish between what is really history and what is interpretation, Morris points out that the real question is: Does the interpretation enable us to account for the data? I.e., does the interpretation do justice to the facts? If it does, facts may be accepted as reliable.

2) In answer to the assertion that the gospels arose out of the community of the early church, Morris points out that this raises some interesting and essentially unanswerable problems. How did the community arise to begin with? Is the community more creative than the gospel writers? How is one to explain the existence of the church if not on the basis of the historical reality of the life of Christ? Are the gospels historical documents or are they merely psychological case-material of the early Christians?

3) In answer to the general charge that we have no history in the Fourth Gospel, Morris points out that quite obviously some historical events were recorded not for any particular theological reason or because they had any unique theological significance, but simply because they happened. He further demonstrates that the Scriptures constantly put a great deal of emphasis on eye-witness

13) Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969.

accounts. In this connection he quotes a large number of texts from the gospels and the epistles. In this same connection he asks why more reliance is placed upon the facts of secular history which have less evidence than upon the gospels. And he seeks an answer to the question, why, if the gospel narrators were simply writing theology, did they not write epistles instead of narratives?

4) When faced with the sceptical approach of liberals and modernistic critics, he points out, correctly, that such scepticism results in scepticism in all historical research because no "fact" past or present is verifiable with absolute certainty on purely empirical grounds. And he shows how the critics involve themselves in a basic petitio principii when he reminds them that when they rule out the miraculous with their scepticism they are ruling out exactly what the Scriptures claim to record: a miraculous event.

The consequences of this sceptical position are that God proclaimed salvation through a series of false statements. This is an intolerable position to take. For if God does enter history, then we may expect that there will be miraculous events which become a part of that history.

5) Finally, Morris points out that there is much proof of John's accuracy in his accurate knowledge of the geography of Palestine, in his inclusion of time references which are without theological significance and in his extensive references to Jewish feasts.

Now it is not our intention to speak disparagingly of this extremely valuable work of Morris and to push it aside as being irrelevant to the debate. The work which Morris has done is worthwhile. Let this be clearly understood.

But what troubles us is the fact that it is not enough; and it is not done in the right way. There is not, in all the work of Morris, one solid reference to the truth of the inspiration of Scripture. There is no part of the book which answers the critics by reminding them that the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God. In other words, the critics are not answered on the basis of Scripture (which teaches its own doctrine of inspiration),

but the critics are answered on the grounds which the critics themselves have chosen, i.e., the grounds of rationalism. The error of Morris is not that his arguments are worthless; the error is that he does not put his arguments into the context of an infallibly inspired Scripture.

There are several consequences of this which are extremely serious. The first is that presumably also the truth of inspiration and the infallibility of the Scriptures must be ascertained on purely rationalistic grounds. Once we have permitted the rationalistic critics to choose the battleground, we may not interject into the debate the argument of inspiration unless we are prepared to defend it on rationalistic grounds. But this can never be done. There is no rational proof for this truth. Attempts to prove it in this fashion are doomed to failure. And the result is that we have permitted the most basic argument in our defense to be ruled out of order. The truth of inspiration can only be learned from Scripture itself. Scripture teaches the truth concerning Scripture. This too may be a petitio principii, but this is the commitment of faith--a faith which bows in humble submission to God's Word.¹⁴ Thus we may never permit this error in strategy. We may never permit the enemy to choose the battlefield. We must insist that the battle be waged on the battleground of faith. I.e., unquestioned faith in the Word of God contained in the Scriptures. If the critic rejects this insistent point which we make and argues that we are begging the question, that we must come over to his side of the argument in order to engage in any kind of intelligent discussion, we shall have to refuse this request with steadfastness. If the conservative argues against this by saying that we shall then be accused of being unscholarly and of permitting the presuppositions of faith to determine the course of the argument, we shall graciously acknowledge it, but insist on it nonetheless, because this is our calling before God. If the conservative shakes his head in something ap-

14) Cf. The Belgic Confession: "We receive all these books...as holy and canonical...because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts, that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves."

proaching despair at such stubbornness and points out that we can never succeed in convincing the modern unbeliever with such argumentation, we shall have to remind him that faith is a gift of God and is not implanted in the heart by rational argument, no matter how forceful.

In the second place, by permitting the unbelieving higher critic to choose the battlefield, we run the grave risk of losing the debate. Indeed, this is quite inevitable. And the tragedy of it all is that we have not simply lost a debate which may or may not prove the superiority of our opponents' skills in debating; we have lost our faith. 2.

Morris himself, rather unwittingly, gives an illustration of this. He is arguing that we need not deny the historicity of the gospels simply because they are products of faith. He points out that the gospel narrators may have been so strongly convinced of the fact that their case is unassailable that they are scrupulously fair to the facts. He then with approval quotes C. H. Dodd, who makes this point with respect to the use which the New Testament church made of Old Testament prophecy.

It was not to provide documentation for a previously formulated theology that the early church searched the Scriptures; it was to find an explanation for attested facts, many of which appeared to run counter to their inherited beliefs and even counter to the scriptures as they were currently understood. The facts themselves exerted pressure upon their understanding of prophecy and fulfillment, and dictated the selection of testimonies.¹⁵

Then in a footnote Dodd is quoted again as saying:

Fundamentally, the framers of the tradition were in bondage to facts, although here and there they strained at their bonds.

The point here is that while Dodd is arguing against the conclusions of higher criticism, he is arguing on rationalistic grounds. The result is that he concedes the possibility of error

15) Morris, op. cit., p. 95.

in Scripture. This is a key concession which ends in a denial of Scripture as the Word of God.

Kuitert, while probably less than conservative, is nevertheless a member of the Reformed Churches. He argues that we cannot believe that anything happened just because the Bible says it did. He writes:

The Bible itself, in many places, tells us that it is not enough simply to say such and such happened because the Bible says so. On the other hand the same Bible says that faith is empty if certain things did not happen. Where do we go from here? The best path we can walk is this: The sheer fact that certain events are reported in the Bible does not guarantee that they occurred; rather, things happened for the salvation of men and their world, and thus, in order to tell others about them, the Bible came into being. We should underscore this in regard to the resurrection of Christ. We do not insist that the resurrection of Jesus really happened because the Bible says it did...¹⁶

In the third place, such rational argumentation, no matter 3. how conservative, has really no firm interpretation of history. There is, in such a position, no view of history which will adequately explain the "intervention" of God in history. There is no interpretation of history which is a sufficient explanation of the miraculous. There is no explanation for the continuity between Christ's work on earth and Christ's work as the ascended Lord. The Christ Who lived among us is the Christ of history. But Christ in heaven is not. Christ on earth is historical and we may know what He does by historical investigation. But the Christ of heaven is not historical and is beyond the reach of our historical investigation and any knowledge we have of Him must be obtained by other sources.

It may be that we know the Christ Who is glorified because Scripture speaks of His glory. But it is exactly this kind of

¹⁶) Kuitert, op. cit., p. 82

inconsistency against which the liberals rail. Why now do we revert to Scripture alone? If the Christ Who is glorified in heaven is not knowable by historical investigation, how can the Christ on earth be knowable by historical investigation? If the Scriptures are considered from a purely rationalistic viewpoint, as historical documents completely trustworthy, as records of actual historical events--this is all fine. But the Scriptures cannot then become for us a means of knowing Christ Who has gone on to glory and no longer lives among us. The only solution to this problem is to make an impossible and completely unwarranted disjunction between the Christ of the gospel narratives and the Christ Who has gone to glory.

And it is precisely this key point which enters into any discussion of the Christ of the gospels as well. For really the Christ Who is born miraculously from a virgin, the Christ Who died not as other men die, but as atonement for sin, the Christ Who rose bodily from the grave and ascended is not essentially different from the Christ Who is in glory. If we cannot know Christ as He is ascended, we cannot know Him as the Son of God in our flesh Who was born without the will of a man, Who suffered to accomplish redemption and Who rose victorious.

Those who would argue in defense of a historical Jesus on purely rationalistic grounds are hung up on the impossible dilemma of explaining how we can know a Christ Who is miraculous on earth but cannot know a Christ Who is in glory. This, if I understand Bultmann, Barth, etc., correctly, is the very heart of their argument. And to this argument there is no answer, no matter how conservative a man may be, as long as he attempts to defend the historicity of Jesus on rational grounds. He cannot understand nor explain those telling words of Luke in Acts 1: 1: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach..." The point, so important, that Luke is making is the assertion that there is no essential difference between his gospel narrative and the book of Acts which now he writes. The one is what Jesus began both to do and teach. The

other is what Jesus continued both to do and teach. The ascension has not made any fundamental alteration in the whole question of the historicity of Jesus.

But this involves a particular view of what history really is, what the miraculous is, and what the history of revelation is. And all this is closely connected with the truth of Scripture itself. To this we shall turn, the Lord willing, in another article.

A S T O T H E D O C T R I N E
O F
H O L Y S C R I P T U R E

--Prof. H. C. Hoeksema--

Since our Journal is published only twice a year, a little review might be helpful in order to pick up the thread of our discussion.

In our May, 1969 issue (Vol. II, No. 2) we reviewed Dr. G. C. Berkouwer's De Heilige Schrift, II. At the conclusion of that review we presented a few propositions of a positive nature which we promised to develop in future essays. Briefly, those propositions were the following:

1) The phenomenon of Holy Scripture is to be explained as lying wholly within the sphere of the wonder of grace, both as to its content and as to the manner in which it came into being.

2) The self-testimony of Scripture is exclusively that it is the Word of God written.

3) Scripture is never presented in the Bible as a human production, either with respect to its content or with respect to the manner in which it came into being.

4) The organs of Holy Scripture were by no means time-bound in their writing, but it can be shown from Scripture that they frequently wrote of things which were entirely beyond the limited horizons of their own times, both into the distant past and into the distant future.

5) The key to the understanding of organic inspiration, as excluding any so-called human factor, or element, is the principle of God's absolute sovereignty as it completely embraces the human writers, the holy organs of inspiration. Any dualism introduced into the concept of inspiration is more mechanical than organic.

In the November, 1969 issue of our Journal (Vol. III, No. 1, pp. 22, ff.) we discussed briefly, first of all, the first proposition above. We explained, in the first place, that our point of departure must be that of a world-and-life view which considers all things in the light of the Wonder of Grace. In the second

place, we explained briefly the idea of this Wonder of Grace. And, thirdly, we pointed out that Scripture, both as to its content and as to the manner in which it came into existence, lies in the line of that Wonder of Grace.

Next, we turned to a discussion of the self-testimony of Holy Scripture. We pointed out, in the first place, that it cannot very well be denied that for our Lord Jesus Christ Scripture as a book was indeed the infallible Word of God which cannot be broken, showing in detail how the Lord Jesus recognized and acknowledged in the Scriptures the divine program of His way through suffering to glory, and calling attention to the fact that here we find a kind of "unintentional" self-testimony of Holy Scripture to the fact that it is the Word of God. In the second place, along this same line, we called attention to the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ concerning the Scriptures as such, a testimony which shows plainly that He accepted that Scripture as the Word of God.

But this self-testimony of Scripture is not limited to the testimony of the Lord Jesus Himself during His earthly sojourn. Scripture throughout bears the same testimony concerning itself as that which the Lord Jesus gave it in the words and works of His public ministry. This is to be expected: for that testimony, whether it be through Moses and the prophets in the old dispensation or whether it be through the evangelists and apostles of the new dispensation, is the testimony of the very same Lord Jesus Christ, a testimony which is borne through the Spirit of Christ in prophets and apostles. To some aspects of this testimony, therefore, we now turn.

Thus far all the passages of Scripture which we cited had to do with the self-testimony of Scripture with respect to the Old Testament. This is in the nature of the case. The New Testament did not yet exist at the time of the testimony referred to. But, in the first place, this has no effect upon the question which we are now discussing. It must be conceded that the Old Testament has the testimony of Christ Himself that it is the Word of God, not a human book. And the principle, therefore, is established that the Bible is the Word of God, since Scripture is one, and

since, therefore, what is true as to any portion of Scripture is true of all Scripture. In the second place, however, it is not difficult to demonstrate that this very same testimony of Christ Himself holds with respect to the New Testament as well as the Old. This may be shown from several passages. In His sacerdotal prayer in John 17: 8 the Lord Jesus says: "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me (τὰ ῥήματα ἃ ἔδωκας μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς); and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee..." Still more, in John 16: 12-14 the Lord gives to His disciples the promise of the Comforter as follows: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." Moreover, not only will the Spirit of truth show unto them things to come; but, according to John 14: 26, the Lord promises His disciples: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." It is true that these passages say nothing in themselves about either the speech or the writing of the apostles. But, in the first place, this is not the point. The point is rather that these passages do indeed say something about the origin of the apostles' testimony. And what they teach us is that their testimony has its origin not in themselves, but in the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. And, in the second place, taken in connection with what the apostles themselves write elsewhere concerning both their speech and their writings, that is, therefore, taken in connection with the whole of the self-testimony of Holy Scripture, these passages are indeed a clear testimony concerning the nature and the origin of the New Testament Scriptures. They are the Word of God in Christ.

Nor must it be overlooked that in the Book of Revelation there are several passages which express this self-testimony of Holy Scripture in very clear language. Thus, for example in

Revelation 1: 1-3 we read: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." Notice here, in the first place, that the subject is "the revelation of Jesus Christ," an expression which, according to the analogy of Scripture, must be understood as referring not to the revelation of which Jesus Christ is the subject, but the revelation of which Jesus Christ is the object. Notice, in the second place, that this revelation has its origin in God: "which God gave unto him." Notice, in the third place, that this revelation is transmitted to His servants by way of its being "sent and signified by his angel unto his servant John (καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστέλλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ, τῷ δοῦλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ). In the fourth place, John bare record of the Word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ) and the testimony of Jesus Christ (τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). In the fifth place, he wrote this down, so that it is possible to read and to hear the words of this prophecy (τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας) and to keep those things which are written therein (τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα). Moreover, according to Revelation 1: 11, John receives a specific command to write the things which he has seen: "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia." And in seven specific instances, in Revelation 2 and 3, in the letters to the seven churches, this specific command is given again in the well-known formula, "Unto the angel of the church of ____ write..." Again, in the epilogue of the Book of Revelation the same idea is affirmed in most emphatic language. First of all, notice Revelation 22: 6: "And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the pro-

phecy of this book." Notice in this connection how it is emphasized not merely that the ideas, or thoughts, are faithful and true, but the sayings, and that, too, the sayings of the prophecy of this book, (τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου). And the truth and faithfulness of these words of the revelation of Jesus Christ is such that an emphatic warning is sounded in vss. 18 and 19, a warning which again applies specifically to the "words of the prophecy of this book." "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." Notice again the very definite expressions τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου and τὰς πληγὰς τὰς γεγραμμένας ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ and in the end of vs. 19 simply the expression τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ. And notice, finally, how once again, at the very close of the book (22: 20) the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is introduced as the One testifying these things: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen." Again it may be remarked that indeed what is stated here applies first of all and directly to the Book of Revelation; but when we bear in mind the truth of the organic unity of Scripture, the principle which is expressed in the language which we have quoted from the Book of Revelation is valid with respect to the whole of the New Testament, as well as the whole of Holy Scripture.

But there is much more.

Virtually everywhere in Scripture God, or Christ, or the Spirit of the Lord appears as the witnessing and speaking Subject. Sometimes Scripture is even identified with the speaking Subject. Thus, for example, there are passages of Scripture in which the Scriptures are spoken of as if they were God. This is true of Galatians 3: 8. There we read: "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be

blessed." The reference here is to Genesis 12: 1-3: "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Notice that in Genesis 12 the Lord is the speaking Subject, Who says to Abram, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." But in Galatians 3: 8 the Scripture is presented as the speaking Subject: "And the scripture...preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." How is that possible? Remember, in the first place, that from an historical point of view when this promise came to Abraham there were not even any Scriptures as yet. And it was not for some centuries that this Word of the Lord to Abraham came to be inscribed in the Holy Scriptures by Moses. Hence, from a strictly historical and literal point of view it is impossible to speak of a preaching of the gospel to Abraham by the scriptures. Neither is it possible in that same sense to speak of the scripture as foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith. Notice, in the second place, that in Genesis 12 we are told very plainly that the Lord spoke to Abraham. To put it in the language of Galatians 3: 8, therefore, it was the Lord Who "preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." Yet the apostle Paul writes in Galatians 3 that the Scripture foresaw that God would justify the heathen through faith and that the Scripture preached before the gospel unto Abraham. What you have, therefore, in the Old Testament passage is the speech of God recorded by Scripture at a time later than the actual event. And when, therefore, the New Testament, as it were, simply substitutes the name "scripture" for the name "the Lord," this can only be because of the complete identification of the text of Scripture with God as the speaking Subject. This identification is so complete that it is natural for Scripture to use the expression "the scripture says" when literally the meaning is "God as re-

corded in Scripture said."

Another set of passages in which this same idea occurs is Romans 9: 17 and Exodus 9: 16. In Romans 9: 17 we read: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." The Scripture referred to is that of Exodus 9: 16: "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power: and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." But when you consult the context, beginning in vs. 13, you discover again that in the literal sense of the word it certainly was not the Scripture that said this to Pharaoh. In fact, you do not literally read that this was said to Pharaoh at all. According to the context these words belong to the message which the Lord instructs Moses to convey to Pharaoh. Thus it is in verse 13: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence: and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power: and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." As the record stands here, therefore, in Exodus 9, these words are addressed by the Lord to Moses, who, in turn, was to convey them in the name of the Lord to Pharaoh. And it is evident from the subsequent context, vss. 20, ff., that Moses did indeed go to Pharaoh with this Word of the Lord. Nevertheless, in Romans 9: 17 we read, 'the scripture saith unto Pharaoh,' while in the literal sense of the word the Lord said this unto Moses, and Moses conveyed it to Pharaoh; and later the record of this Word of the Lord by Moses to Pharaoh was written in the book of Exodus. Again we confront the question: how is this possible? And the answer is: only because of the complete identification

of the written Word of God, the Scriptures, with God as the speaking Subject, so that it is possible to say "Scripture says" when the meaning is "God as recorded in Scripture says."

There is also what may be called, in a way, the reverse phenomenon in the relation between the New Testament and the Old. That is, there are passages in the New Testament in which quotations are made from the Old Testament; and these quotations are in the New Testament directly attributed to God while in the Old Testament there is no direct indication that these words are the speech of God. B.B. Warfield in his book, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, p. 300,¹ calls attention to several such passages. Let us review some passages of this kind.

In Matthew 19: 4, 5 we read: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh?" The quotation in vs. 5 is ascribed to Him "that made them in the beginning," that is, God. This quotation is taken from Genesis 2: 24, in the context of the narrative of the creation of the woman. There we read that Adam said, after the Lord God had brought the woman unto the man, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." And then follow the words quoted in Matthew 19: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Now regardless whether Genesis 2: 24 is interpreted as belonging to the words of Adam or whether it is interpreted as being commentary, the statement of a principle which is inserted here and which is the expression of the creation ordinance in connection with what Adam had said, the fact remains that in Genesis there is absolutely no indication of a direct and literal kind that the words of vs. 24 are the speech of God. Genesis 2: 24 is the Scripture; but according to Matthew 19: 4, 5, that word of the Scripture is the Word of God.

1) Samuel G. Craig, editor; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1967

In Hebrews 3: 7-11 we read: "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart: and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)" Notice that in the Epistle to the Hebrews these words are ascribed to the Holy Ghost. But they are a quotation from Psalm 95: 7-11: "For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice," etc. It is evident from the language of Psalm 95 that the words quoted in Hebrews 3 do not occur in the direct and literal sense of the word as the speech of God the Holy Ghost, but as the speech of the psalmist calling upon the people of God to join in singing unto the Lord and making a joyful noise unto the Rock of their salvation, vs. 1. This is evident from the fact that throughout the psalm God is spoken of in the third person: He is spoken about. But suddenly in vs. 9 the language changes to the first person, and it becomes plain that God Himself is speaking: "When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work," etc. And yet in Hebrews 3 this quotation of the Scripture of Psalm 95 is directly ascribed to the Holy Ghost.

In Acts 4: 23, ff., there is a very significant passage in this regard; and its significance lies in the fact that not only is this the testimony of the New Testament Scriptures with respect to the Old, but also that this testimony is the expression of the faith of the church--a faith which is expressed, most poignantly, in their prayer. You will recall that it was the occasion when the chief priests and the elders and the scribes had laid hands on Peter and John after the healing of the lame man. And when Peter and John had appeared before the Council and had testified concerning the risen Lord, they were released with a warning. And then we read: "And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God

with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, "Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ," etc. The quotation here is, of course, from the well-known words of the second Psalm, a psalm which is ascribed in this prayer of the church to David. And when you consult Psalm 2, the language is obviously that of David, and God is spoken of in the third person. It is David speaking, and David speaking about God. In Acts 4, therefore, we have a quotation by the church of the Old Testament Scriptures. But notice that this quotation is ascribed, according to Acts 4: 24, 25 to God: it was God Who, in Psalm 2, spoke by the mouth of His servant David.

In Acts 13: 34, 35 there is an example of this same phenomenon in the preaching of the apostle Paul at Antioch in Pisidia. The apostle is proclaiming the gospel of the risen Lord. And he proclaims that gospel as the fulfillment of the Scriptures, of the promise of God. Thus we read in the context, vs. 32: "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Notice, by the way, that already here there is plain testimony that the Scriptures of the Old Testament--in this case, the second Psalm, where, remember, David writes about the Lord, and says, "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee,"--that those Scriptures are the Word of God: they are the promise (of God) which was made unto the fathers. But in the following verses (34, 35) there is another instance where the Scriptures are simply referred to as the speech of God: "And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David [a reference to Isaiah 55: 3]. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see cor-

ruption." Notice that in both instances in the book of Acts the quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures are attributed to God Himself: "...he (i.e., God) said on this wise," and again, "...he saith also in another psalm." And yet the words of the first quotation are from the prophecy of Isaiah, and the words of the second quotation are from the sixteenth Psalm, an instance which is all the more emphatic because of the fact that in this psalm these words are addressed by the psalmist to the Lord, Ps. 16: 10.

A similar relationship is discovered when the language of Hebrews 1: 5-13 is compared with the Old Testament. In Hebrews 1 there are several quotations from the Old Testament. We read here: "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" The quotations are from Psalm 2: 7, Psalm 89: 26, Psalm 97: 7, Psalm 104: 4, Psalm 45: 6, 7, Psalm 102: 25, ff., and from Psalm 110: 1. As Warfield states in this connection: "It is not God, however, in Whose mouth these sayings are placed in the text of the Old Testament: they are the words of others, recorded in the text of Scripture as spoken to or of God. They could be attributed to God only through such habitual identification, in the

minds of the writers, of the text of Scripture with the utterances of God that it had become natural to use the term 'God says' when what was really intended was 'Scripture, the Word of God, says.'²

The whole point of the two classes of passages which we have cited above is this, that together they show a clear and absolute identification in the minds of these writers (that is, in the New Testament Scriptures) of Scripture with the speaking God.

Besides this, there are, of course, numerous other quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures in the New Testament--quotations which clearly imply that these Old Testament writings are authoritative, and that their authority is not that of men, but of God Himself. Even where it is not plainly stated, the very fact of these quotations assumes such underlying authority and the acknowledgement of such authority both on the part of the writer and on the part of the addressees for whose benefit such appeal to the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures is made.

But there is a considerable number of passages in which Scripture is introduced by an apparently subjectless λέγει or φησί. About these Warfield writes as follows:³

In the same line with these passages are commonly ranged with others, in which Scripture seems to be adduced with a subjectless λέγει or φησί, the authoritative subject--whether the divinely given Word or God Himself--being taken for granted. Among these have been counted such passages, for example, as the following: Rom. ix. 15, "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion" (Ex. xxxiii. 19); Rom. xv. 10, "And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people" (Deut. xxxii. 43); and again, "Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and let all the people praise him" (Ps. cvii. 1); Gal. iii. 16, "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed (Gen. xiii. 15), which is Christ';

2) Idem, p. 300.

3) Idem, pp. 301, 302.

Eph. iv. 8, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (Ps. lxxviii. 18); Eph. v. 14, "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead and Christ shall shine upon thee" (Isa. lx. 1); I Cor. vi. 16, "For twain, saith he, shall become one flesh" (Gen. ii. 24); I Cor. xv. 27, "But when he saith, All things are put in subjection" (Ps. viii. 7); II Cor. vi. 2, "For he saith, At an acceptable time, I hearkened unto thee, and in a day of salvation did I succor thee" (Isa. xlix. 8); Heb. viii. 5, "For see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount" (Ex. xxv. 40); James iv. 6, "Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble" (Prov. iii. 34).

There is room for difference of opinion, of course, whether all these passages are cases in point. And there has certainly always existed some difference of opinion among commentators as to the proper subauditum in such instances as are allowed. The state of the case would seem to be fairly indicated by Alexander Buttmann, when he says:

"The predicates λέγει or φησὶν are often found in the New Testament in quotations, ὁ Θεός or even merely ἡ γραφή being always to be supplied as subject: as I Cor. vi. 16, II Cor. vi. 2, Gal. iii. 16, Eph. iv. 8, v. 14, Heb. viii. 5, iv. 3 (εἶρηκεν). These subjects are also expressed, as in Gal. iv. 30, I Tim. v. 18, or to be supplied from the preceding context, as in Heb. i. 5 seq." Of the alternatives thus offered, Jelf apparently prefers the one:

"In the New Testament we must supply προφητῆς, ἡ γραφή, πνεῦμα, etc., before φησὶ, λέγει, μαρτυρεῖ.

Winer and Blass take the other:

"The formulas of citation--λέγει, II Cor. vi.2, Gal. iii. 16, Eph. iv. 8 al., φησί, I Cor. vi. 16, Heb. viii. 5; εἶρηκε, Heb. iv. 4 (cf. the Rabbinical רבוּנו); μαρτυρεῖ, Heb. vii. 17 (εἶπε, I Cor. xv.27) --are probably in no instance impersonal in the minds of the New Testament writers. The subject (ὁ Θεός) is usually contained in the context, either directly or indirectly; in I Cor. vi. 16 and Matt. xix. 5, φησί, there is an apostolic ellipsis (of ὁ Θεός); in Heb. vii. 17, the best authorities have μαρτυρεῖται."

"In the formulas of citation such as λέγει, II Cor. vi. 2, Gal. iii. 16, etc.; φησίν, I Cor. vi. 16, Heb. viii. 5; εἶρηκε, Heb. iv. 4--ὁ Θεός is to be understood ('He says'); in II Cor. x. 10, φησίν (ADE, etc.[?], 'one says'), appears to be a wrong reading for φασίν (B), unless perhaps a τις has dropped out (but cp. Clem. Hom., xi. 9 ad init.).

After a long discussion of the Greek usage involved in these passages and of the various opinions which have been expressed concerning them, he comes to a lengthy conclusion, pp. 346-348, of which we quote the final paragraph. With the thrust of this conclusion we are in accord.

There may be room for difference of opinion again as to the precise subauditum which it will be most natural to assume with these subjectless verbs: whether ὁ Θεός or ἡ γραφή. In our view it makes no real difference in their implication: for, in our view, the very essence of the case is, that, under the force of their conception of the Scriptures as an oracular book, it was all one to the New Testament writers whether they said "God says" or "Scripture says." This is made very clear, as their real standpoint, by their double identification of Scripture with God and God with Scripture, to which

we adverted at the beginning of this paper, and by which Paul, for example, could say alike "the Scripture saith to Pharaoh" (Rom. ix. 17) and "God....saith, Thou wilt not give thy Holy One to see corruption" (Acts xiii. 34). We may well be content in the New Testament as in Philo to translate the phrase wherever it occurs, "It says"--with the implication that this "It says" is the same as "Scripture says", and that this "Scripture says" is the same as "God says." It is this implication that is really the fundamental fact in the case.

It is plain, therefore, that there is overwhelming self-testimony of Scripture in the New Testament with respect to the Old Testament Scriptures as being the Word of God.

All this stands in close connection with and in confirmation of the abundant testimony of the Old Testament itself. As we said earlier, almost everywhere God, or Christ, or the Spirit of the Lord appears as the witnessing and speaking Subject in the Old Testament Scriptures. We may remind ourselves in this connection of the following facts which are such common characteristics of the Old Testament Scriptures that anyone will recognize them by their mere mention:

- 1] There is the fact that the Pentateuch is full of the expression, "Then spake the Lord unto Moses, saying...."
- 2] Everywhere in the Old Testament Scriptures the prophets appear, not only in the spoken word but in the Scriptures, in the written word, with the demanding, absolutely authoritative, "Thus saith the Lord," or "...saith the Lord of hosts," etc.
- 3] For anyone who is acquainted with Old Testament prophecy it is a familiar fact that the Subject God and the subject the prophet are sometimes extremely difficult to distinguish and sometimes really impossible to distinguish. Earlier, and in another connection, we noted this phenomenon in Psalm 95. But this is of very frequent occurrence in the prophets.
- 4] There is the fact--not usually connected with the subject now

under discussion, the doctrine of Holy Scripture, but nevertheless very significant for this doctrine--that sometimes Israel as a nation, sometimes the remnant according to the election of grace, sometimes the person of the prophet himself, and sometimes Christ Himself appears in Scripture as the speaking and acting Servant of Jehovah, while in the deepest sense of the word the Subject Who thus speaks and acts is always the same.⁴

All of these phenomena of the Old Testament Scriptures find their explanation in the fact that those Scriptures are not the testimony of mere men, but the testimony of the Spirit of Christ, even as we are instructed in I Peter 1: 10-12: "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

Finally, we may consider for a moment the question what the self-testimony of Scripture is in the New Testament with respect to the spoken and the written word of the apostles themselves. In answer to this question, we call attention, in the first place, to the fact that in the light of the organic unity of Holy Scripture, what we have already shown extends to the whole of Scripture, including the writings of the apostles. In the second place we must not forget that when in the New Testament such frequent appeal is made to the Old Testament Scriptures, this implies already that the apostles claimed for their own speaking and writing on the basis of its harmony with the Old Testament Scriptures, the very same authority which they acknowledge in those Old Testament Scriptures. But, in the third place, it is not difficult to point to various individual passages and expressions which show very plainly that the self-testimony of the Scriptures through the

4) For a brief discussion of this subject (in connection with the subject of the Pactum Salutis) cf. H. Hoeksema, Reformed Dogmatics, pp. 298-304; Reformed Free Publishing Association, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1966.

apostles is the very same as that to which we have already called attention. Thus, we read in I Cor. 2: 12, 13: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Notice the expression "words... which the Holy Ghost teacheth." In I Cor. 14 the apostle writes: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord," (vs. 37). In Gal. 1: 6-8 the apostle writes: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." The sharp contrast which the apostle draws here can only be based upon the absolute and divine authority of the gospel which he has preached. And this is quite in harmony with the statement in vss. 11 and 12 of the same chapter: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." In I Thess. 4: 2 the apostle reminds the saints: "For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus." And in vs. 15 of the same chapter he says: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord..." It is only on this basis that he can admonish the church in II Thess. 2: 15: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." And in II Thess. 3: 6 he claims the same authority when he writes: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received of us." And again in vs. 14: "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." Nor should we overlook the fact that when the

apostle Peter writes concerning Paul's writings, he classifies those writings with "the other scriptures," II Peter 3: 15, 16: "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto 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." And finally in this connection, we call attention to the well-known words of the first Epistle of John, 1: 3: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you," and then writes, leaving no question as to where they saw and heard these things, vs. 5: "This then is the message which we have heard of him and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

We shall have more to say, the Lord willing, in a later article concerning this subject of Scripture and its inspiration, and especially concerning those two well-known passages which have been so often cited in connection with the truth of inspiration, II Peter 1: 21 and II Tim. 3: 16. For the time being, we conclude our discussion with the following remarks.

1] It should be abundantly clear from all that has been written that the truth of the inspiration of Holy Scripture certainly does not rest upon a couple individual passages, such as those just mentioned, but is the current thought of Scripture.

2] If we take all the various elements in the self-testimony of Scripture together, then we certainly do not say too much if we maintain that in overwhelming fashion that self-testimony is that Scripture is the Word of God written, as God Himself through the Wonder of Grace causes it to come to us in human language. And we may remark in this connection that we have not by any means adduced all the Scriptural evidence on this subject. Careful attention to the Scriptures throughout will make it plain that this self-testimony of Holy Scripture pervades the entire Scriptures, and that it is expressed frequently in almost unnoticeable fashion, either directly or by implication, and sometimes at the most un-

expected junctures.

3] We must point out that this Wonder of Grace whereby we now possess the Scripture as God's Word includes, in the very nature of the case, much more than divine and graphic inspiration as such. It includes the entire wonder of history by which God has revealed Himself to His people. It includes the calling into being of all the historical circumstances in the life of God's people in the world, as well as more particularly in the life of the holy writers,--all of those circumstances which were necessary in order to call the organism of Holy Scripture into existence. For we must remember: the Scripture is not merely a Word of God; it is the Word of God. You can neither add to it nor take away from it without marring and rending and breaking it. Scripture is an organic whole which reveals to us the God of our complete salvation in Christ, and that, too, in harmony with the counsel of the Most High. He who would speak of organic inspiration must keep this in mind. And he who once understands the idea of organic inspiration will cease to speak of a human factor. There is no human factor in the Wonder of Grace. There never is; neither is there such a human factor in that aspect of the Wonder of Grace according to which Scripture came into being.

But of all this we shall speak more in our subsequent discussion of the doctrine of Holy Scripture.
